

# NUTS & BOLTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE NFRBMEA

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VOLUME 5 - NUMBER 4  
May 15, 1992

RAPID CITY HERE WE COME!

Before you know it our annual NFRBMEA conference in Rapid City, SD will be happening. In fact, when I check my calendar I can count just about three weeks until our June 7 arrival at the Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn.

This looks like a fantastic chance for you to charge your batteries while you rub shoulders with your fellow teachers. And besides that, you just might learn something that would help you in this next year, working with your farm and ranch families. I haven't seen a conference yet where I haven't gone home with at least one real gem of knowledge.

If you gain nothing else than the chance to get away from the job that once-in-a-while seems to get you down, it's worth your time to get that registration blank sent back to Dan Oedekoven and you'd better call in your reservation to the Holiday Inn, since they say in the literature that May 18 is the day.

I'll see you in Rapid City. You'll recognize me as the fat, gray haired old guy with the Norwegian accent, and wearing Rockport tennis shoes.

## SHIP-SHAPE

Ron Van Norden, who teaches Farm Business Management at Owatonna, MN, literally had the scare of his life this winter.

He was playing Fox and Geese in the snow with his kids and as he was running, which is part of the game, he became light headed, and his stomach became upset. He was able to get to the house, lay down on the sofa and call his wife Lynn. And that was the last thing he remembered until he regained consciousness some time later.

Lynn recognized, as he passed out that he stopped breathing. She saw this, thought his tongue might be blocking his air passage so she rolled him onto the floor on his stomach. He then began breathing but she was still concerned so she called 9-1-1. After spending overnight in the local hospital he was transferred to St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester where Mayo Clinic surgeons performed open-heart surgery on Feb. 26.

Ron now has a St. Judes aortic valve with, as Ron puts it, "no lifetime warranty." He will be on blood thinners the rest of his life and will need to exercise more, his doctors have told him.

Ron says that he has known about the bad heart valve since his high school days and has been part of a Mayo Clinic study since then. The timing of the operation, which he expected to need about the time of his retirement, came sooner than that though.

Like all good management teachers, Ron worried about his farm family clients. Some of the record close-outs didn't get done, not all of the analysis reviews were completed and marketing plans didn't get planned. His April newsletter made a point of this. Although he'll be at his tasks in full force by the time this letter hits my reader's mail boxes, he has been able to work on a part-time basis.

As I read Ron's account in his newsletter, I thought his troubles should be shared with our NUTS & BOLTS readers. In his words: "I want to tell my story for a reason. If my wife had not known what to do when I stopped breathing, I might not be here today. She recognized the problem that my air passage was blocked and did something to correct it. First Aid people will tell you that's the first rule. Make sure the air passage is clear."

\* \* \*

The only way to make a profit farming is to sell something. Producing is only an expensive pastime.

AN ODE TO "THE SOIL AROUND US"

A True Story

by Wayne Pike

Farm Business Management Instructor, Leroy-Ostrander, MN

Thursday night, a week ago,  
I went to bed, I didn't know,  
that Friday at the crack of dawn,  
I'd rise to find our soil gone.

All was normal when I went to bed,  
but Friday, all was rock instead.  
As if some aliens in the night were  
there,  
and stole our earth, yes, stripped it  
bare.

Our house upon the bedrock sat.  
The trees lay on their sides, so that  
the gophers and moles now homeless and  
nervous,  
moved in with the squirrels a few feet  
from the surface.

The light poles that Thursday held  
blackbirds in flocks,  
now lay like toothpicks dumped out of  
a box.  
Our sheep were quite bored with  
nothing to do,  
they looked sullen and grumpy with no  
grass to chew.

For a while our kids thought no soil  
was neat,  
they could run in and run out with no  
mud on their feet,  
and explore into places where no one's  
explored,  
but like the sheep, they soon got  
tired and bored.

COMPUTER QUICKIE #1

Are you wishing for some extra space on your hard disk? I'll bet that many of you are in that predicament. Not too long ago I used CHKDSK on my hard drive and discovered that my 20mb disk had only about 2mb left before it would start screaming at me that most feared message: DISK FULL. And I have only an 8088 processor in my machine with a 640K capacity, so I'm not able to utilize any of the big memory grabbing programs like Windows.

Just the other day, when my one of my several computer magazine came into my mailbox, I began leafing through it at the post office. I opened it to the DOS help section which can be found in each issue and I began to read. "This is something to help me and probably most of my readers of NUTS & BOLTS could use it too," I said to myself. "List the files in your DOS directory that you seldom, or never use and copy them to a floppy," it told me. "You'll pick up lots of space on your hard drive and you'll be able to operate faster."

I went home and before procrastination set in, began to do just that. The result: I picked up over 542,000 bytes. Speed gained: I think my programs upped their speed but I have no way of measuring it. The files I removed filled up more than 1 1/2, 5 1/4 floppy disks.

