



NUTS & BOLTS

... Teachers delivering knowledge that works to North America's Farm and Ranch Families

Volume 14 Number 2

Winter 2000-01

Vacation In Colorado This Summer

By Maylon D. Peters

The late John Denver had a hit song, "Rocky Mountain High". The Colorado delegation would like to give you a "high" this summer, an experience you will not forget. In fact, as you drive up on I-70 from Denver to Breckenridge you can take a ten-mile detour right to the top of 14,264-foot high Mt. Evans. The scenery is breathtaking and the mountains beckon you to come and enjoy them.

We have an outstanding facility for our 2001 summer conference. Some of the amenities are a newly remodeled conference hall, a 22-person hot tub, an indoor/outdoor swimming pool, and the list goes on. We have two nationally-known speakers who will help us become 'Conflict Resolvers', assist us in effective team-building and give

us tools to improve the 'Communication Skills' of our farm and ranch families. Yours truly will share with flatlanders what makes the "West Side of the Continental Divide" unique.

Many of you have asked for years that we have the summer conference in the mountains of Colorado. We are counting on your participation to make it a success! Your packet will be in the mail the first week of February. If you do not get one, contact me at mpeters@mesa5.mesa.colorado.edu, or go to our web page, www.nfrbmea.org for registration information. We have no organized activities for Monday and Wednesday evenings, so you have time to get a "Rocky Mountain High".



Here Fishy, Fishy! NFRBMEA Board members (L to R) Larry Oraskovich, Ira Beckman, Al Graner, Lynn Schluckebier and Maylon Peters check out one of the trout runs at the fish hatchery near Leadville, CO. This is just one of the many interesting places to visit on our tours during the 2001 Conference at Breckenridge.

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Leaving Your Mark

A Message From Lynn Schluckebier, NFRBMEA President



Happy New Year. Has the millennium finally started? In our area the last millennium went out with temperatures averaging 10 to 20 degrees below normal. Hope your weather was warmer.

December also found my wife and me joining our son and his family

for a week's vacation in Orlando. Our first event at Walt Disney World was a Cinderella Breakfast for Elena, age 5. The cast members did everything during the breakfast to make our meal a wonderful experience with many children, their parents and grandparents. It felt like a visit to the park with 90,000 of your closest friends. A perfected marketing technique. It was also interesting to note, only half of the people were from the states.

That reminds me of a story. Edward was ten years old when his father gave him his first tools. His father had found Edward at his bench, using his pet panel saw making a toy boat. The father took the saw away and told him to leave his tools alone, but the next day the father gave him two small saws and a little jack plane. That was fifty years ago. Edward still has the two saws and jack plane. He and the tools' elder brothers, his father's tools, are now in a big chest that were a treasure house of possibilities to him in his childhood, and is now rich with memories.

The father seemed to give Edward little instruction in using tools, only an occasional caution, such as "Don't saw so fast and don't force the saw." "Keep your left hand behind the point of your chisel, not in front of it; then you won't cut yourself." But as Edward looks back through the years, he can see that out of a demonstration now and then, as his father would take the tool into his own skillful hand, Edward was learning and building memories.

Durability was one of Edward's earliest craftsmanship ideals, as he still has a snow shovel that he made when he was twelve years old. He still uses it today to move snow. The blade, which was of whitewood, originally had a nose of zinc, but that long ago wore out and fell away. The blade itself has worn back until it is now only half its original length. But the piece of clapboard that gives the handle its proper pitch with the blade, and the handle itself, are still sound and whole. He had put enough screws in the handle to plank the side of a ship! He was building for the ages.

"Every blow of a hammer, every stroke of a plane, leaves its record, not to be gotten over. When I first saw the Viking ship dug out in Norway after a thousand years, the thing that caught my eye was the record of a lazy carpenter's axe, left upon the oak timber of the bow of the ship. Every nick in it was there, plain to see. He had been too lazy to grind the axe, and, a thousand years after, that fact stood out." — Jacob A Riis

We can all learn something from Walt Disney World. They are doing the best they can to help people enjoy themselves. As instructors, we can help our students do their best. Management, and the skills it takes to be a good manager are skills anyone can learn. Each person learns at a different speed. Each of our students use using different methods to arrive at the end point— profitable farms and ranches. As we enter the end-of-the-year season of looking back, always remember the future goals of the families you are helping. And keep your axe and marketing skills SHARP!



Agriculture on the Other Side of the World

Tom Schulz, FBM Instructor, Central Lakes College, Staples MN

My wife, Kyle, and I were among 48 participants in a Minnesota Agriculture and Agribusiness Leaders Delegation to China in November of 2000. Our trip was part of the People to People Program that was organized by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956. The program is intended to foster communication between people of different countries. We found that one farmer can talk to another about seeds, weeds, weather and the soil, no matter where they come from. We spent two weeks touring agricultural and cultural centers of China. Our delegation visited Beijing, Suzhou, Shanghai and Nanjing - all of which have populations exceeding 10 million people.

