NOTES TO DAD

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Dads in agriculture are special, especially older dads like 68-year-old Adams County fruit grower Guy Donaldson. Recently, I spent a morning with Guy as we talked about his life and his family's future in agriculture. You see Guy and his wife Betty, grandparents of seven, are in the process of selling their fruit farm to their three children Beverly, Steve, and David.

Guy was quick to mention that Betty encouraged him some time ago to begin looking at turning the operation over to the children and letting them get more involved with the management decisions.

He says "We all have heard stories of how parents never let go of a farm and almost take it to the grave. This makes for hard feeling with the children."

He didn't want that for his family.

With a twinkle in his eye, Guy spoke lovingly of his three children. It was obvious he was quite proud of them. Each has an area of specialty in their new partnership since they hire only one other full time person.

Beverly, the oldest, manages the Donaldson Farm Market, handles record keeping and finances. Steve, the oldest son, handles everything production related, spraying, pruning, everything horticulture; and David the youngest handles all the mechanical needs of the farm along with hiring and labor during harvest season.

I asked Guy if there were any challenges to stepping back as an agriculture dad. He said, "Naturally there are, everyday. It's natural not to want to let go of the farm because you spent a life time getting to where you are. The children do things different than when I did it when I was in control. A different management style–that takes some getting used to."

Guy mentioned that he and Betty have noticed that since they have removed themselves from the day to day things, the children have come together closer as brothers and sister.

Each was very independent, but now they have changed. They plan and talk more and that's encouraging to him as a dad.

He was quite honest when he told me one of his concerns was that they would not hit it off when they formed the partnership. With a big smile, he was proud to tell me he has developed trust in them. "They have had to make some of the tough decisions that Betty and I have made and that has matured them," he said.

As many of you know who have worked hard to buy a farm, pride in your business runs deep.

Guy shared the story of how his father's heart attack while Guy was in his first year of college brought him back home to take over the farm. His father's poor health, found Guy making most of the major decision with the help of a very supportive mother.

Eventually, Guy and Betty bought the original 267-acre home place located in Carroll Valley, which was once part of a tract of land from Lord Baltimore. Guy is proud to say he and Betty worked day and night to pay for the farm in 10 years. He laughs as he mentions, back then, the biggest entertainment the family had was going to Gettysburg on a Saturday night and getting a pound of steamed shrimp.

It appears that that hard work and determination has paid off and is being carried forth in the new generation of Donaldsons. Today the family owns more than 400 acres and farms about 500 acres. The majority of their land is used for growing production apples, about 50 acres of sour cherries, about 10 acres of peaches, and some acreage for production of vegetables for the roadside market.

This special agriculture dad concluded by saying, "Many parent's have children move out of the area and only see them on special occasions. I'm fortunate. I see my children every day and each day is a special occasion." A father's love is a wonderful thing.

York Garden and Flower Show

YORK (York Co.)–The Eighth Annual York Garden and Flower Show will focus on a series of nine large display gardens. The show is held at the York Fairgrounds Expo Center, York, today Saturday, February 26 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, February 27 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

About 70 exhibitors will display a variety of products and services related to gardens and outdoor living areas. There will be thousands of flowers, plants and accessories and beautiful gardens with ponds and waterfalls. Persons thinking about spring planting have an opportunity at the show to get a head start by taking advantage of show specials on seeds, spring bulbs, and perennial plants.

SATURDAY-February 26

10:30 a.m.–Making English Trough Gardens: Lynn Jackman, Lynnwood Herb Farm

11:45 a.m.–Gifts From The Garden: Linda Fortney, Ashcombe Farms and Greenhouses

12:45 p.m.–Compost-Truth or Consequences: Gail Stoner, Ashcombe Farms and Greenhouses

1:45 p.m.–Discovering Herbs: Wendy Plowman, Ashcombe Farms and Greenhouses

3:00 p.m.–Professional Floral Design Symposium: Vince Butera, Butera The Florist

4:00 p.m.–Trees I Have Known: Robert Meckley, York Tree Service

7:00 p.m.–Low Maintenance Gardening: Josie Boyer, Penn State Extension Master Gardener

SUNDAY-February 27

11:15 a.m.–Growing Medicinal Herbs: Susanna Reppert, The Rosemary House

12:30 p.m.–Using Dried Flowers For Wreath & Swags: B J Hare, Ashcombe Farms and Greenhouses

1:30 p.m.–Color In The Garden: Karen Olson, Ashcombe Farms and Greenhouses

2:45 p.m.–Professional Floral Design Symposium: Vince Butera, Butera The Florist

Admission is $5 for adults, $4.50 for seniors age 65 and over, and $2 for children ages 10 to 15. Group rates are available. There is plenty of free parking. The York Fairgrounds Expo Center is on Carlisle Avenue, Rt. 74 south of Rt. 30 in York. Information is available by calling (717) 755-5885.

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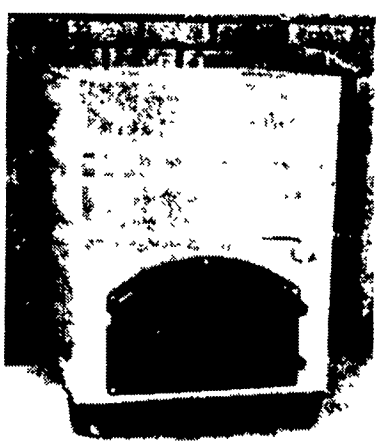

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