

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

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NEWARK, Del. — Looking back is often a nostalgic business.

When I look back, I think fondly of the days when I worked in the field with a horse team. Even now, as winter approaches, I remember hauling loads of fodder beets for the cows from the trench silo several miles outside my village near Heidelberg, Germany.

The work was rugged and the cold almost unbearable at times — for me and the horses — but I still manage to cast the memory in a romantic light.

It's that time of the year now. We may sit around the fireplace to warm up, reflect on those years and consider how far we have come.

Where I grew up, we milked by hand, so 20 cows was the maximum one person could be asked to do twice a day as fulltime milker.

Today, we don't have to stoop; we can stand up in a "parlor" and milk a lot more than 20 cows without great discomfort, either to us or the cows. We even have parlors in which one person can milk more than 100 cows per hour for several hours. That's progress! What efficiency of labor!

Why, then, are we sentimental about the old days?

You'll have your own thoughts, but I think the slower efficiency, the unhurried pace of life, the not being driven by machines and computers made things easier. We had time to sit back at the fireplace, to contemplate, to reminisce.

Still, we can be thankful for the progress and better efficiency on our dairy farms. We feed more people more cheaply, helping to reduce hunger around the world.

When I was given the responsibility of the University of Delaware dairy herd 37 years ago, our Holstein herd milked barely 8,000 pounds per year; the national cow numbers were around 15 million. Today, the national herd is under 10 million and our university herd averages more than 21,000 pounds of milk per year (and this without stimulants).

At the same times many of our dairy farms have disappeared because of the increased efficien-

cy and higher output per cow. We have 178,000 dairy farms in this country, down from almost 800,000 farms 37 years ago, a shrinkage of 78 percent. Is this why we're nostalgic about the old days?

Four decades ago, New Castle County here in Delaware was wall-to-wall cow country, a county green with farms surrounding Wilmington and the little town of Newark.

Today, two dairy herds remain — one at the university — and the county is covered with houses.

At best, one in 10 of my students come from farms; 37 years ago most of them did.

Now I take my portable milking machine and model rubber udder to elementary schools, high schools and youth camps to demonstrate to youngsters where their milk comes from.

You should see the happy surprise on those kids' faces when they put a finger into one of the teat cups and feel the vacuum and pulsation that milks the udder. Then they see the milk come through the teat cup and the clear plastic hoses into the bucket!

Because of our progress in efficiency, are we losing part of farm life and nature and green space? Is this way of life irretrievably lost to a major part of our population? Is that why we are sentimental about the good old days despite the hardship? Perhaps we can be thankful for our Amish dairy farmers who still hold on to the farm life that we can only reminisce about.

I found an interesting and relevant statistic: people in this country spent 22 percent of their income on food 25 years ago. Today it is only 15 percent, a measure of our progress for the common good.

At the same time, income spent on medical costs 25 years ago was 10 percent; today it averages 14 percent!

What can we look forward to?

Just as the last election made the statement "enough is enough," there will come a time in this sprawling urbanization when we'll have to make a statement about the loss of our dairy and family farms and green spaces.

Studies show that for human health, people require a certain amount of green space. And what better system can you find but dairy and livestock farms, where grazing is the major part of the feeding system, to preserve our precious green space in an attractive and satisfying way?

How will we cope financially?

Among our five leading U.S. dairy states, cow numbers in California are up by 3 percent. In Wisconsin, cow numbers declined last year by 1.8 percent, in Minnesota by 3.9 percent and in New York by 2 percent. Pennsylvania showed no change. Total milk production was 1 percent higher in Minnesota, 3.3 percent in Wisconsin, 1.2 percent in Pennsylvania and 7.7 percent in California! New York had no change.

At the same time, milk prices at the farm gate averaged \$1.50 less in California than in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin dairy farmers ask how Californians can profit while getting paid less for their milk.

So, looking forward for the farmers in Wisconsin (and probably for us as well) will include considering how to invest less money in overhead and produce the same quality of milk cheaper.

I have tried over the last years to stay away from rewarding record production, as attractive as it might be, and have concentrated on the "bottom line" in our dairy business, offering ideas from research and practice to improve dairy farm ledgers. Among better nutrition, better health and better reproduction in our dairy herds, our best opportunities are in trying to improve the many inefficiencies in reproduction.

