

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Time For

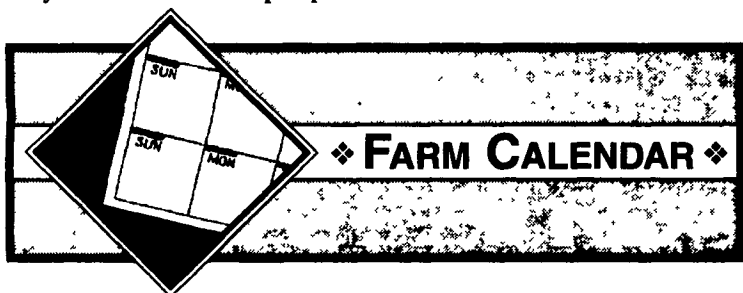
New Year's Resolutions

The end of the year of our Lord 2000 is near. What a short time ago, it seems, we were talking about Y2K and all the anticipated problems with computers and their inherent garbage-in, garbage-out limitations. But we got through it. A lot of money was spent and a lot of money made, depending on which side of the program upgrades you were on.

This year, we have the national presidential election to talk about at year's end. But for farmers, not much has changed. We are still concerned about low commodity prices and the environmental restrictions that are an increasing part of the mix needed to stay in the business of farming. The opponents of agriculture now hire private law firms to take ag enterprises to task because they believe government moves too slowly to enforce regulations. You can sometimes spend more time in jail for disrupting the habitat of an "endangered species" than for human murder.

And yet, a little travel to underdeveloped countries to see how they handle food makes those who think scratch their heads in disbelief. Unrefrigerated meats in the market place and vegetables washed in sewer water are the norm. U.S. food safety and environmental standards are extremely superior. We can only hope our agriculture is not forced offshore into those kinds of conditions. Then "what's for dinner" will really be inhuman and unsanitary.

Truly, we live in a wonderful country. At this time when it's normal to make New Year's resolutions, let's resolve to do our part to build up America. It's not perfect. But it is still the best place in the world to live. And agriculture is a big part of the reason we can wish everyone in the nation a prosperous 2001.



- Saturday, December 30
- Sunday, December 31
- Monday, January 1
Happy New Year!
Lancaster Farming office closed.
- Tuesday, January 2
Solanco Young Farmer Meeting, Accelerated Calf Grower, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 3
Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center.
- Farm Financial Management Using Computers, Cumberland County extension office, thru Jan. 4.
- Pa. Holstein Central Region Convention Meeting, Pa. Holstein office, State College, 11 a.m.
- Thursday, January 4
Dairy Feeding Employee Training, Mason-Dixon Farm, Adams County.
- Pa. Tobacco Marketing Association Auction, Solanco Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.
- Schuylkill County Dairy Day, Schuylkill County Ag Center, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- Friday, January 5
Dairy Feeding Employee Training, Mason-Dixon Farm, Adams County.
- Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman Community Center.
- Fresh Cow and Transitional Period Protocol, Robert and Linda Fenchak Farm, Knox, 1 p.m.
- Saturday, January 6
Pennsylvania State Farm Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., thru Jan. 11.
- Pennsylvania Hereford Association Meeting and Banquet, Harrisburg Marriott.
- Sunday, January 7
Pennsylvania Angus Association

- Membership Banquet, Holiday Inn, Grantville, 5:30 p.m.
- Monday, January 8
Ice Cream Short Course, Nittany Lion Inn, University Park, thru Jan. 18.
- Pa. State FFA Convention, Farm Show Complex, 4:30 p.m.
- Octorara Young Farmer meeting, Octorara High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, January 9
Keystone Farm Show, York Fairgrounds, thru Jan. 11.
- Eastern Pa. Turf Conference and Trade Show, Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, thru Jan. 1.
- Ephrata Area Young Farmers Introduction To Ephrata School District Demo Farm, Ephrata High School, 7:30 p.m.
- Great Lakes Vegetable Growers' Convention and Farm Market Show, Grand Center, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Wednesday, January 10
National No-Tillage Conference, Omni Netherland Plaza, Cincinnati, Ohio, thru Jan. 13.
- North American Berry Conference, Sheraton Fallsview Hotel, Niagara Falls.
- Thursday, January 11
Livestock Mortality Workshop, Rescue Hose Co., Greencastle, Franklin County extension office, 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m.
- Organic Grain Marketing, Kutztown University's The Blue Room, Kutztown.
- Friday, January 12
Berks County Ag Conference, Inn at Reading, Wyomissing, 6:30 p.m., thru Jan. 13.
- Susquehanna Regional Vegetable Meeting, Carriage Corner, Mifflinburg.
- Saturday, January 13
Dauphin County DHIA Banquet



To Plan For Profits

As the New Year approaches, tradition has us making New Year's resolutions. One resolution you may want to consider is increasing your business skills.

Most farmers have done an excellent job learning and mastering their production skills and developing and managing enterprise budgets. But most farmers need to develop and enhance their business skills.

These are the executive skills that every business needs to be successful. These skills include strategic planning, human resource management, and legal and risk management. Profits just do not happen, they need to be planned for. If you do not have a business plan, you should consider developing one.

Your business plan serves as a road map for you to achieve your

goals. My vocational agriculture teacher use to say "Plan your work and work your plan." The same is true with your business plan. Also, you might want to consider establishing an advisory committee for your farm. This committee should include key people who may help you in meeting your business goals.

