



NUTS & BOLTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE NFRBMEA
John Hest, Editor



VOLUME I - NUMBER 4
May 15, 1988

REGISTRATION FOR JUNE 13-16 CONFERENCE IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

According to Wayne Anderson, 1988 NFRBMEA Conference chairman, the date for pre-registration, May 23, is fast approaching. Our brother teachers from Nebraska would like to get these forms in and finalized so they can more easily plan the meeting. And don't forget to make your motel/hotel reservation at the same time.

I imagine that all of you have had a chance to look over the program that the committee has put together for furthering our farm and ranch management education. Looks like several days devoted to getting together to refresh ourselves and visit with other people who do the same thing as we're doing. My experience in attending almost all of the past meetings gave me the feeling that our old team of horses Jim and May must have had when my dad took off the "blindens" from their bridles. Hey! there is a world out there that includes more than we see directly in front of our eyes!

Even though your pre-registration makes it easier for Wayne and his crew, they'll still gladly accept your arriving at the Villager Motor Inn on June 13. The more the merrier!

WAY OUT WEST

NUTS AND BOLTS is interested in the day-to-day doings of people in our profession. Recently I received an article from the Walla Walla, WA *Capital Press*, written by staff writer Don Richardson. It concerns NFRBMEA member Bill Dicus. Here's the article:

Get finances in order, then find new markets

OLYMPIA, Wash. - Farmers in financial trouble don't have time to wait for the development of new markets, according to Bill Dicus, of the Farm Business Management Center at Walla Walla Community College.

Dicus raised some eyebrows when he testified before a recent joint meeting of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Most of the testimony repeated familiar themes: develop new export markets, patch up the farm credit system, concentrate on value added products, bring in more food processors (but get rid of the Business and Occupations tax first) and spend more money for research.

Nothing wrong with any of those suggestions, Dicus said, but the first priority for a farmer is to get his financial house in order.

"Profitability is a new word, but it shouldn't be," said Dicus. The trouble is, he continued, a lot of farmers have been losing money and some of them don't even know how much because they haven't kept good records or taken the time to analyze their financial situation.

The most urgently needed thing right now, Dicus said, is financial counselling. He told the two committees he is working with 15 farmers in southeastern Washington, but doesn't have enough funding to take care of all the appeals for help. Of the 15, he said, nine now have viable operations, three have a 70% chance to survive, one will liquidate and quit farming, and one may go through bankruptcy.

Dicus cited the case of one farmer who has a net worth of \$460,000, but had debts of \$1.4 million and no possibility of meeting his payments. Dicus helped him negotiate settlements that left him with a net worth of \$70,000 and a total debt of \$101,000. The farmer sold off two parcels of irrigated land at a sheriff's sale and is negotiating a lease with right of redemption.

Another farmer Dicus is working with bought land at inflated prices in the 1970s, and now finds he not only cannot meet the payments, but cannot borrow money for operations. This man made loan payments of \$753,000 in eight years and still owes \$688,000, Dicus said, but the land is now appraised at only \$490,000.

The obvious solution in such a case, Dicus said, is to negotiate a debt compromise. In many cases, he said, he can offer creditors more money through a debt compromise. In many cases, he said, he can offer creditors more money through a debt compromise than they would get if they forced the farmer into bankruptcy.

If the current appraised value of the land is lower than the amount owed, Dicus said, the best solution might be to deed the land back to the lender in lieu of foreclosure. The farmers then often can lease the land and continue to farm it.

Dicus said the worse experience he can remember was when a farmer lifted the seat of his pickup, showed Dicus a gun he had carried with him for more than a year, and said, "When I leave the house in the morning, I never know whether I will come back that night."

He contrasted that with a sprightly 92-year old man in the Walla Walla area who is out buying machinery for a farm he purchased recently.

"That's confidence," Dicus said. "There is still opportunity out there."

The current farm credit crunch might appropriately be called "The scramble for the buck," Dicus said. There is not enough farm income to supply everyone who wants it. Everyone wants a piece of the shrinking pie; farmers, local creditors, long term creditors, and federal lending agencies.

Many of you recognized the scenario that Bill painted for those legislative committees in Olympia, Washington, and only the place was different. He did get a chance to show the legislators that farm management could, and did, lend a hand to hurting farm families. Despite the fact that several thousand miles separate some of us, the problems are pretty much the same wherever we are.

PROFESSIONALISM

After lunch today I was reading an article about professionalism in the latest issue of the *Vocational Education Journal*. Since I had planned to write this issue of NUTS AND BOLTS, I immediately thought of a piece that I'd received from my friend Wayne Ditmer, a month or two ago, that could apply to this theme. Wayne, who teaches adult farm management in Goodridge, MN., wrote this when he was teaching high school agriculture in North Dakota in 1954. Even though it was written with high school teaching in mind, doesn't it fit any good teacher? It seems to me that it's just as good now as when he put it together for the ND Vo-Ag magazine. Sometimes we tend to get "off base." Maybe this can help get us "on" again.

