

# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

*Common sense.* There's an old saying that "common sense is not so common." But I saw that in Jay Irwin, who brought a pragmatic aptitude, a dynamism of practical thought and procedure, to agriculture.

I will miss that refreshing attitude. When the industry was in near panic, as it had been during the terrible avian influenza crisis of 1983-84, Jay worked to calm the industry down and to help solve the problem.

Jay passed away recently at the age of 76. Jay was the county extension director when I began at *Lancaster Farming* more than a dozen years ago.

Jay, a Landisville resident, really kept most of his heart in Happy Valley. I can't recall a time when a comment or two wasn't made about Coach Joe-Pa, the Nittany Lions football team, and what chances Penn State had against Nebraska.

I knew Jay because I ate lunch with him most times during the very many Penn State-sponsored poultry health and management conferences at Kreider's Restaurant in Manheim. Football and the Lions were at every lunch. No one could ever doubt how dedicated Jay was to the Lions and Lancaster County agriculture, almost in equal measure.

I remember speaking to Jay at the Farm and Home Center during the last serious avian influenza (A.I.) outbreak in the region in the late '90s. By then, Jay had a disposition that was positive about control. Never any panic. He was always there to answer our questions. He respected the press and knew how important they were. And he made sure we not only got the facts, he pointed us in the right direction. As an agent, he was a true mentor for extension agriculture, for industry, and for the press.

(This was late '90s, mind you, long after he had retired. But that's the thing about Jay — he never retired! You can get the man out of agriculture, but you can't get agriculture out of the man. Besides, I would remind him at the Kreider lunches, in his retirement, after dedicating his life to agriculture, what else was he going to do?)

Jay Irwin also contributed a lot to *Lancaster Farming* — directly. He wrote the *Now Is the Time* column on this page when he began as county extension director for Lancaster in 1981 until he retired in 1991. And we have his first column, dated when we announced he was director on March 28, 1981, about how it was time "to check ventilation systems." Jay wrote, "This is a good time to go through your buildings and clean the fan blades, louvers, and screens." That advice is still pertinent.

Jay's last *Now Is the Time* column was dated May 4, 1991, when he "bid farewell — time for a change." He mentioned that he had passed his 65th birthday. John Schwartz became director and took over duties at the column. But Jay noted that he wasn't totally retiring because he accepted a temporary duty assignment with USDA extension and Penn State's program to serve as adviser with a team going to Poland from June 2-Nov. 29, 1991.

Jay's pragmatic, no-nonsense, common-sense approach to handling the challenges of agriculture persisted even in those columns, and he spoke about maintaining that positive attitude right to the end of the column in May 1991, mentioning how computers would improve farm efficiency and the benefits to everyone about incorporating integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. He stayed at the forefront of knowledge about these issues.

Even to the last, Jay maintained that approach, contributing where he could at the Kreider meetings and the many places agriculture took him. Even at the end, he was learning about ag developments — it's a lifelong process — with other county agents in Savannah, Ga.

Leon Ressler, county extension director, noted Jay "was active until his last day." I think Jay wanted it that way. I think he wants us all in agriculture to take that to heart, to continue to learn, to continue to make agriculture prosper.

Goodbye, agent . . . mentor. And friend.

**Jay Irwin  
1926-2002**



**Agent Mentor**



**Now Is  
The Time  
By Leon Ressler  
Lancaster County  
Extension Director**

**To Remember Jay Irwin**  
Agriculture lost a loyal friend with the passing of Lancaster County Extension Director Emeritus Jay Irwin.

Jay's quiet and steady leadership earned him deep respect across the agriculture community. He began his extension career in Lancaster County in 1967 after spending 15 years managing Farm Bureau cooperatives in Indiana, Venango, and Westmoreland counties.

Jay earned his bachelor's degree in agriculture economics from Penn State in 1949 after serving in the Navy on a submarine in the South Pacific during World War II. His interest in agriculture economics led him to keep statistics to plot farming trends. He used this information in guiding farmers to making wise decisions and assisted farm families with financial planning. As the livestock production intensified in the county, Jay sought ways for farmers to manage their manure with environmentally sound methods.

Jay worked closely with the poultry industry and provided training in all aspects of production. His leadership was especially critical when the region was struck with a disastrous avian influenza outbreak in 1983-1984. When the disease was first diagnosed in the county in the

spring of 1983, Jay went to work to help the county's 700 producers slow the spread of the disease. He urged producers to tighten sanitation procedures and taught them how to do so. He began seminars to teach veterinarians how to diagnose and combat the disease.

When the disease reached epidemic proportions in the fall of 1983, the county was placed under quarantine and the state and federal avian influenza task force arrived to enforce the quarantine and depopulate infected flocks. Jay provided crucial liaison between the task force and the community. He met with producers to explain the importance of strict quarantine and to help them accept the task force's work. In all, the county's producers lost 16 million birds.

Jay's commitment went beyond the job to caring for the families involved. Within one year the industry was back to full production in spite of some predictions it would take three years to recover. Jay's work in combating the epidemic was recognized in 1985 when he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award from USDA.

Jay remained actively involved in agriculture throughout his retirement, and it was a pleasure to interact within him at many events over his retirement years. He became my mentor and I appreciated his counsel and support. I could always go to him for advice.

I will always remember the day in November of 2000 when he came to see me to encourage me to apply for the position of county extension director. I appreciated that although he strongly encouraged me to apply, he also said if I didn't believe I should, he would understand. This was an example of his gentle leadership style.

I enjoyed seeing him almost weekly when he came to attend the Lancaster Rotary Club meeting. He was an avid Penn State football fan and I enjoyed discussing our prospects with him. He felt we had a chance to beat Nebraska in September.

