

## Ringler Steps Down, Thanks Grange

**VERNON ACHENBACH, JR.**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**WILLIAMSPORT** (Lycoming Co.) — William Ringler said serving as master of the Pennsylvania State Grange for the past four years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of his life and has helped reaffirm his belief in the goals of the organization — that family is the foundation of civilization, and that it is better to be right than win.

Ringler stepped down Monday during a farewell address at the Scottish Rite Consistory in Williamsport before more than 600 Grange members who attended the group's annual convention, its 120th.

On Thursday, Ringler had time to reflect a little more during a telephone conversation.

"Our travels over the past four years have taken us about 120,000 miles, so we pretty much crossed the state north, south east and west. That was one of the nicest things about being the head of State Grange, getting to meet many people," he said.

"I have found it almost impossible to properly thank the people who have served the organization both at my direction and both at the direction of the delegation that was set in. How do you thank people who have given time, money and themselves, not for their immediate personal benefit, but for the benefit of others, so that cumulatively, each of us will have the kind of lifestyle that will be of benefit to each one of us."

According to Ringler, the strength and longevity of the Grange comes from its precepts that all members are equally important and from an ethic based strongly on the Judeo-Christian admonition to love and treat others as one would wish to be loved and treated.

"One of the founding pillars of our organization was the belief that the family was the cornerstone of

civilization — as the family goes, that is the way the nation will go.

"As a consequence, there has always been a very personal relationship among Grange members. Not that we partition ourselves from others, but we love our neighbors as ourselves."

Ringler said he joined the Grange and supports it not necessarily because of its age, but because it was the original group working to sustain family values in rural Pennsylvania. He said it was and continues to be one of the most influential organizations for agriculture and rural communities.

"My life and experience of 47 years as a farmer so we had a lot of practical experience in production agriculture. As master of state Grange, we had a complete turnaround in views — no longer just production ag, but we got to see and participate in the marketing aspects, the political aspects and most importantly in the aspect that the Grange is particularly interested in the moral aspect of, not only business, but the political world."

However, Ringler, a Somerset County potato and dairy farmer of 47 years, said he felt he didn't accomplish his goals while in office.

"Our farming experience was a relatively satisfactory one, not one without pitfalls, but overall a very rewarding experience.

"My experience as Grange master has been very satisfactory as far as relationships with people. However, I was not able to do the job that I should have done for the organization.

"I entered without ego and personal gain. That's the way I should leave it, but I should have been spreading the Ag gospel more — that we have agriculture that is second to none. But I have not done a good enough job of selling," he said.

Ringler said he plans to return to his home, located on a subplot of

the family farm which his son James Ringler bought and expanded.

He will not rest, he said, but intends to help his son with running the farm.

Ringler said he will remain active, because, "If I don't have a reason to put my boots on in the morning, I'm done."

However, he said he would like people to keep certain things in perspective.

He said that despite some of the disappointing things in life, his has been one of miracles and he has no reason to believe that there will be no more.

"Of course we've lived over three score and ten and I would like to tell you that this was the golden age of America.

"Not to negate the things to come, but (in his life) we came from (using) animal power, to mechanical power, to chemical power and now we're going to genetic restructuring. How many people have seen that happen, not only in their life, but in three score and ten?"

Ringler said he believes the future holds many more changes and hope for better living (though not necessarily materially).

And over all this time of change, agriculture in Pennsylvania continues to lead all other industries in importance to the economy, he said.

"Pennsylvania was the number one industry when it first became established as a commonwealth. Between 80 to 90 percent of the people were involved. It was number one then because of the number of people involved.

"Now it is number one because of efficiency. But now the number of people involved is only a little more than one percent."

Ringler said that this is a concern of the Grange whose membership fairly well represents the age demographics of the agricultural community as a whole — a lack of

young people involved.

But he quickly added that the Grange was attempting to do something about it, seeking ways to attract younger members in order to keep the organization strong.

"There was a time, of course, when the church set the social life. Then the schools became more intense, and no longer were social activities centered on the church. The emphasis no longer lent itself to family activities," he said, pausing to let it sink in.

"I think as an organization, the

thing that needs to be stressed is that people have to realize where the true value of life lies and what actually is the worth of those things we are working for.

"If the aim is for those things high and lofty — as spelled out in the holy writ — then that will be to our satisfaction. "I think the future hope of a nation rests upon the recognition of one's obligation to one's maker and obligations to neighbors. If a person will have respect for those entities first, then he will have respect for himself."

## Thousands Attend Agway

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expenses resulted in a net loss of \$58.8 million for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1992."