A TEACHER'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

A GOOD TEACHER:

- *Appears neat at all times.
- *Takes individual differences into account when teaching.
- *Encourages activity in student's work.
- *Assumes responsibility for contributing to the life of the community.
- *Comprehends the necessity for guidance responsibilities.
- *Helps students maintain both mental and physical health.
- *Encourages development of ethical character.
- *Recognizes learning through desirable changes in behaviour.
- *Shows impartiality in providing educational opportunities.
- *Practices the Golden Rule.
- *Has an optimistic outlook on life.
- *Initiates change when change is needed.
- *Leads students to honest effort in both work and play.
- *Opens the door to creativeness whenever possible.
- *Shows sense of justice in dealing with his students.
- *Organizes class work before presentation to students.
- *Presents pleasing personality at all times.
- *Has sympathetic attitude toward student's problems.
- *Yields to repeated effort in furthering learning.

COMPUTER STUFF

You may recall that I reviewed the program FIRST CHOICE in the second issue of NUTS AND BOLTS. Since that review I've acquired the updated version so it might be in order that I tell you about the things that have been added to it.

First and I think, most important, is the addition of graphics that can be called up from the spreadsheet or can be used independently. And following the simple format of the original, it can be used within a few minutes after the box is opened. It offers more graphics choices than Lotus 1-2-3 and as a bonus, makes the hard copy of a circle graph in circular form, rather than an oval shape.

Other new things added: (1) a 20,000 word thesaurus (2) an electronic calculator (3) capability of printing 250 characters wide (must have wide printer) (4) can have 20 columns in report (5) can sort labels.

I received a computer advertisement in the mail yesterday and discovered that the program can now be acquired for \$79 plus shipping. By the way, with all the goodies added, the program needs 512K of RAM. With these additions FIRST CHOICE is an even better value than last fall when I wrote the original review. I most heartily endorse it.

MORE COMPUTER STUFF

If you own an Epson FX-80 dot matrix printer and wish you could update it so that you can print "near letter quality" and not have to go inside of the machine and monkey with DIP switches to do different things, fret no more! You don't need hundreds of bucks trade difference to do the job. I answered an ad that claimed I could update my printer for only \$79.95 and except for a small shipping charge, it was true.

When it came from Dresselhaus, via UPS to my door, I opened the box and found three chips. It took awhile before I had enough courage to tackle the "simple job" that the instruction book claimed but when I did I was pleasantly surprised. It was simple and it took less than an hour to complete. I can change type and size by hitting the buttons a specified number of times and I now have near letter quality, plus "push button" menu, something I've been wishing for.

I'm happy about the change and so's my wife. I'd been preparing my wife for the printer trade for a long time and now found it cost only \$79.95! Now, let's see, what can I buy for the money I saved?

IN BALANCE WITH NATURE?

Dr. John Carew
Chairman, Department of Horticulture
Michigan State University
(Reprinted from (MN) *Ag in Action*)

In the beginning

There was Earth; beautiful and wild

And then man came to dwell.

At first, he lived like other animals

Feeding himself on creatures and plants around him.

And this was called IN BALANCE WITH NATURE.

Soon man multiplied. He grew tired of ceaseless hunting for food;

He built homes and villages.

Wild plants and animals were domesticated.

Some men became Farmers so that others might become Industrialists, Artists, or Doctors.

And this was called Society.

Man and Society progressed.

With his God-given ingenuity, man learned to feed, clothe, protect, and transport himself more efficiently so he might enjoy life.

He built cars, houses on top of each other, and nylon.

And life was more enjoyable.

The men called Farmers became efficient.

A single farmer grew food for 41 Industrialists, Artists and Doctors.

And Writers, Engineers, and Teachers as well.

To protect his crops and animals, the Farmers produced substances to repel or destroy insects, diseases, and weeds

These were called Pesticides.

Similar substances were made by Doctors to protect humans.

These were called Medicine.

The Age of Science had arrived and with it came better diet and longer, happier lives for more members of Society.

Soon it came to pass

That certain well fed members of Society

Disapproved of the Farmer using Science.

They spoke harshly of his techniques for feeding, protecting, and preserving plants and animals.

They deplored his upsetting the Balance of Nature;

They longed for the Good Old Days.

And this had emotional appeal to the rest of Society.

By this time Farmers had become so efficient, Society gave them a new title: Unimportant Minority.

Because Society could not ever imagine a shortage of food

Laws were passed abolishing Pesticides, Fertilizers, and Food Preservatives.

Insects, Diseases, and Weeds flourished.

Crops and animals died. Food became scarce.

To survive, Industrialists, Artists, and Doctors were forced to grow their own food.

They were not very efficient.

People and governments fought wars to gain more agricultural land.

Millions of people were exterminated.

The remaining few lived like animals.

Feeding themselves on creatures and plants around them.

And this was called IN BALANCE WITH NATURE.

TRUISMS

Murphy's Law of Computing - The person who says that something can't be done should never interrupt the person who's doing it.

Most farmers learn humility either on the business end of a manure fork or across the the desk from the banker.

f John Hest
r Editor, NUTS & BOLTS
o Box 250
m Hawley, MN 56549