

Farming And Auctioneering Bid Dual Roles

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MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) —
Growing up John Hess always envisioned himself as a farmer—like his dad, his grandfather, his great grandfather, and countless ancestors before him.

In addition to helping his dad on their hog and grain farm, John steered his studies to give him a solid agricultural background. He was a member of the county livestock judging team, both a state and a county FFA officer, and the state FFA public speaking champion.

Destiny seemed to shine on his plans to farm. He fell in love and married Jacy Clugston, who, although not from farm background, milked cows for a neighboring farmer for years, was a county dairy princess, a national 4-H ambassador, and secretary for the state FFA. She shared his dream for farming. And, when John's dad offered to help them buy a farm within a five minute drive of the home farm, they were ecstatic.

"My dad said that he'd either help buy the farm or pay for my college education. I chose the farm," John said.

The couple married and fixed up the two-family farmhouse. They chose to live in the smaller part and rent out the larger side.

Farming, from the Hess perspective, was always supplemented with a sideline business. John's dad fixed tractors on the side. He encouraged his son to find something to do to pay for the land taxes.

"In fact, my dad encouraged me to use my public speaking skills by becoming an auctioneer," John said.

It seemed a natural progression to John to balance farming and auctioneering. After attending auctioneering school, he was required by law to work as an auctioneering apprentice for two years before he could venture out on his own.

He began working for Wolgemuth's. In particular, his responsibilities centered on the Green Dragon auction held every Friday held approximately from 9 a.m. to 9

p.m., depending on the amount to be sold.

At first, the setup seemed ideal. But auctioneering demanded more and more time. John's dad found himself more and more responsible for the 400 acres they farmed together. Another unexpected thing happened. In John's words: "I didn't realize how much I'd enjoy another occupation. I had never considered another career before. I didn't intend to make auctioneering my career. I thought it would just be a sideline that could help me afford to farm."

Not that John's planning to give up farming completely. But the roles have switched. Instead of auctioneering supplementing farming income, farming is now a sideline.

The couple intends to continue to live on the farm. They love the wide open space that surrounds the farm. They enjoy the diversion of growing six acres of tobacco, and John likes to hop on a tractor to help his dad with the field work whenever he can.

"Farming is a great way of life. If we have children, I'd want to raise them on the farm the way I was raised," John said.

"Farming is in my blood. I'd be perfectly happy being in farming, but the taxes, the expense from government regulations are overwhelming," he said.

"We were forced into the Clean and Green Act. I say, make farming profitable for farmers and they'll want to protect the land."

John enjoys the family togetherness that tobacco stripping promotes. He said, "My grandpa, father, mom, sister, Jacy, and I were all working together in the barn. It's sort of like a family-type business."

"Auctioneering is challenging, just like farming, every day is different," John said. Some days he sells farm toys or equipment. The next he may sell building supplies or hold a household sale.

Another similar aspect between farming and auctioneering is the long hours. The couple have taken only one mini-vacation since their marriage because Fridays and Saturdays are always big auction days.



After John and Jacy Hess purchased a farm on the halves with his dad, John started auctioneering to pay for the exorbitant farm taxes. "You can't be an auctioneer and not be a pack rat," said John, who has a penchant for rustic things, toy tractors, and ice cream paraphernalia. His wife Jacy prefers Victorian accent pieces. The Dalmatian dog, nicknamed Tucker the Holstein Cow, reminds Jacy of the cows she had milked for years.

An aspect that isn't similar is the people contact in auctioneering. "Auctions are sociable affairs. It's a place where people meet and talk. That's what I love. I can't do that on a tractor plowing 100 acres," John said.

Holding household auctions offers a special excitement for him because one never knows what might be in the next lot to sell. Estate sales often hold hidden

treasures. John said that he cannot emphasize enough the importance of not throwing away items that family members believe are of no value. More than once, he has pulled memorabilia from the trash that later brought hundreds of dollars over the auction block.

"You can't be an auctioneer and not collect something," John said. He likes to collect rustic things, tobacco spears, cigars, toys, ice

cream scoops, and ice cream freezers.

The interest in ice cream paraphernalia actually stems from his teen-age years when he participated in ice cream churn off contests and won the state competition at the Farm Show.

If he accumulates too much stuff himself, he simply loads it up and

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