

1996 Pennsylvania Farm Show In Review

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into heavy use to open and keep clear main traffic arteries before hitting side streets or alleys.

A quickly trite question became, "Where are we going to put all this snow?"

While snow removal activities continued early Friday morning, another winter storm was predicted to bring another half foot or more of snow to the same area by Friday evening.

Some rural areas probably didn't see a plow much before Thursday, and it was reflected in this year's Farm Show — the weekly attendance was estimated at half normal and a lot of people couldn't get to or leave the Farm Show Complex.

However, a record price for a market steer was set Thursday despite delays and the lack of some supporters being able to attend.

Even with the state of emergency declared for all day Monday, the Farm Show judging events continued. Qualified judges were recruited from among those at the Farm Show, or nearby.

Youth and adult exhibitors who made it to the Farm Show, or were snowed in with hundreds of others helped show entries for other exhibitors stranded at home.

The event was a victory of human spirit and camaraderie, according to Dennis Grumbine, Farm Show director.

On Thursday, after six days of not being able to go home from the Farm Show Complex, in jest, Grumbine said Thursday, "We pretty much held the Farm Show without an audience."

Accounting for about 30 hours sleep in six days, with 12 from Wednesday into Thursday morning, Grumbine said he estimated the attending crowd might be about 25 percent of normal.

"But everybody's been super to work with," he said. "Everybody's been terribly complimentary about the show and the help."

With a skeleton staff, Grumbine said that about 100 people from the agriculture community helped man telephones, helped with shows, helped move things, and whatever was needed to keep the shows as much on schedule as possible.

"Probably, as I walked around, several hundred other people asked if there was anything they could do to help," Grumbine said.

"I think that's the ethic we have in the agriculture community — people willing to work for the better.

"If the world could get along as well as the people snowed in at the

Farm Show Complex, a lot of the problems would be solved."

Without access to specific numbers, on Thursday Grumbine said he estimated that about 50 judges for the different Farm Show contests had to be replaced. He said he based that on the phone conversations he had directly and re-organization efforts of some key events that he was directly involved in handling.

There are several hundred officials that the Farm Show administration takes care of as far as accommodations and travel arrangements, and picking up expenses.

It was definitely one of the most unusual Farm Shows, Grumbine said, relying on his straight run of 33 years at the Farm Show, of which 16 years he served as a member of the Farm Show Commission. It was also the first year he didn't show any livestock. He has shown champion swine and sheep.

According to Grumbine, there were about 1,800 people stranded at the Farm Show as captive overnight guests Sunday night and Monday night. He commended everyone of them for their cooperation and attitude.

"We had plenty of food," Grumbine said adding that his sense of the fellowship was that of a "hunting camp atmosphere" in which people of all titles willingly set aside their social or business titles and pitch in on chores. At the same time he also compared the experience to a summer camp.

For breakfast Monday morning, "The building superintendent ran the grill in the cafeteria, while others were scrambling eggs or dicing potatoes."

With the Farm Shows 250 employees, the hundreds of exhibitors and families stranded there, Grumbine said that the people found ways to entertain themselves during off hours, such as picking up touch football games in the Large Arena, and the younger kids playing in the Small Arena with toy trucks and such.

All the while, 12 pieces of snow removal equipment hauled tons or snow from the 40-acre parking lot and plowed out the front lots and driveways.

Grumbine said that some youth had been stranded at the Farm Show, having accompanied their animal(s) on the trip to Harrisburg, and their families snowed home on the farm.

On Thursday he said that parents should not worry. With the full support of Gov. Ridge, Grumbine said that the Farm Show has a 24-hour security, all the essentials

(rooms, showers, food, medical facilities) and that they youth and their livestock would be looked after until Grumbine was satisfied that road conditions were reasonable for safe travel back home.

With an auto and boat show scheduled for Jan. 20-27 at the Farm Show Complex, everything from the Farm Show has to be removed quickly.

Grumbine said that Gov. Ridge has allowed the use of another state facility for temporary storage of equipment so that commercial exhibitors' property would be safe until travel conditions improved.

Beverly Gruber, speaking on behalf of the commodity promotion groups that sold food in the Food Court, sales were down about half. The Farm Show public opening on Saturday was the biggest day for business, she said on Thursday, with Wednesday following next. However, heavy crowds appeared on the last day and stayed past the 4 p.m. closing, obviously driving up sales at the last minute.

One commercial exhibitor said he hadn't made a sale on his grain storage equipment all week until Thursday.

Other commercial exhibitors also commented on the lack of a heavy crowd, but those who sold snow shovels did some brisk business, and there were still thousands in attendance. On Sunday while the storm was breaking out heavily, the parking lot was up to half capacity.

Commercial food business exhibitors set up this year for the first time in the West Lobby, adjacent to the Main Lobby and the butter sculpture site. The location seemed perfect for exposure without confusing those businesses with Food Court sales.

Many of those who attended the Farm Show said it was actually one of the better for them because of the lack of long lines for food, or distractions and time restraints when trying to discuss machinery, equipment and other business.

Again, all spoke of the cooperation among those participating in the Farm Show with digging out each others vehicles, being more understanding of the work of others, and other such considerations.

Of course some of the Farm Show's planned events were cancelled, some without doubt for the first time.

Although a complete list of cancelled Farm Show events was not available from the press office

by deadline, among those noted was the cancellation of the annual convention of the Pennsylvania Society of Farm Women (first time in the organization's 77 years), the annual banquet of the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association, the Scooper Bowl, Dairy Fun Night, Sheep-To-Shawl competition, the annual state FFA convention, the Master Farmer program, a lot of meetings of agricultural commodity or breed organizations, the folk dancing contests, and two goat breeds were unrepresented on Thursday (goats arrive Thursday and leave Thursday).

On the bright side, the Pennsylvania State Police, who had 90 members from troops around the state working out of their booth, reported only 11 lost children by 12:30 p.m. Thursday, only two disabled vehicles, and eight reported injuries from slips or falls.

They also reported two cows, one bull and one horse had to be

recaptured during the week, after escaping the control of their owner.

Trooper Joe Nolte and Trooper Ervin Ward of Troop H (Harrisburg) said it was a pleasure to work at the Farm Show.

Ward said, "It is always a pleasure to help educate, answer questions and to help lost children find their parents."

He said that in addition to the general public assistance and information, the PSP booth also functioned as a traffic conditions news center with a direct line to Traffax (a traffic reporting service) and Pennsylvania Turnpike information.

Charles Idle, manager of livestock shows at the Farm Show, reported that almost all entries arrived for the show, and he said that dairy cattle show entries were up this show.

The 1997 Farm Show is scheduled to be held Jan. 11-16.

Ruhl Honored By Draft Horse, Mule Association



Luke Bruckhart, left, president, Pennsylvania Draft Horse and Mule Association, presents an honorary membership in the association to Donald and Janice Ruhl, Percheron and Belgian breeders from Manheim in Lancaster County. Donald has been a very active member of the association since 1980, serving as president, treasurer, membership chairman, and in many other activities of the association. The presentation was made last Saturday at the association meeting at the Farm Show.

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January 23, 96

Kistler Restaurant

Rts 850 and 17

Kistler, PA

10:30 to 2 PM

January 24, 96

Kinzer Fire Hall

Rt 30

Kinzers, PA

9:30 to 2 PM

January 25, 96

Perkins Restaurant

Rt 15

Lewisburg, PA

10:30 to 2 PM

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