



OPINION

An Open Letter To Farm Fathers

You've worked hard to make a living for your family from the dairy. No one knows all you have sacrificed to make a go of it. The responsibility, though shared with others, has been primarily yours. And it is difficult to let go, after all, the responsibility has held you as much as you have held it.

When your children are in their early twenties, it is time to let more of that responsibility pass. By the age of 30, your children should be brought in as business partners.

As a partner in the business, your child can benefit from your knowledge, yet be able to stand next to you as a partner. Assets can be transferred within that partnership and the process of turning the farm over becomes less of a problem.

Now maybe this is where some of you are getting your jaw set, back up and thinking that those kids are, or were, too young in their twenties to bring into partnership. Why, you weren't even sure if they were going to stay with the farm. That's true and that's the reason that you make provisions in a formal agreement to buy out the other.

"But they will make mistakes and that means money that we can't afford to lose." You are right. They will make mistakes, why should they be any different than you? You will probably survive the mistakes, but if you don't allow them to make decisions and reap the consequences, then they will never learn, nor will they likely stay on the farm.

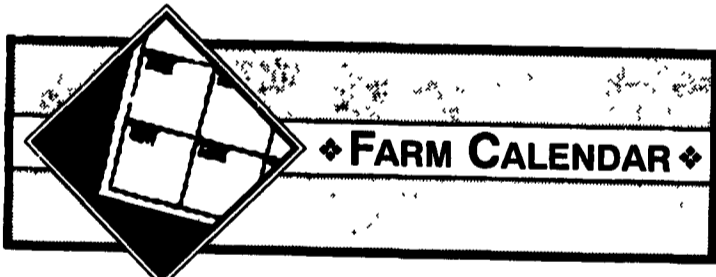
Fathers, in my time as an Extension agent, I've seen a problem repeated frequently. Children were treated as nothing more than glorified hired help even as old or older than age 40. Some of those children stuck with you on the promise of inheriting the farm. Thanks, but that's a bum deal.

That arrangement does not build for the future. That arrangement straps the next generation and makes transfer of the farm more difficult. That arrangement almost guarantees that they will be the last generation on the farm.

Fathers, if your children are teenagers or older, I urge you to show them this letter, and start an honest discussion about their interest in the farm. Interest in the farm can be built up, or it can be destroyed — you hold much of that opportunity.

And Fathers, thank you for the sacrifices you made!

Phil Durst,
Extension Agent,
Columbia, Montour, Northumberland,
Snyder and Union Counties



FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, January 20

Beaver/Lawrence Holstein annual meeting, 11:30 a.m.
Bradford County annual meeting, Bonanza Steakhouse, Wysox, noon.
Maple Production School Video Conference, Bradford County Extension office, Towanda, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Alternative Income Conference, Church Hill Elementary School, 8:30 a.m.-2:15 p.m.
Holstein Club annual meeting, Bonanza Restaurant, Wysox, noon.

Sunday, January 21

Delaware Co. Cooperative Extension open house, Smedley Park, Springfield, PA, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

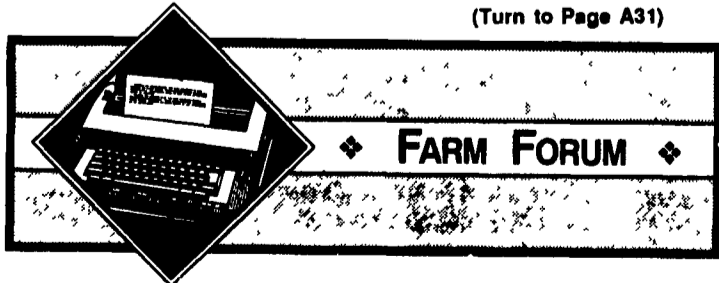
Monday, January 22

Adams County Corn Clinic, York Springs, 9:30 a.m.
Dairy MAP Management For Success, Schuylkill County Ag Center, Pottsville, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., also Jan. 29.
Delaware County Coop. Extension Open House, Smedley Park, Springfield, PA, 3:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
PA Crop Management Assn. meeting Penn State's Scanticon Conference Center, 9:30 a.m.

Lehigh Valley Horse Council meeting, Whithall Mall Community Room, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 23

Franklin County Corn Clinic, Kauffman Community Center, 9:30 a.m.
Berks County Crops Day, Berks County Ag Center, 9:30 a.m.
Penn State Fruit School, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Dairy MAP-Trinity United Methodist Church, Elizabethville, also Feb. 1.



FARM FORUM

Editor,

The Blizzard of '96 destroyed the myth, "We don't need farmers, we get our food from supermarkets."

During the storm, farmers were milking cows twice per day and caring for their animals so there would be plenty of food available

when roads were reopened. It often takes a shortage to appreciate our abundance. No bread, no milk, empty shelves — that's what we need to remind consumers about the Blizzard of '96.

Karl Hellerick
Center Valley, Pa.

To Do Preventative Maintenance

Winter is a good time to perform routine service on farm machinery and make those repairs you may have been putting off. Regular preventative maintenance keeps machinery operating safely at or near its full potential.