China has experienced a great deal of change in agriculture since the 1970s. China underwent a transformation beginning in 1978 when Chairman Deng Xiaoping allowed farmers to take "individual responsibility" for a parcel of land. Since then, the Chinese government has made an impressive effort to reconnect people to the land. For example, all elementary and junior high students are required to spend ten days a year working on a farm.

Because of their agricultural transformation, China has vastly improved its output. If a farmer is an expert in growing vegetables, for example, the government said he could specialize in vegetable production. Every farmer must sell a certain amount of rice or wheat every year to the government at a fixed price as his land rent. If he doesn't grow those crops, he must buy them to sell back. By this method, the government takes responsibility to see that everyone gets fed. A typical Chinese farm is from one-quarter to six acres in size. The large, state-run operations are often 10,000 acres or more.

The country's population of 2.3 billion accounts for 22 percent of the world's population, yet China grows enough to feed its people. The country possesses about 11

percent of world's arable farmland. They rely heavily on channel irrigation, organic fertilizers and soil conservation.

It is a practice in China to eat fresh food. There is very little refrigeration or frozen foods. The marketplaces are filled with live chickens, ducks, fish, and shellfish. All are slaughtered before the customer's eyes to guarantee freshness.

China's agriculture today provides more rice and wheat than they can consume. Farmers are being encouraged to diversify. China also wants to enter the world market as part of the World Trade Organization, but they're concerned about protecting their farmers. Their current domestic prices for coarse grains are about 10% above the prevailing world market prices. Therefore, the government is encouraging them to grow crops that will have a higher export market value.



Although much of the labor is done by hand, other technology is available. A Chinese farmer may rent harvesters, tractors and tillage equipment from a machinery depot in his community. An operator is typically sent with a wheat or rice harvesting machine to ensure correct settings to guarantee complete harvesting of the crop.

China's population has increasingly moved from rural areas to urban centers. In 1949, 98% of the population was classified as peasant (rural). Today, China's population is 60% peasant. This rural to urban migration is exacerbated by the difference between rural and urban incomes. The urban worker will make 2.6 times as much as his rural counterpart. The Chinese are undergoing expansive construction to meet the needs of the urban population.

My wife, Kyle, is an art teacher at the Wadena Alternative Learning Center. It was a pleasure for her to tour
(See "AGRICULTURE", continued on page 6)

NFRBMEA Fall Board of Directors Meeting Highlights

Breckenridge, Colorado • November 9-11, 2000

The NFRBMEA Board of Directors met November 9-11, 2000 at the Beaver Run Resort in Breckenridge, Colorado. A summary of Board action is as follows:

- * Changed the Exchange of Ideas award to \$100 per idea from \$200 per idea.
- * Created two Distinguished Service Awards: a Distinguished Service Award- Friend for non-members, and a Distinguished Service Award- Member.
- * Requested donations from the use of the NFRBMEA logo if a profit is generated by its use.
- * Directed Deb Pike to check on a Web listserv.
- * Decided to pursue common interests with NAFBAS, an organization similar to NFRBMEA.
- * Discussed Ethics and Board Unity.
- * Reviewed the Past Presidents' recommendations on

seeking funds and sponsorships. Assigned the following persons to follow-up: Lynn Schluckebier- Farmland Cooperative; John Caster- Noble Foundation; Ira Beckman- Land O' Lakes; Wayne Pike- Pioneer; John Caster- Doanes; Maylon Peters- John Deere; and Al Graner- Harvest States.

- * Heard a report from Larry Oraskovich on the 2002 Conference in Faribault, Minnesota.
- * Reviewed writing assignments for articles for NAAE *News & Views*.
- * Toured the 2001 Conference facility and tour sites.
- * Reviewed Section 501(c)3 maintenance requirements.
- * Set Thursday, April 19, 2001, 1 p.m. CDT for the spring conference call.

For a complete copy of the minutes, please visit our website or contact NFRBMEA secretary, Al Graner.

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At Work in Romania

By Gene Francis

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gene and Pat Francis own and operate Prairie Farm Management, Incorporated, a farm management consulting firm near Blooming Prairie, Minnesota. They help farm families develop farm and financial business plans. Gene is a retired FBM instructor.

This is Gene and Pat's account of a month they spent in Romania this past summer. The Francis' were sponsored by VOCA (Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance). VOCA provides the opportunity for volunteers with specific areas of expertise, such as farm management, to work with families in a host country to improve or establish a business.

