

Bedford Farmer Helps Ukraine Farmer

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Bedford Co. Correspondent

BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — When Fred Claycomb signed up to be a VOCA (Volunteers Overseas Co-operative Assistance) volunteer at Ag Progress Days, he didn't realize it would change his life.

And, little did he know that he and his wife, Connie, would both be working to help convert the country of Ukraine back into the bread basket of Europe.

It began with Fred, a Bedford County dairy farmer, being sent to Ukraine to educate farmers on the latest farming technologies. Ukrainians, natural born farmers, had had little knowledge of modern farming methods during the communist regime. With the breakup of the Communist control, Ukrainians were ready to make the rich soil of their country productive.

However, Communism had not allowed for advancements in farming. Machinery, seeds, and parts are difficult to find and the knowledge of farmers such as Fred Claycomb is a valuable asset.

Fred was met at the airport by an interpreter, Anna Alekseyenko, a third-year student at the University of Kiev studying "International Tourism."

Anna's father was one of the farmers with whom Fred worked in the Ukraine.

It was an instant friendship and soon after his return to America, Fred and his wife, Connie, invited Anna to come to America. They raised the money for her expenses with donations from churches, civic organizations, clubs, and individuals. A letter from Senator Rick Santorum helped to speed up plans.

Arriving on October 25, Anna is staying with the Claycombs until January 7, gathering agricultural knowledge to take back to her native homeland.

"I want to return to America to attend Penn State and study ag business," Anna says. "I am so excited about all I have been seeing."

"I feel the Lord has had a hand in all this," says Connie Claycomb. "There is a plan for that rich farmland in Ukraine and I feel we are somehow a part of it."

Anna is quick to point out that her native land has always remained Christian despite the strong Communist control. "All of the priests in our Christian Orthodox churches were killed during Stalin's takeover," she says. "But we still maintained our Christianity."

"We do not need the missionaries from the Mormons, Baptists, and various other religions being sent to us. What we need instead is the knowledge and availability of seeds, fertilizers, and machinery, to make our farmlands productive."

Proud of her heritage, Anna remembers a grandmother who, despite a life of hardship, was always smiling and full of faith that the people of Ukraine would some day get their native land back.

Her father always managed to keep his family well fed. He has worked as a journalist, a musician, a photographer, and is now fulfilling his greatest desire of farming. "Everyone in Ukraine is, in his own way, a farmer," Anna continues. "In every backyard you will find a vegetable garden, a few pigs, or chickens. We know how to farm, we just don't have the lat-



Anna Alekseyenko, the interpreter for the volunteers who visited the Ukraine, is visiting the Claycombs in Bedford County and plans to return to study agriculture at Penn State.

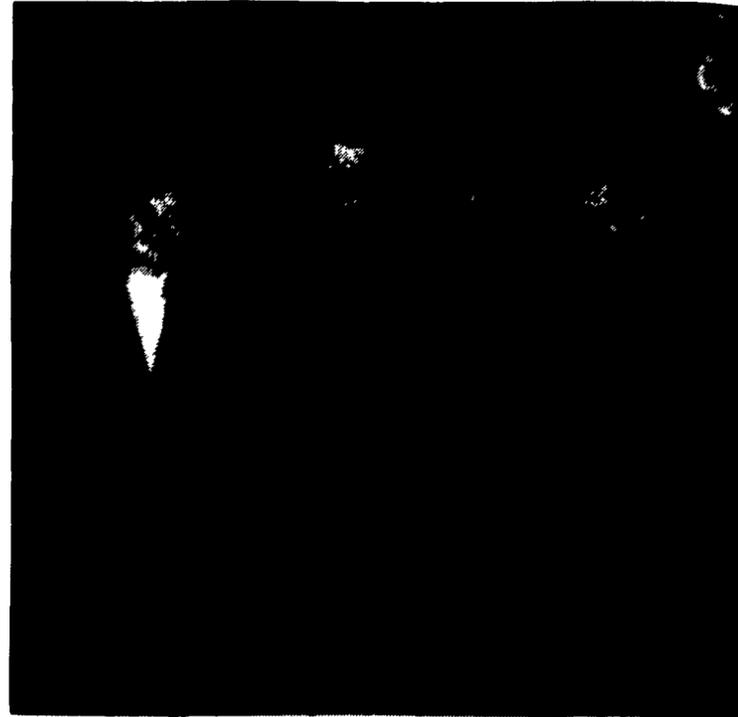
est technical knowledge or the resources we need. We know that the soil in Ukraine is the best in the world and I can't ever remember of the drought. I have never even heard my parents talk about a drought."

Traveling with Fred on his calls as a crop insurance agent, Anna has met dozens of farm families throughout the state. She has also met Governor Ridge, the secretary of agriculture, and most of the members of the board of Penn State University. "The highlight of my stay was being asked to attend classes at the University for

a day," Anna beams.

