



OPINION

Farms For The Future

Recent opinion polls and news reports all suggest the public is becoming increasingly concerned over runaway growth and its ramifications in the metropolitan Washington and Baltimore areas and the surrounding mid-Atlantic region. As our population soars and shifts to rural areas with cheaper land and greater open space, growing numbers of residents are openly voicing their frustration and distress over the impact of sprawling development on their lives.

Frequently overshadowed in the clamor about sprawl-induced construction, congestion, crime and overcrowded classrooms is the destruction of our farmland and the agrarian way of life it has provided generations of Maryland farmers and the escalating conflicts between farmers and city dwellers who want country surroundings but eschew the agricultural traditions.

In the last 45 years, about 2 million acres of Maryland farmland, more than half the total agricultural land base in 1950, were paved over as the state's population swelled by 2.5 million. That means just about one acre of farmland production was lost for every person added to the state's census rolls. The Maryland Department of Agriculture says that should the ratio persist, the state in just two generations will not have a single acre of farmland left to feed its projected population of 9 million. If that trend is not sufficiently sobering, then consider the fate of the Maryland farmer. In 1950, the state had 39,000 farmers. Today, the number is 13,000 and falling.

As a fourth-generation Maryland farmer with a true passion for the land and a strong commitment to seeing it saved from rampant, runaway growth, I am concerned about the loss of the state's farmers and farmland. This is state with a proud agricultural heritage. During the Revolutionary War, our farmland generated flour, meat and other foodstuffs for George Washington's army and his French allies, an action for which we later were hailed as the Breadbasket of the Revolution. Soil additives were developed in Maryland, and the nation's first manufactured fertilizer was produced in Baltimore. Even today agriculture remains Maryland's largest industry with \$1.5 billion in annual sales, and the farmland upon which this economic powerhouse is based continues to offer numerous other environmental, social, scenic, historical, cultural, and wildlife benefits.

To its credit, the state has recognized the widespread but often underappreciated values of our farmland and the development threat facing it. Long before most, Maryland established a number of farmland protection programs, and it now leads the country in farmland acreage permanently saved from development.

But admirable as they are, the programs still have not been enough. Much of our most important farmland remains at serious risk of being overrun. Moreover, less than seven percent of the state's farmland with prime or productive soils and an even smaller percent of ag land with key environmental, cultural or historical features have been permanently protected.

Three years ago, the Future Harvest Project brought together a diverse group of public and private agricultural, environmental, political, planning and development interests as the Chesapeake Farms for the Future Board. The board completed an appraisal of the state's farmland protection efforts. As part of the process, it identified on sophisticated, computer-generated maps the state's strategic farmland, the land most deserving protection because of its agricultural, environmental, cultural, or historical importance or its risk of being developed. It also developed a model farmland protection program.

The model is the first of its kind in the country. It relies on a comprehensive mix of proven incentive-based and regulatory farmland protection techniques that evenly divide program cost between individual landowners and the general public.

With the program, responsible county and state agencies would establish plans with firm farmland protection goals and timetables-goals and timetables that identify on the maps which strategic farmland to save and how. Agricultural zoning protection would be strengthened. More compact, efficient housing would be encouraged in farming areas. Landowners would receive stronger incentives for enrolling their land in agricultural protection districts. Federal and state funding for farmland protection programs would be increased to truly allow landowners the option of saving their land rather than developing it. Counties would

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Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

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Agricultural Agent

To Understand Odor Perception

A 1995 report from North Carolina State University Swine Odor Task force noted four factors which influence how objectionable an odor may be to individuals.

First, the amount of control an individual has over the situation will affect one's feelings towards an odor. If one feels they have no ability to do anything about the odor, then the situation is likely to be more offensive.

Second, the more understanding one has about the source of an odor, the more tolerable an odor will be. If the source of an odor seems mysterious to the offended party, the level of objection is likely to be higher.

Third, the context of an odor also influences how objectionable the odor will be. If the operation has dirty, unkempt appearance, the neighbors are likely to have more of a problem with the odor than if the farm is neat, tidy and appealing.

Fourth, is the level of exposure. If one is constantly exposed to an odor, one's awareness of it lessens. In time one may lose the ability to detect the odor. This explains why livestock workers may have a difficult time understanding the objections of others about odor. By considering these factors, one may gain an understanding of where objections to odors are likely to occur and steps which



Saturday, June 27

Western State Master Gardener Conference, Penn State Beaver Campus.

Pa. German Festivan, Kutztown Fairgrounds, thru July 5.

Crawford County Dairy Princess Pageant, Christ Evangelical Free Church, Saegertown.

National Holstein Convention, Louisville, Ky., thru June 30.

18th Annual Hickory Ridge Antique Farm Show, Horace Potter Residence, Milford, Del., thru June 28.

Marburger Farm Dairy Open House, Marburger Farm, Evans City, noon-6 p.m., also June 28.

