

The Force Behind The Poultry Industry's Success

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— It's difficult to separate the life story of Paul Whipple from the history of the poultry industry. The two are almost synonymous as Whipple, alias "Money Bags Whipple" was the catalyst in helping farmers make the poultry industry the giant industry that it is today.

For his achievements, Whipple's received the George Delp Award and he's been named Man of the Year by the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation.

Perhaps not as significant to the poultry industry but just as valuable to Whipple is that he and his wife Elva recently celebrated 50 years of marriage.

"Behind every successful man is a great woman," the saying goes.

And, Whipple is quick to praise his wife and lovingly refers to her as his "Million Dollar Baby."

Elva was the one who cared for the couple's four children while her husband crisscrossed counties in his diligent efforts to help farmers establish successful farming practices. She was the city gal who quickly adapted to working in the barn.

Of her switch from city to country, she said, "I was of the old school. I was taught that when you married, you did what your husband did. That you backed him up."

Despite his busy schedule, Whipple did his share of work on the farm. His wife said, "Many times he would be out plowing to 2 a.m. and then get up again at 5 a.m. to get the farm work done so he could go on the road to do his job."

Whipple was born and raised in Bradford County where he and his siblings continue to own the 129-acre farm that has been in the family since 1838.

"When I was young, we didn't have tractors. We stabbed corn by hand," Whipple said of his early years.

During the Depression Era, Whipple worked as a Guernsey herdsman in Spring Hill. Later, he and several neighboring young fel-

lows moved to Chester County where he met Elva.

There was concern in 1943 about keeping people on the farm. Those fellows from 18-26-years of age who worked on the farm were draft exempt. Whipple returned to Bradford County where he was in charge of the milk route for a 1,400 acre farm in Towanda. Whipple married when he was 21 and Elva was 18½. They soon bought their own 105-acre farm and worked in poultry sales at a feed mill.

An ambitious young man, Whipple soon caught the attention of the local Farm Credit office. In 1955, he was asked to run a branch office. A year later, Farm Credit asked him to cover Lancaster, Lebanon, and Dauphin counties.

It was a big step for the Whipples who knew everyone in Bradford County to choose to move to a new area. Especially since Whipple had been warned that Lancaster Countians were skeptical of newcomers.

"People said that Lancaster Countians were clannish and I'd never make it," Whipple said.

Being adventurous and liking challenges, Whipple decided to take the plunge. He put a three-day ad on his farm in the newspaper. Even though it wasn't the right time of the year to sell a farm, the farm sold immediately, Whipple said.

The Whipples moved to a farm in Lancaster County. "My boss wouldn't let me go out of the office until I learned to pronounce Lancaster properly and not like the tourists do," Whipple said.

Immediately, Whipple became acquainted with ag business people and became aggressive in helping farmers enlarge poultry operations.

"Money Bags Whipple," became his nickname as he became adept in handling contracts for Weaver's Poultry, Miller and Bushong, Kreiders', Wenger's, and other rapidly growing companies.

Whipple's secret to success was rooted in being a good listener. It did not matter if the person was Amish, old-order Mennonite, or an



Elva spends many hours in her colorful flower beds surrounding their Lancaster home. Although Whipple is supposedly retired, he still works long hours only now he doesn't charge for his consultation work with farmers.

agri-business giant. Whipple took time to develop friendships with all.

The warning that local people were clannish proved wrong as Whipple soon became almost like a family member to many farmers and agri-business people.

All loans had to be approved by the Baltimore office, who had little understanding of the local agricultural community. Weekly, Whipple traveled to the Baltimore office to argue the case of local farmers and to explain that county farms cost more and that they were worth more than those in other areas.

Whipple helped farmers establish the first large broiler houses in the county. Temperature-controlled environments were a new concept in the industry and it took awhile before Penn State became convinced of the concept's practicality. But when Penn State saw the potential, they took steps to help farmers work out the kinks in the system. In 1959, Whipple became general manager for Keystone Credit.

In 1964, Miller and Bushong asked Whipple to work for them as credit manager. It was his job to develop a new broiler program for the company that was innovative but not like their competitor's Weaver's Poultry of New Holland.

Whipple devised the two-story 40x250-foot and the 40x400-foot poultry houses that he sold as a package deal that included everything from equipment to construction and financing.

At first, banks weren't helping finance farming operations at all. But when they saw how lucrative that business could be, other banks jumped on the bandwagon.

To Whipple's dismay, people were getting credit that should not have been getting it. The easy credit heyday of the 1970s caused him great concern, said Whipple who believes the industry is paying for that today. FHA loans were given indiscriminately to good and bad managers and it backfired on the lender. Some lost their farms and the government lost money in the venture.

"I don't think we will ever see the easy credit of the '70s again," Whipple said. "The government is more interested in social problems than in helping farmers," he said.

When he first began farming, Whipple said that it was tough to make it financially. His pay check

was only \$65 a month for working on the farm. "But if you were a hard worker and a good manager, you could start out without a penny and make it," Whipple said.

Today, a new farmer couldn't do that without a lot of good lucky breaks.

A degree was not required when Whipple began his financial career. He did take several Penn State short courses over the years, but most of his expertise was gained from on-the-job experience.

He's proud that people say his two sons are a chip off the old block. Both are CPAs. The couples two daughters also earned a college degree.

"We paid the tuition and board for each of children and it was the best investment that we ever made," Whipple said. That doesn't mean the children didn't work. They held summer jobs and saved their money for books and additional expenses. The sons learned to change oil and grease their own cars, which they continue to do today, Whipple said.

Whipple considers that he is on the conservative side when it comes to spending money.

"I pick up pennies and straighten nails," he said of his thriftiness. He

doesn't buy new cars. Twice in his lifetime, he has taken a hunting trip to Montana, but not for the last 10 years.

At the same time, Whipple said that he doesn't approve of being stingy with money. In his position, he sometimes saw farmers who sacrificed everything to purchase another farm. Some did not properly clothe and feed their children because buying another farm was a priority.

In 1984, Whipple began working for Agri-General as a financial consultant.

Whipple is an outside director and on the audit and compliance committee for York Farm Credit. He's been with the Ag Preserve since the beginning, is treasurer of the executive committee for Farmland Trust, and on the Ag Issues board. He is also a church trustee, and manages a 38,000 square foot complex.

Although retired, Whipple continues to work as a consultant only now he does it gratis.

"I like helping people. It gives me great satisfaction to see farmers succeed," he said.

It also brings him much pleasure in knowing that he had a part in helping the poultry industry making a better life for many people.

Homestead Notes



Fifty years of marriage is an accomplishment achieved by the Whipples.



Many of the companies for which he worked held retirement parties and gave him a clock. "Now I have a clock in every room," Whipple said of the many clocks awarded him. He also has many plaques noting his work for the agricultural industry.