In order to give the farmers of the Ukraine a better understanding of how co-ops work in America, Anna spent a day making a video at Agway and Farm Bureau asking managers in the various stores to give their own ideas on how a similar type structure could be developed.

Anna's father owns about 100 acres in Ukraine which was given to him by the government following the breakdown of the Communist control. He raises potatoes and other vegetables. His desire is to become a distributor of quality



Anna, Fred Claycomb, and Mr. Alekseyenko in Ukraine.

seeds. It is Fred Claycomb's wish to help him realize that dream.

"Prior to the revolution, farmers in Ukraine had about 1,000 acres of land. But, all of those farms were destroyed when the communists took over," says Anna.

Today only a few live on their farms. Most housing is in large apartment buildings. "A few are beginning to rebuild private homes and that is what we hope to do," Anna says.

Anna has been "very much impressed," with American farm life. "I am so happy I got to come here," she emphasizes.

While here she took advantage of a local dentist. An abscessed tooth was reason enough and Anna was quite surprised to find a root canal a painless procedure. "In Ukraine it would take many

dollars to have painless dentistry," she explains. "You can get your teeth fixed through the medical treatment provided by the government. If you want it to be painless you pay a lot more."

Consequently, Anna has had as many teeth filled as time would allow.

The same is true of all medicine in Ukraine. "You can always find a doctor," says Anna. "But, the government pays them only \$90 a month. If you want good treatment, you pay under the table."

When she departs the United States in January it will be with a bundle of newfound American knowledge. Knowledge she hopes her native Ukrainians can put into practice.

And, Anna also hopes to return as a student at Penn State where she can further studies in agriculture.



This column is for readers who have questions but don't know whom to ask for answers.

"You Ask—You Answer" is for non-cooking questions. When a reader sends in a question, it will be printed in the paper. Readers who know the answer are asked to respond by mailing the answer, which will then be printed in the paper.

Questions and Answers to this column should be addressed to You Ask—You Answer, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Attention: Lou Ann Good.

There's no need to send a SASE. If we receive an answer to your question, we will publish it as soon as possible. Please include your phone number because we sometimes need to contact the person to clarify details.

QUESTION — Esther Nolt, Newmanstown, would like to know where she can buy a set of Jungle Doctor books written by Paul White. She enjoyed these books as a child and would like to get them for her children.

QUESTION — Dale Leighow, R.R.3, Box 368, Catawissa, would like to locate some seed from a corn called 8-row yellow or possibly Flint corn. It is a small diameter cob about 8-10-inches long. Also the cob is white and every ear has eight rows of kernels. The kernel is about the size of an average person's fingernail on the ring finger and is dark yellow in color. It was used many years ago to grind into cornmeal. Dale would like 20 to 25 kernels to plant in 1996.

QUESTION — A Turbotville reader would like to know where to find literature or an owner's manual on a US Slicing Machine Co., Van Berkel's original hand crank meat slicer that was made in 1912 in La Porte, Ind.

QUESTION — A reader from Coatesville wants to buy a lap harp for her husband for Christmas. Consequently, she doesn't want her name printed. She understands that lap harps are handmade.

QUESTION — Allison Burdeshaw Harriford, Staunton, Va., desperately wants to purchase a child's turquoise blue Easy-Bake oven with accessories in time for Christmas. Please call her at 1-800-229-5801, ext. 246.

QUESTION — Daniel Esh, Gordonville, would like to know where to purchase a small battery-operated music box that imitates a canary singing.

QUESTION — Glenda Strouse, Northumberland, would like to know the title and author of an excerpt from the following poem. The complete poem appeared in the 12/9 issue, but we need to condense for space. It's her grandmother's favorite poem and she could recite every word until a stroke took her voice. She is 89 and in a nursing home, but Glenda reads this poem to her every Christmas. Glenda said that there may be parts missing or wrong since she wrote it from memory.

*The yule log blazed in the ancient hold.
The beggar shrank from the biting cold.
The baron's only daughter, the little Lady Grace
was better dressed than any guest and fairer in the face.
Yet never a thought of pride had she
as she gaily danced round the Christmas tree. . . .*

QUESTION — Carrie Leiphart, Port Trevorton, would like to know where to buy by-products for cattle such as pasta and bread.

QUESTION — Doris E. Jordan, R.4, Box 153, Muncy, Pa. 17756, will pay for a pattern to make an appliqued peacock quilt.

QUESTION — Mrs. Clyde Barrick, 2660 Walnut Bottom Rd., Carlisle, Pa. 17013, would like the story "The Night the Animals Talked."

QUESTION — Mary Dengler, Middletown, Ohio, would like to know where to purchase heavy duty chair frames for macrame. She does not want to do all that work on used frames.

(Turn to Page B15)