Professions to consider are your accountant, attorney, banker, nutritionist, veterinarian, crop adviser, insurance agent, non-farm business owner, and human resource manager. Another way to develop your business skills is to serve on a board of directors of a nonprofit organization.

Remember, change is inevitable but success is optional. If you do not plan for profits in your business, they probably will not happen.

To Know Your Competition

To be a competitive farm today you need to know your competition and trends that are occurring in society.

Who is your competition? It is your neighbor, farmers in other parts of the U.S. and the world, business in town, and producers of alternative products to yours. Have you developed benchmark data for your farm? If you have, how does it compare to the industry average? Are you in the top 10 percent? If you are not, how are you going to become a member of the Top 10 Club?

The days of the open market are over where you produce a product and take to market to see who will buy it and at what price. Alliances are being formed between suppliers of inputs, farmers, and marketers. This is being driven by consumers. Thus, it is important to know your customers' customers and your suppliers' suppliers. Also,

you need to study consumer trends, both in purchasing power and the type of products they want. Once you have done your homework, you need to make adjustments to your farm business to meet these changes. This is an ongoing process. The successful farms will be the ones to anticipate change and make the right choices.

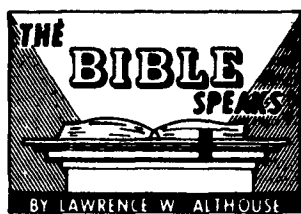
Remember, your profits are directly related to your customers' profits. Anything you can do to enhance his profits will help yours.

To Keep Learning

Time management becomes more critical but harder to do each year. If have not already done so, this next year should be the year you manage your time instead of other factors managing it for you. Sit down and set the major priorities or goals you want to achieve for next year. One of those goals should be achieve balance in your life.

If you have not read Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," you should. Budget time to continue your growth and development through education. Attend professional meetings and management seminars. Develop new skills.

One excellent meeting coming up is the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce Farm Business School Jan. 31 at Leola Family Restaurant. Dr. David Kohl, Virginia Tech, will be conducting a full day workshop on global competition, benchmarking, alliances, establishing advisory committees, and alternative investments. For more details and registration information, contact Brent Landis at the Chamber by calling (717) 397-3531. Remember to take time and invest in yourself.



YOUR OWN NUNC DIMITTIS

Background Scripture:
Luke 2:21-40.
Devotional Reading:
Isaiah 52:7-10.

I have never heard of any churches named for either St. Simeon or St. Ana. In fact, not really being up on the official saints, I'm not sure if these two have ever been accorded official status as saints.

But I think it would be quite appropriate to name a church after either or both of these people who play notable roles in the post-Christmas story.

They appear in the Bible in only one place — Luke 2:21-38. Their appearances are only brief, but these cameo roles are no less important.

Christianity has certainly benefited greatly from the works of spiritual giants such as St. Peter and St. Paul. But there are others who have made fine contributions despite their walk-on roles.

Simeon and Anna have several things in common. In that they are humble people of devout faith. Of Simeon, Luke writes: "... and this man was righteous and devout" (2:25). Turning to Anna, he says: "She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day" (2:37). Both expected God to send a messiah. Simeon looked for "the consolation of Israel" and Anna, giving thanks for the infant Jesus, "spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

Both these terms — "consolation of Israel" and "redemption of Jerusalem" — "implied action by a messiah."

According To The Law

Simeon, Anna, Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus were brought together in the temple by the provision in Leviticus 12:1-8, directing that a newborn son was to be circumcised and, 34 days after that, taken to the priest for naming and dedication to the Lord. (A daughter required 66 days).

Unable to afford to sacrifice a lamb, Mary and Joseph were permitted (Lev. 12:8) to offer either two turtledoves or two pigeons.

Because Mary and Joseph were careful to observe the religious traditions, they profited from some unexpected blessings and a prophecy. While it is true that ritual and tradition may become substitutes for faith, we often forget that, when regarded rightly as "earthen vessels," they can also be conduits to authentic spiritual "treasure."

Although chronologically Anna appears after Simeon, we will look at her first because his account is fuller and more significant. All we know of the widowed Anna is that her name means "grace," that she is a prophetess, and was at least 84 years of age. Unlike Simeon, we do not have a record of her words and we know only that she "gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel."

'God Has Heard'

Promised by divine inspiration that he would not die until he personally witnessed God's messiah, Simeon was inspired to come to the temple at the precise moment when Jesus was brought there for dedication. By that same inspiration, Simeon

recognized this humble couple's infant as the fulfillment of that promise.

The name "Simeon" means "the deity has heard." Although there were many by this name, it was particularly appropriate for this devout and patient man. God had heard and now answered his prayer.

Note that Simeon proclaims that Jesus was sent by God, not only for the glory of Israel, but as "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (2:32). This child would not be just the messiah of Israel, but for the whole world.

Further, Simeon delivers a prophecy which must have chilled Mary's heart. By this child many would be saved or condemned and "a sword will pierce your own soul also" (2:35), a foreshadowing of the cross at Calvary.

Simeon's concluding words, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace..." (2:29), are called the *Nunc Dimittis* from the Latin translation of the first words of this quotation. They have been used as Christian liturgy since at least the 5th Century AD, and possibly even earlier.

The aged Simeon did not have to see the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The same faith by which he had waited for the messiah was enough to permit him now to die in God's peace.

And what is your *Nunc Dimittis*?

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