

Change — It's What Sands Thrive On

(Continued from Page B2)

tanks with quality grains and sell it for less than what it costs to grow it. Pay farmers what it's worth and they'll keep the ground in production. A farmer has as much right as any other business to change direction to make it more profitable."

He doesn't see lack of land a problem for farmers now or later. He states two reasons.

"One, when you travel, you see miles of empty spaces everywhere. Two, when I first began farming, 50 bushels to an acre was considered a really good crop. Now, 100 bushels to an acre isn't uncommon. That's the same as doubling acres."

Sands likens farming to mountain climbing. "Mountain climbers climb by taking hold of projections of rocks. That's a good picture of the life of a farmer," he said.

"I started farming on a shoe string. I clawed up the ladder, one rung at a time."

He refers to the first 10 to 15 years of farming as the most difficult. He remembers picking corn when the cost to grow it hardly paid to pick it because of drought conditions.

"You need to plan and budget to realistically build in a cushion for rough times," he said.

For the first eight years of farming, Sands didn't miss one milking. As the kids got bigger and took more responsibility, he was able to take some time off and later to hire someone so the whole family could go camping.

In those beginning years, Sands said that necessity prevented him from taking a break. That's when he learned that participating in farm tours and Penn State Extension programs not only was an ideal way to learn but it also gave him a break.

"In the winter, I didn't waste my time standing around at farm sales," he said. "I went to classes offered by Penn State. Part of the excitement in learning is what's near and changing. I want to help

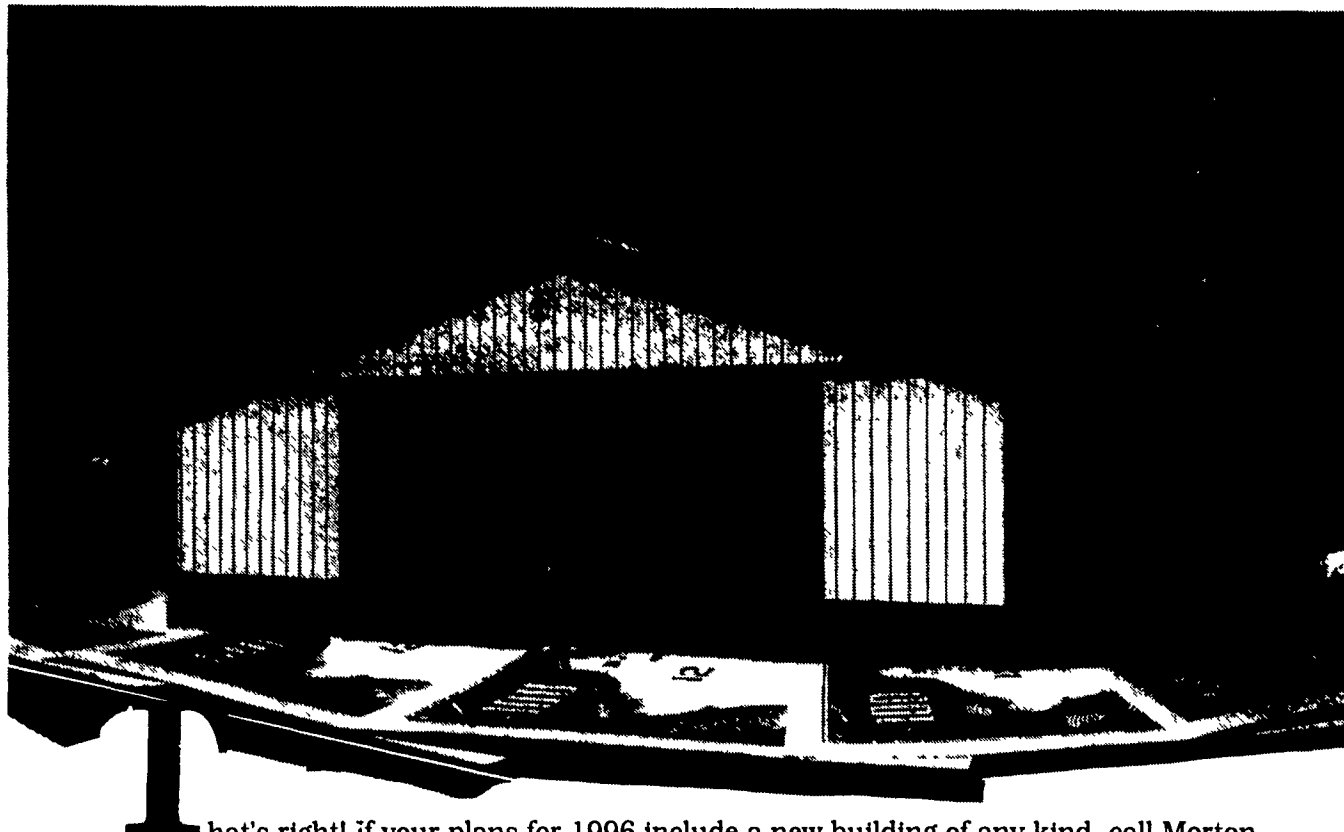
(Turn to Page B4)



It's hard to believe that Paul and Helen Sands farmhouse was once a delapidated farmhouse where chickens had roosted. Paul said, "Buy a place for the land, not the buildings. You can always change the buildings, but you can't change the land."

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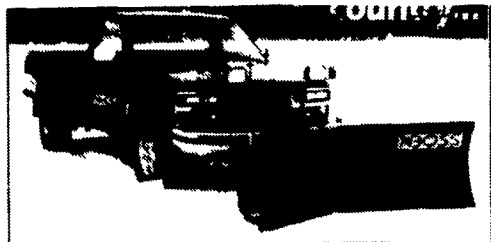
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