Poor functioning machinery may start a chain of events leading to personal injury. If you are working and a mechanical problem occurs, it is tempting to try to fix it with as little interruption as possible, for example, without turning the power off or moving the equip-

Farm and Home Foundation annual meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 24

York County Corn Clinic, York, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Lehigh/Northampton County Crops Day, call extension office.
Soil Fertility School, Lebanon Valley Ag Center.

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Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Apply For Farm Safety Grants

The Farm Safety and Occupational Health Advisory Board has approved final guidelines for a statewide farm safety grant program.

Direct grants and matching grants up to \$2,500 are available to farm organizations, volunteer fire companies, etc. for farm safety, occupational health and emergency response programs.

The grant program is designed to reduce farm accidents and health problems and improve farm rescue response procedures through safety education.

Grants will be awarded annually to organizations based on the scope of the project and the number of people it benefits, the value of the project to the agricultural community and those who work directly with farm accident victims and the impact upon rural youth and farmers.

For more information about the grant program call 717-787-4843 (Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture).

ment to a safe location for repairs. Regular preventative maintenance helps you to spot potential problems, such as weak chains and belts, worn gears, leaky hoses, dull blades, loose nuts and bolts, cracked or broken guards, before they happen. So invest a little time in servicing your machinery now, and in the spring, you will be glad you did.

To Vote in Sheep Referendum
The United States Department of Agriculture will conduct a nationwide sheep referendum on Feb. 6, according to Chester Hughes, extension livestock agent.

The purpose of the referendum is to determine whether sheep producers, sheep feeders and importers of sheep and sheep products approve the sheep and wool promotion, research, education and information order.

If the order is approved, assessments would be collected on domestic and imported sheep and sheep products.

Registration and voting will take place at your county coopera-

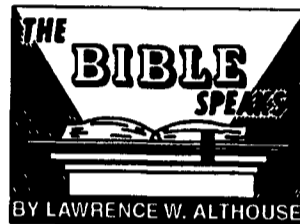
tive extension office on Feb. 6. Absentee ballots will be available through Jan. 26. A request for an absentee ballot must be made in writing to your county cooperative extension office. Absentee ballots must be received in county offices by close of business Feb. 2. All producers, feeders and importers who certify that they were engaged in sheep production, sheep feeding or importation of sheep or sheep products between Jan. 1, 1994 and Dec. 31, 1994 will be eligible to vote.

This includes 4-H and FFA members who raised sheep during this period.

The order may be approved by either a simple majority of those voting or by voters who account for two-thirds of the number of sheep represented by those voting.

The initial domestic assessment rate would be one cent per pound on live sheep sold and two cents per pound on greasy wool sold. Plan to vote and have your voice heard.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "A leader maintains proper perspective and surveys the big picture."



BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

A FACE LIKE FLINT
January 21, 1996

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Background Scripture:

Isaiah 50:1-11

Devotional Reading:

Hebrews 12:1-11

Harry Emerson Fosdick, late minister of Riverside Church in New York, tells of a Midwestern university that some decades ago unveiled a tablet to one of its alumni. This man had been active in many undergraduate activities, but he had never excelled in any. For four years he had gone out for football, but rose no higher than the scrubs. Scholastically, his average was a "B". When World War I broke out this young man served in the medical corps and finally was killed trying to aid a wounded soldier. Posthumously the French conferred upon him the *Croix de Guerre*. Impressed by this recognition of a very average alumnus, his alma mater erected a tablet with this inscription: "He played four years on the scrubs — he never quit."

FAITH AND TRUST

That story has always been an inspiration to me. Those I admire most are often not those most divinely gifted, but those who persevere in using whatever gifts they have. Life is sometimes a lot like football. We are often confronted with challenges for which we are meagerly equipped and everything turns on whether we persevere or give up. Perseverance is sometimes likened to stubbornness, but I think it really is the product of faith. And faith, I believe, is largely the degree to which we trust in God. I have been in situations — as I'm sure you have — in which, if I had had only myself to rely on, I could not have seen them through. I have "hung in there," not because I was confident of myself but because I found that God was the only support I could truly trust.

In Isaiah 50, God asks, "Is my hand shortened that it cannot

redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" The bedrock of life is trust that God has both the will and the power to save us, if not from our peril, at least in the midst of it. In whatever circumstance I find myself, the most important question I need to ask and answer is whether or not I believe God is more powerful than my danger or challenge. "Behold," says God, "by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert ... I clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering" (50:2b, 3). Is such a God too weak or restricted to help me in my distress?

THIRD SERVANT SONG

The prophet returns to the Servant theme and 50:4-11 is regarded as the third Servant Song. "The Lord has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary" (50:4a). Once again we need to ask, who is the Servant here? Mostly, Isaiah sees the Servant as the whole nation of Israel, but sometimes, as in this passage, he seems to be speaking also of himself. God has called him to teach the people of Israel to trust in the Lord and the people of Israel, in turn, are to teach all the nations.

That is the plan, but the results have been disheartening. Yet, despite the unresponsiveness of Israel, the Servant has persevered: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (50:6). Not because he is brave or self-confident, but because he trusts in God: "For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know I shall not be put to shame."

That's what faith is: trusting in God and setting one's face like a flint!

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