COMPUTER QUICKIE #2

How many of you are really making use of the AUTOEXEC.BAT file that comes into play when you boot up your computer? If you aren't, you're missing one of the ways to allow your computer to help you do your job more efficiently. Probably the most important line in that file, is PATH. You can have several directories in PATH, but the most helpful is to get your DOS directory listed. There's a certain way one has to do the PATH line though, and using mine, here's how: PATH=C:\DOS (one doesn't have to use caps). If you're going to list other files in PATH, you'd have to add a semi-colon after DOS. And DOS in my PATH statement allows me to call for CHKDSK in whatever drive I'm in.

After a while as I looked around,  
I noticed there was higher ground.  
Our neighbors, Sorenson, Withey and  
Scott,  
still had their soil, while we did  
not.

Our phone rang just then and shook me  
with worry,  
"Long Distance from Mars," said my  
wife, "please hurry." The man, or  
whatever, from Mars on the  
line,  
said, "I'm afraid we've made an error  
here at our mine."  
"We sent a crew out to mine soil from  
space, but they zipped and not zagged."

I did not mind paying their fee, as I  
knew now that soil is so vital to me.  
How often, I wondered, do I even think  
about soil,  
or the folks who raise food with their  
tools and their toil.

So if your soil is gone overnight as  
you slumber,  
there's a mine on Mars with an 800  
number.  
But if it's gone little by little I've  
learned,  
there's no way on Earth to get it  
returned.

## OTHER STUFF PERTAINING TO OUR BUSINESS

The following is something I've picked out of several of the newsletters I receive from you teachers of farm and ranch management. If all of us took it to heart, our world would be a much better place to live and we'd all be much happier as a result.

### Lessons From The Geese by Merle W. Boos

As each bird flaps its wings, by flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediately in front.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will step in formation with those who are headed where we want to go.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks, and sharing leadership, interdependent with each other.

These geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging, not something less helpful.

When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow to help and protect. They stay until the goose is either able to fly again or dies.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll stand by each other like that.

## ANOTHER BIG STEAL

I've told you before that I don't mind stealing ideas if they're going to benefit you readers (and indirectly to the farm and ranch people with whom you work). This next bit came from the newsletter issued by the gang at St. Cloud Technical College at St. Cloud, MN. And actually they "borrowed" it from the farm management people at Bismarck State College, Bismarck, ND.

### Management Strategies

It has been stated that 86% of what it takes to make business succeed is confidence. If the farm manager is aware of where the business is headed, then obtaining confidence is much easier.

There are certain management strategies that successful managers use (not in order of importance):

1. Problem solving attitudes - the person directs efforts toward problem solving rather than blaming the government, weather or other people.
2. Timeliness - organized and ready for the task at hand.
3. Conservative - but uses progressive management styles consistently, and will cautiously adopt new technology.
4. Appropriate balance between physical work and business decision making - balance between work and vacation time.
5. Wary of high debt levels when farming under uncertain conditions.
6. Business management skills - not a "way of life" attitude, base enterprise decisions on productivity calculation rather than just "expected" production.
7. Skilled at gathering up and interpreting information - a difficult

Management Strategies (continued)

task - use telephone, computer, magazines and information subscriptions.

8. Anticipation - have long memories, know when to monitor situations closely.

9. Persistence - single-minded determination to succeed, have a high degree of will power in a crisis.

10. Diversified business structures - applies to enterprise and financial diversification so that "all the eggs aren't in the same basket."

11. Suitability of enterprise to the area - choose only those enterprises best suited to their region, climate and soil type.

12. Has the confidence that the business is in a positive direction - this confidence is a written or proven example.

When times get tough we seem to get the "Cry Wolf" syndrome. This is when a person believes it's necessary to always appear negative and unsuccessful. When the person is asked the question "how are things?" they answer "not good enough, if the government, the banker, the other person would just . . . ."

It has been said, "You are what you think you are." Let us think our friends are our friends, our business is a challenge, our family needs vacation time and enjoy life. There is one thing that is guaranteed and that is we only get the one chance to go around and around and where it stops nobody knows . . . .

IT'S THE TIMES WE'RE IN

This paragraph appeared in the Roseau County Times, Roseau, MN, 1-31-1902: (Editor's note: I thought this interesting. We still have doomsayers today but the problem isn't oxen vs. horses currently. Substitute at will.)

"Time and time again this Journal called the attention of the farmers in Roseau county to the advantage of using working oxen instead of horses. Six years ago you could see ten yoke of oxen in town to one team of horses. Now an ox team is seldom seen. Many settlers have virtually lost their farms through debts contracted for the purchase of horses, and others have mortgages on their farms for the same. In one instance, a farmer paid \$300 for a team of horses that were not worth \$35, and, of course, they soon died. Many farmers sold their oxen and bought horses, for which they had to buy feed. One settler lost his farm for horses which he had purchased at a big price and which died on his hands. The farmer with limited means, who has stuck to his oxen, has, as a rule, kept himself free of debt and is now in easy circumstances."

\* \* \*

A little country girl was heard explaining to her 4-H group how to make soap like the pioneer ladies used to do.

Her directions began: "Put two cups of lard in the microwave. . . ."

\* \* \*

If you learn to chuckle at your mistakes, you will seldom be short of laugh material.

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