

Farmland Trust Director Believes In People, Stewardship

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff
MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)

— Thomas D. Stouffer has become the new executive director of the Lancaster Farmland Trust, it was announced this week.

A 1962 graduate of Elizabethtown High School and a 1966 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Stouffer spoke to *Lancaster Farming* on Wednesday about his appointment by the Trust's board of directors.

Stouffer replaces Karen Weiss, acting director, who will resume her position as director of land preservation. Weiss had assumed duties of acting director after the resignation of Alan Musselman, previous director.

Raised in West Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Stouffer said that serving as director of the Trust provided him an opportunity for service and stewardship of farmland preservation in the county.

"The idea of stewardship is extremely important," he said. Stouffer admitted he has a passion for the preservation of farmland. He said that while the county has suffered increasing development pressure and has expanded through the years since he was a boy, "the inherent beauty of farmland is still there."

Stouffer was graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1966. After graduation, he was a student in the Fulbright program at the University of Vienna in Vienna, Austria. He received his master of arts degree in international relations from Salve Regina University,

Newport, R.I. in 1988.

In 1995, Stouffer retired as a colonel from the U.S. Marine Corps after more than 29 years of military service. Upon his retirement, he was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal.

As a colonel in the Marine Corps, Stouffer served as the barracks commander at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He learned that people are a vital resource to any organization. Like farmland, people are "special and come first," he said, looking at his new position as a "leadership opportunity — and more as a stewardship opportunity."

Stouffer worked as regional director in the department of banking and finance in West Palm Beach, Fla., with the office of the comptroller. He was responsible for managing, directing, and providing media contact for department activities and operations in a 12-county region.

According to Lancaster Farmland Trust, Stouffer brings this experience as well as his extensive background in resource management to the position of executive director. He said he was interested in working for a private organization such as the Trust, which is nonprofit and is entirely member supported.

Stouffer was born in Dauphin County and moved to Rheems in the fifth grade. While living in West Donegal Township as a child, Stouffer said he lived near the Garber Farm. Through the years, he saw how much the county was expanding as a bedroom

community but wanted to preserve the rich farming heritage unique to the area.

Stouffer recently returned to Mount Joy, from where his wife, Deanna, was raised. They have raised three children, Dean, 23, Craig, 21, and Charissa, 20.

As regional director for the Florida Office of Comptroller, Stouffer said he enjoyed the transition, working with the military (which is vertically integrated) to his position as regional director, which was more horizontally integrated. He indicated that he agrees with whoever quoted President Dwight Eisenhower, who said he had more control and power over a few men as platoon commander than as president of the United States.

As regional director, what was required was more diplomacy, more cooperation, more of those skills necessary to work with the resources of a horizontally integrated agency.

Near Miami, there was farmland preservation continuing — mostly orchards who wanted to preserve the farmland.

Stouffer showed Lancaster Farming a newspaper clipping from Sept. 1, 1966, a story by Sam Christensen with a headline, "Farms Threatened By Urban Growth." Even at that time, the trust board of directors — composed of attorneys, agribusiness people, corporate leaders, educators, farm managers, former legislators, and other professionals — recognized the need to preserve farms. Now there are 25 members on the board.

Stouffer's goals are to continue



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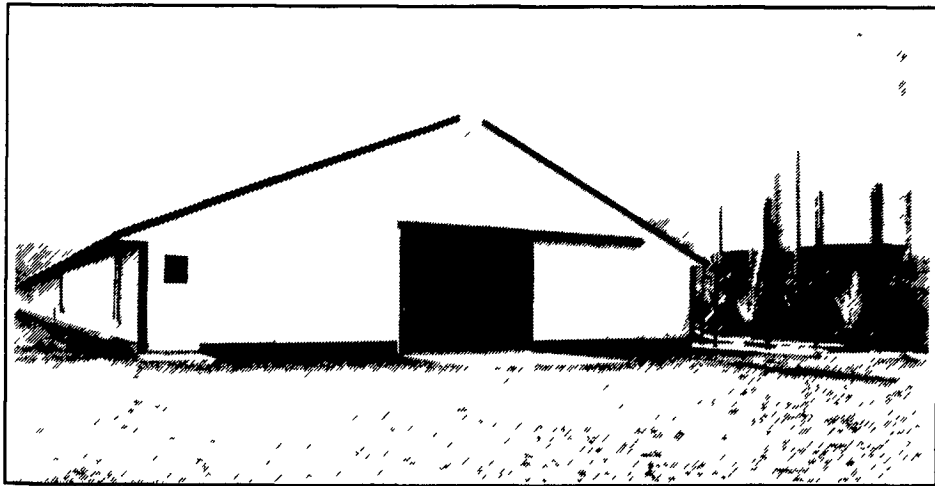
to work to preserve farmland, offering the services of the Trust as an additional method to the state's ag preservation board. While there is a waiting list for the statewide program, which provides payment for signing away development rights, there is no list for the Lancaster Farmland Trust.

Stouffer intends to meet with the board to review their long-range objectives. He intends to work to preserve farmland in contiguous plots. Stouffer said he will continue in his education efforts to foster appreciation of and cultivate interest and support in farmland preservation.



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