

Harvard Graduate Farms, Teaches, Directs

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BEDFORD (Bedford County)

— Frank Antonson spent his growing up summers in Bedford County. He has traveled the world over and still declares Bedford to be "the most beautiful spot in the world."

A Bedford middle school teacher, Frank teaches humanities and language. He speaks five languages including English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, and German.

The Antonsons live on the farm they bought from Frank's uncle and raise beef cattle.

But, Frank's true love is the Dutch Corner Community Choir which he formed and directs. Practice is held every Monday evening in the room

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Frank added to their home for the choir.

Almost nothing is too difficult for this group of rural singers (a number of them farmers) to undertake. In the spring, they are planning to do Mendelssohn's "Elijah." For Christmas, they will perform the Messiah, which will be free and open to the public.

The group performs for churches, clubs, and does special events such as a concert in the Bedford Square in July. They will be a part of a special talent show being presented by the Pennsylvania Consort in late October.

Frank organized the choir in 1982 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Cessna. "I knew there was a lot of talent here," Frank says. "God is very democratic in his dispersal of talent. Therefore, we have people in the



Frank Antonson directs the Dutch Corner Community Choir. From left are basses Michael Marisic, Jeremiah Heydt, Will Snyder, and Dave Harper.



"In a large choir, you can lean on someone else. Put an average alto in the middle of a large section of outstanding altos and she can sing well. But, on her own, she might have trouble. That's what you quickly learn with the Dutch Corner group," Antonson said. From left are alto singers Nancy Koontz, Michal Wiles, Connie Claycomb, Donna Zubak, and Allyson Dehmke.



country who can sing just as beautifully as those in the big cities. They often need an outlet to prove it."

The group uses no accompaniment for performances. To get over the difficult practice hurdles, Terry Osman, a member of the group plays the baby grand piano located in the Antonson "singing room." Terry also writes special numbers for the choir.

Baroque, secular, and religious music are all included in the repertoire. "We seldom sing 20th Century numbers," Frank said. "But, we can, and on rare occasions, we do."

There are no tryouts for the choir, however, some come and soon learn it is too difficult for his or her individual talent. "Most of the time, we let the individual be the judge of that," Frank explained.

"We have folks come from large city choirs who thought this would be a piece of cake. They soon learn otherwise. In a large choir, you can lean on someone else. Put an average alto in the middle of a large section of outstanding altos and she can sing well. But, on her own, she might have trouble. That's what you quickly learn with the Dutch Corner group."

Membership changes frequently as singers find other interests, move away, or even become ill. Connie Claycomb, wife of retired farmer Fred Claycomb, and Carolyn Kegg would come closest to being charter members.

Few are music majors or have even had professional training, but under Frank's leadership, they work hard and they learn. "I hardly let them breathe for an hour and a half every Monday evening," Frank admits. "There is, however, time afterwards for some fun and few good-natured comments are hurled at the driven director who often comes to practice directly from tending his cattle."

The teacher/farmer's most recent accomplishment has been applying for and receiving a \$350 grant from the Pennsylvania Rural Arts Alliance. It had to be used to nurture a quartet of young people. These include students Willie Snyder, Joy Thomas, Deanna Reffner, and Chris Bullington.

Ages of the choir vary from high school students to senior citizens.

Making Hay Inside The House With Strawboard/Agrifiber

(NAPSI) — There's more wheat in the bread drawer these days as the use of agrifiber products rises on the homefront. Once just the kernel of an idea, agricultural fiber-based products are now on their way to becoming staples for a wide range of interior uses.

Panels and boards made from wheat straw, sugar cane and other agricultural crops are appearing everywhere from a showcase straw house in Montreal to kitchen and bath cabinets and interior furnishings across North America. Engineered to meet or exceed performance standards of industrial-grade particleboard, these agrifiber products are now a viable option for a host of applications.

A custom-order manufacturer

in Portland, Oregon, for example, first introduced wheatboard as a substrate in one kitchen cabinet collection over a year ago. Not only did the new agrifiber line garner an industry product innovation award, but the overall performance results were so successful that today the company uses wheatboard in all its kitchen and bath cabinets.

"Wheatboard is light, strong, and repels moisture well," explains Rick Fields, vice president and general manager, Neil Kelly Cabinets. "We couldn't find any reason not to use it."

A high-profile Canadian building also proves that agrifiber products are no straw in the wind, but an up-and-coming option. The first straw house in downtown Montreal features

strawboard from Isobord Enterprises throughout its 2,000-square-foot design. The ecological home, completed last summer as part of the Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) Program for housing innovation, boasts strawboard on wall paneling, cabinets, baseboards and shelving.

Products made from annually renewable resources have been in the development stage for years. Researchers at Iowa State University, for example, have been working for nearly a decade to find ways to use agricultural materials like cornstalks to manufacture composite panels. Today, wheatboard and other agrifiber products have successfully entered the consumer market and are coming into their own. They are used increasingly in the man-

ufacture of office and residential furniture, kitchen cabinets, case goods and other applications. They are now also widely available at home supply stores like Lowes and Home Depot throughout the United States and Canada.

Consumers aren't likely to notice any visible difference with these crop-based boards, although they may pick up on the light weight of the products, which makes them easy to work with. However, customers may well notice a difference in their pocket books, as cost benefits draw manufacturers to agrifiber products.

One ready-to-assemble (RTA) furniture manufacturer began using strawboard as a component for its home office and home entertainment designs two

years ago because of its competitive price. "This allows us to offer a cost-effective product to the customer," says Derek Okada, president, Talon Systems, Inc.

Strawboard performs as an equal with other tried-and-true composite boards, according to Okada. "We intermix straw fiber particleboard, medium density fiberboard (MDF), and wood fiber particleboard," he notes.

Although their potential has only begun to be tapped, agrifiber products are already blossoming on the homefront, providing consumers greater options than ever before.

For more information about engineered wood products, contact the Composite Wood Council at 301/670-1752 or visit their web site at www.pbmdf.com.