Sequoia Riders 4-H Horse and Pony Club Spring Open House, Columbia Riding Club, 9 a.m. Sunday, June 28

Ephrata Area Young Farmers Summer Picnic, Ephrata Park, 12:30 p.m.-3 p.m.

Monday, June 29

Holstein Association 113th Annual Convention Meeting, Louisville, Ky., thru June 30.

IDFTA Summer Orchard Tour, (Turn to Page A35)

could be taken to avoid or reduce the problems.

To Control Bagworms

Dr. Timothy Elkner, Lancaster County Extension Horticultural Agent, notes bagworms have hatched recently. If you had problems with these pests last year, now is the time to check your plants to see if these insects are around again this year.

Look for tiny bags on the upper leaf surface of your deciduous plants or along the needles of spruce and arborvitae. The bags are pointing upward at this time of year and are mostly silk with little bits of leaves attached. As the insects grow larger, the bags will hang downward and will be covered with a large amount of plant material.

Start your scouting now where bags were observed over the winter season. It is important to find bagworms early in their development because controlling them is easier while they are small. But will provide excellent control

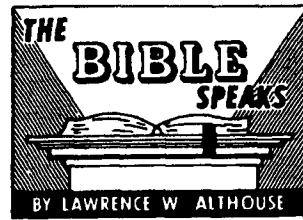
while bagworms are small. There are several other products labeled for the control of bagworms on ornamental plants.

To Enter Hay Show

The Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council and Penn State Cooperative Extension are sponsoring the 1998 Pennsylvania Hay Show as part of the Penn State Ag Progress Days. Ag Progress Days is scheduled August 18-20 at the Rock Spring Research Farm. The hay show has three sections: Field Cured, Heat Treated and Preservative Treated. There are 30 classes of hay in each section for exhibitors to enter hay samples.

Samples for this year's show must be delivered to Ag Progress Days before 10 a.m. on August 18. A complete copy of the classes and rules may be obtained from your county extension office.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote "In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity."



NOW I KNOW!
June 28, 1998

Background Scripture:

Job 38: 1-7; 42:1-6-10

Devotional Reading:

Job 28:20-28

The "friends" of Job have all had their say: three times, in fact. Job has answered each of their discourses, insisting upon his innocence and the rightness of his cause.

A fourth visitor, Elihu, suddenly appears, vents his anger upon Job and just as suddenly disappears from the scene.

Job has repeatedly asked God to come and hear his complaint. Now at last, enter God, demanding: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" The Lord of the universe governs in light, but Job's ignorant complaints bring, not light, but darkness. Job wants to argue with God and challenge him to answer his questions; all right, let him stand up like a man and see whether he can answer God's questions!

These questions, 77 as I counted them, span most of chapter 38 through 41. From the first — "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (38:4) — to the last — "Who can open the doors of (Leviathan, a mythical sea monster) his face?" (41:14) — they are unanswerable. (All of us should read these questions at least annually to help us remember who we are and are not!)

BEYOND UNDERSTANDING

The questions are asked, not in expectation that Job might answer them, but to forcefully impress upon him that the creature cannot possibly understand the answers that the Creator might give to his questions. Job is asking good and honest questions about the infinite, but he and all of us are able to comprehend only that which is finite.

Like Job we ask our questions and the more up-front of us even sometimes challenge God with our human logic. "Lord, how could you let this happen?" "Why this innocent little child?" "What have I done to deserve this?" "How can you let evil people pros-

per?" "Lord, how can you be good and permit this evil?" And you can probably add some questions of your own. These human questions are logical and we are not blasphemous in asking them. But we are arrogant in thinking that we could understand God's answers.

I'm not suggesting for one moment that we should not seek answers to life's questions. The gospel of Jesus Christ gives us all the answers that we can comprehend. Sometimes we may not be satisfied with those answers, just as Job was not satisfied with the traditional theological answers given by his friends. But, having asked our questions and understood as much of the answers as we can, we need to know that the ultimate answers lie beyond human comprehension. That is where faith comes in, living confidently on the basis of what we do know and can understand.

SOMETHING TO BANK ON

This is what Job concluded. Faced with God's unanswerable questions, he confesses the basis upon which he will live: "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted" (42:2). No matter how tragic and bleak the circumstances of life, Job will trust in the God whose eternal purposes are not whimsical and cannot be defeated. That will be enough for he knows now that "I have uttered what I did not understand . . ."

The late Prof. Samuel Terien comments that apparently Job's faith had been an inherited, second-hand one. In good times, that inherited faith was good enough, but in the midst of his personal tragedy it was not. Now, having experienced God in the deepest levels of his life, he has a faith that will sustain him: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee . . ." (42:5).

Job does not have to have answers to all his questions to the Creator, for he knows and trusts the Creator himself. Job could say, Now I know! Can you?

Lancaster Farming

Established 1955

Published Every Saturday

Ephrata Review Building

1 E. Main St.

Ephrata, PA 17522

- by -

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Everett R. Newswanger Managing Editor

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