A recent survey of Pennsylva-

nia dairy herds indicates that only 15 percent of the herd managers use synchronized prostaglandin-induced controlled breeding of cows after calving to overcome the costly problem of silent estrus and missed estrus observation.

Controlled breeding has been proven to lessen the variation in calving intervals among cows and reduce long average calving intervals in the herd. It also decreases culling of certain cows when they have failed to come into heat or become pregnant again in a reasonable time after calving. Controlled breeding will reduce the time and cost spent for heat detection, and improve net return, the

bottom line, because more cows are in their natural peak production.

I've seen forecasts of farm gate milk prices for the coming year that should average \$0.10 per hundredweight more than last year, despite higher potential production.

Because of a good hay and corn crop this year, feed prices should stay low.

And, finally, because of better commercial milk sales over last year's, the outlook for our dairy farms is good as we begin another year.

Happy New Year!

Rutherford Appointed Representative

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Dairylea President Clyde Rutherford of Otego, N.Y., was recently appointed to the Agricultural Transportation Review Panel as representative of agribusiness by New York State Governor Mario Cuomo.

Under chapter 654 of the laws of 1994, the nine-member panel will review the impact of the federal motor carrier safety regulations upon farm vehicles in New York State, and examine the statutes and regulations regarding the movement of agricultural equipment upon the state's highways.

As representative of agribusiness, Rutherford will be significantly involved in the transportation of agricultural inputs, supplies, or commodities.

Rutherford, who has served as president of Dairylea for the past 16 years, was recently reelected for his 17th term.

Rutherford is a member of the executive committee and chairman of the Dairy Stabilization Committee Task Force of the National Milk Producers Federation.

Regionally, he is chairman of the Northeastern Farm Policy Council, vice chairman of the board of directors of Atlantic Processing, Inc., and a director and member of the executive committee of Empire Livestock Marketing Cooperative, Inc.

Rutherford and his wife, Jeanette, operate a 500-acre dairy which produces 1.8 million pounds of milk annually.

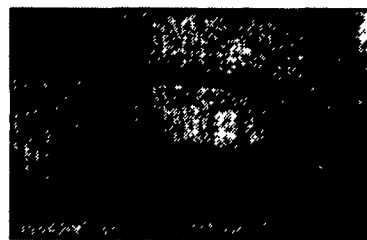
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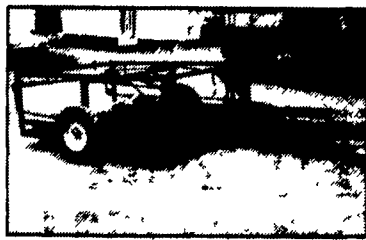
55- The "Model 55" bale rack is the foundation on which Steffen Systems Incorporated has built its reputation of quality. This model is available in many frame-size options, as well as with attachments to fit bucket loaders, forklifts and skidsteer loaders, to accommodate nearly any bale size or mounting application.



200- The "Model 200" self-propelled yard loader is a unique machine designed to move many bale sizes and package configurations at high speed. Its stacking height of 20 feet and short wheelbase allow the "Model 200" to maneuver in and out of tight areas while making optimum use of the existing storage space.



65- The "Model 65" bale rack is specifically designed to match the needs of New Holland bale wagon users, such as models 1003, 1037 & 1069. With six hook bars, this unit easily handles any three-bale-wide package. This model is also available with several frame-size options and mounts to suit your special needs.



950- The Bale "Accumulators" are designed to conveniently and easily arrange up to ten 2-tie or eight 3-tie bales into a uniform package. The fully automatic electric over hydraulic controls operate the accumulator without the need of an operator. With its quick and smooth functions the bale accumulator can accept up to five bales per minute.



51-32- The "Model 51-32" bale rack is a perfect match for most compressed bale loading or unloading operations. With a frame size of 86" x 86" and powered vertical tilt. The unit adapts nicely to 6000 to 7000 lb lift trucks. Comes standard with 32 teeth, 2 hook cylinders. The "Model 51-32" is excellent for half cut bales.

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