"We have made provisions for utilizing our assets more productively to meet the needs of the new structure we have developed. This charge also makes provision for discontinued product lines, selling off excess inventories, buildings, and other assets not needed as we look to the future," Saul said.

A significant portion of the restructuring charge relates to Agway's work-force. Saul reported that 439 employees, out of a possible 828 who were eligible for early retirement, accepted an enhanced voluntary early retirement program.

"A restructuring charge helps identify what needs to be changed and puts a dollar value on it so we can concentrate on the future rather than the past. Agway is in a

position to absorb the impact while maintaining an equity of \$190 million at year-end," Saul said.

Saul reported that Agway investors collected over \$35 million in interest and dividends during the year, up \$3 million from the previous year.

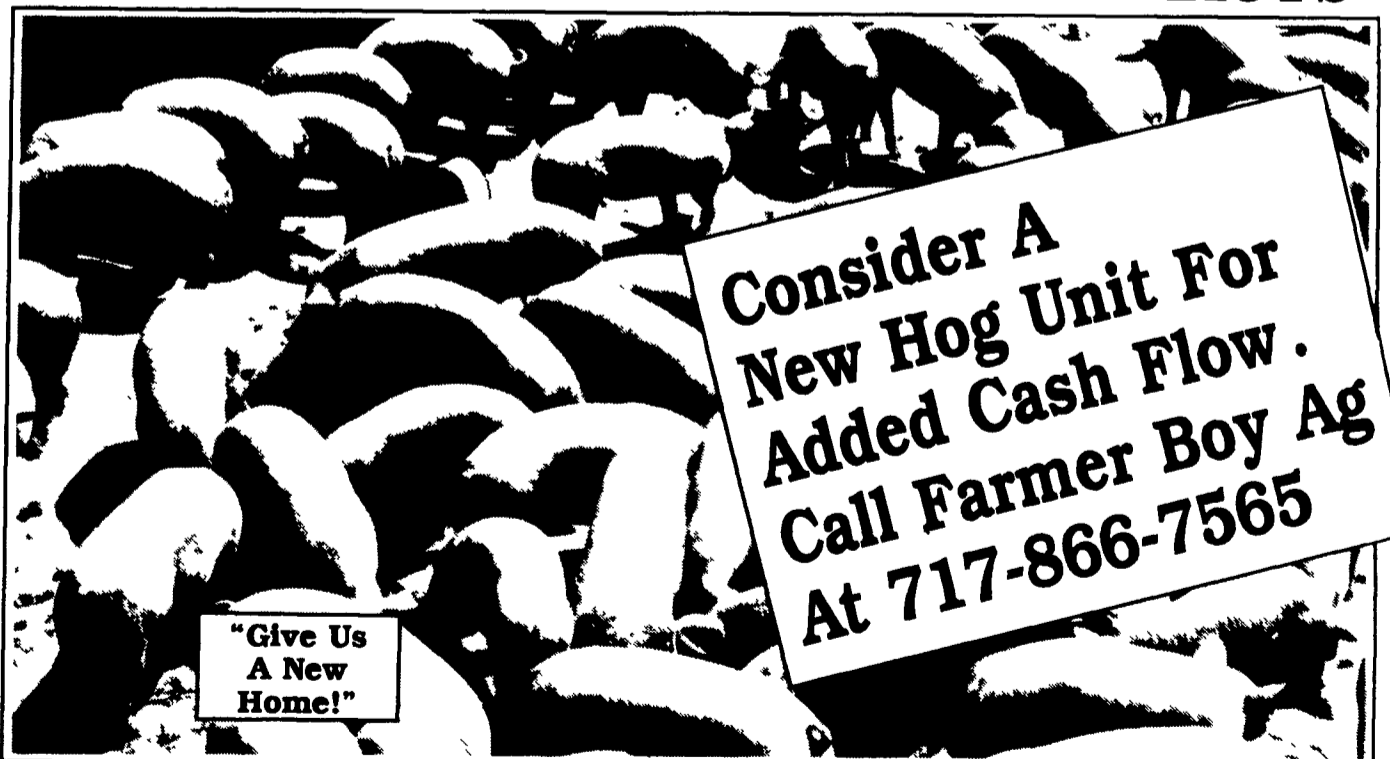
Saul state that, while it was a disappointing year for some Agway businesses, it was a good year in terms of positioning the farmer-owned cooperative for the future. He believes the new Agway mission describes what the cooperative will become in the current year and beyond. It reads "to be a customer driven and financially successful cooperative that is highly effective in meeting the needs and interests of commercial farms and other agriculturally related markets."

"We are well on our way toward implementing the changes that will achieve our goals," Saul said.

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