Besides his interest in agriculture, he also was active in his church, Bethany Presbyterian in Lancaster. Over the years he served as elder, deacon, trustee, Sunday School teacher, and served on the worship committee. He was a dedicated family man and celebrated 54 years of

marriage to Betty in April. He loved interacting with his five daughters and their families, which included 11 grandchildren.  
Jay will be sorely missed by many.

**To Plan To Attend  
Ag Progress Days  
With The Whole Family**

From building character to building a bank account, from reading skills to sanitary skills, parents and children who visit the Family Learning Hub at Penn State's 2002 Ag Progress Days Aug. 20-22 will find a wealth of fun and information.

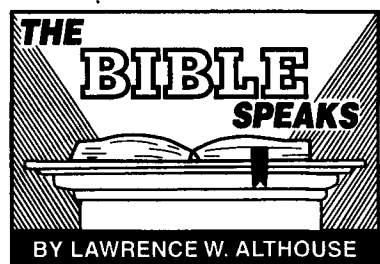
Located on Main Street between West 8th and 9th streets at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rockspring, the area includes the Family Room building, the ImAGination Station, the Family Animal Learning Center, and Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

The theme in the Family Room is "Healthy Foods, Healthy Families," according to Marilyn Furry, Penn State associate professor of agricultural and extension education. "We present the latest research and high-priority extension programs," she said, "but they're in contexts that are fun and engaging for children. We're addressing important issues for Pennsylvania today. But they're wrapped up in fun activities like a treasure hunt, guessing the totals in a piggy bank, and 'fishing' for saving tips."

Of course there will also be more than 350 exhibitors, crop production information, field machinery demonstrations, and animal exhibits. Because of concerns over the possible transmission of foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases, visitors who have been overseas within two weeks of attending Ag Progress Days are asked not to visit the event's live-animal exhibit areas.

Penn State's Ag Progress Days is conducted at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rockspring, nine miles southwest of State College on Rt. 45. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday; and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday. Admission and parking are free.

**Quote of The Week:**  
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."  
— Jesus (Matthew 5:4)



**ON 'WISING UP'**

**Background Scripture:**  
Proverbs 3 through 4.  
**Devotional Reading:**  
Proverbs 3:1-8.

I don't know whether "wise up" is still in the popular vocabulary. Maybe it is no longer "cool," but it wasn't many decades ago that it was a popular, if somewhat rude, invitation to get smart. Regardless of how you say it, "wising up" is a very good thing.

We are living in "The Information Age" with mass access to tremendous stores of data through computers. We also have "smart cards," "smart bombs," and other technological "smart" devices. So, who needs proverbs or wisdom?

All of us, I believe, need wisdom, and getting information per se is not the same as getting wisdom. Data can help us in making judgments and decisions, but all the data in the world cannot keep us from unwise actions.

For example: how many people who have all the data they need on the harmful effects of smoking continue to smoke? Or how many people

who have all the data they need on the catastrophic dangers of global warming continue to treat God's creation as an expendable resource? Wisdom consists of knowing what to do with the data — and doing it.

**Wisdom: God's Gift**

The Book of Proverbs is classified as wisdom literature, one of the five types of writing found in the Old Testament, along with history, law, devotions, and prophecy. Although it is the single largest depository of wisdom writing in the Old Testament, it also can be found in other Old Testament books and even in the New Testament. The Beatitudes, for example, are a kind of wisdom writing and in Matt. 11:19, Jesus says, "wisdom is justified by her children."

In John 1:1, the evangelist's use of the Greek word "logos" (the word) is related to the concept of God's wisdom. Scholars identify 16 "wisdom parables" of Jesus, and Paul regards wisdom was one of the "gifts of the Spirit."

There are two kinds of wisdom writings in the Bible: practical/utilitarian and theoretical/speculative. Earliest and most prevalent are the practical and utilitarian types of wisdom. This is wisdom that proposes to teach us how to live our daily lives. Most of the passages from which we will be studying Proverbs are of that type.

There is a problem we must confront at the very start of our study of Proverbs, for it would appear that those who value and live by wisdom will receive tangible benefits. Among these benefits are "Length of days and years of life and abundant welfare . . ." (3:2), "... favor and good repute in the sight of God and man" (3:4), "... healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones" (3:8), "barns . . . filled with plenty

and . . . vats . . . bursting with wine" (3:10), guidance and protection (3:23-26).

**Practical Benefits**

What about those claims? According to several recent surveys and polls, religious people are healthier, happier, and more successful than the average person who is not religious. Couples who pray together have more satisfactory, intimate lives. But while those benefits are experienced by large numbers of people, we know for a certainty that religious convictions and practice may also bring persecution, suffering, and even death.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the clearest reminder that following him may lead to a cross, as most of his apostles discovered.

Neither should we conclude, as did the friends of Job, that illness is a sign that we have sinned against God, that a person who lives a long life is necessarily a good person, or that a rich person is so blessed because he or she walked by spiritual wisdom.

Living by wisdom and insight does greatly enrich both our lives and those of our neighbors, and we can experience for ourselves the wisdom of him or her who discovered: "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold" (3:13,14).

I'm not sure the world has "wised up" to that even now.

**◆ FARM CALENDAR ◆**

**Saturday, August 10**  
South Central Holstein Championship Show, Fairgrounds, Shippensburg, 9:30 a.m.  
Washington County Fair, thru Aug. 17.  
Kutztown Fair Holstein Show, Fairgrounds.  
Maryland State Grange Picnic,  
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**◆ FARM FORUM ◆**

**Editor.**  
Recently there has been a lot of attention given to a House Bill that would impose tariff rate quotas on Milk Protein Concentrate (MPC). H.R. 1786 is typical of dairy "fixes" that issue forth from the bowels of politics.  
The first and most dangerous aspect of this bill is that it grants  
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