Romania is a land of many contrasts. Its major national resource is the soil. It was once known as the "bread basket of Europe".

Prior to communist days, most of Romania's farmland was under private ownership. During the forty-plus years of communistic rule most of the land ownership was taken over by the government. About thirty to forty percent of it is now being returned to the former owners or heirs, but they can only receive 10 hectares (about twenty-five acres) regardless of how much they formerly owned. Many have 1-5 hectares that they farm with a horse and wagon, a one-row cultivator or a hand hoe. Annual rainfall is about 20-22" in southern Romania. This year they were experiencing a severe drought.

The State is also selling many of the former "collective" farm sites to private owners. This was the case in the situations where we were involved. These new owners had requested help from VOCA volunteers to establish business plans, balance sheets, cash flows and loan applications for funds to modernize the unkept, antiquated buildings on these sites. We used a laptop computer and FinPack financial software to project plans.

Our interpreter at the first farm invited us to a barbecue at his home. He had purchased a nice home (modest by U.S. standards) and 1½ hectares in Potcoava, a village of 5,000. He and his wife had about one hundred layers and two hundred smaller chicks. They had a vineyard, a cornfield and a very large and productive garden. Most of their annual food supply was from the garden and the chickens. They had a cistern well with a bucket on a rope. Their house was very clean and well kept. He also had a cell phone and a computerized date and appointment calendar.

Our host farmers at our first location, Constantin and Olympia Spak, were finishing about 1,400 pigs that they were buying at twenty pounds. They wished to become a farrow-to-finish operation and eventually finish 5,000 head per year. They asked us to help them plan and draw the building layout for a farrow-to-finish setup. They found it difficult to find quality soybean meal and consequently their rate of gain on the hogs was poor. Market hogs sold for the equivalent of about \$39.70 per hundred pounds of live weight.

Corn was priced at the equivalent of about \$2.25 per bushel. Other costs of hog production appeared to be somewhat lower than here in the United States. Probably because labor costs to provide all the other services and products were much less.

At our second location, we consulted with three farmers who had purchased a former collective farm that had farrow-to-finish capacity for 12,000 head. They had recently purchased "P.I.C." breeding stock from England and were able to upgrade their ration with quality soybean meal and premix additives. The farm buildings were in fair to poor condition. Our job was to help them decide on ways to revise their operation and to determine if new or remodeled facilities would increase profitability.

Most of the pork is processed into sausage, salami, hams and other casing products. About 10% of the typical meat counter is fresh product. Most stores (known as *magazins*) are operated by a family, and many are about the size of your living room.

Much of the infrastructure is in tough condition. Some roads were being improved, but automobile traffic was very fast in a dangerous mix of cars, horse-drawn wagons, pedestrians, bikes, poultry and livestock.

Education appeared to be quite good despite old and overcrowded schools. Elementary students attend class from 6 a.m. until noon, then they go home and the Junior High uses the same building from 1-7 p.m.

Wages for a factory or farm worker are between \$30-60 per month for a 44-hour week. A professor makes about thirty percent more than a factory worker does. Even at
(See "ROMANIA", continued on page 6)

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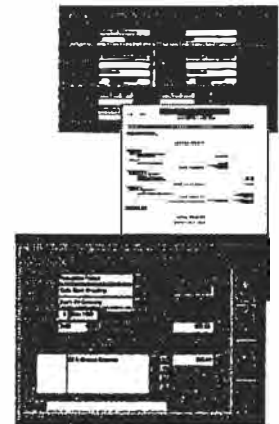
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(“AGRICULTURE”, continued from page 3)

China's Buddhist temples and royal palaces. “Their art is wonderful, so fine and intricate,” she said. Detailed scrolling, paintings and woodwork are characteristic of the country.

Along with other delegates' spouses, Kyle also visited three different schools. Each child is cherished because couples are allowed only one. The penalties are harsh for disobeying the one-child mandate. The father is demoted to the lowest job at work. The mother loses her job entirely. Both lose their health and retirement benefits.

Kyle describes the Chinese people as “very open-minded” and “gracious.” They appeared to like Americans.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- * 187 ACTIVE MEMBERS
- * 14 AFFILIATE MEMBERS
- * 2 HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBERS

(“ROMANIA”, continued from page 5)

that, unemployment is high. Milk sells for about \$1.09 a gallon. Gasoline costs \$2.00 per gallon. A summer shirt costs \$7-10. A small washing machine costs about \$450.

Inflation is a major problem for Romania. When we were in Romania in October of 1994, the exchange rate was 1,800 lei per United States dollar. Currently, the rate is 20,800 lei per U.S. dollar. Interest rates on loans are about 60% annual percentage rate.

We found that Romania has a fascinating mix of people. We thoroughly enjoyed our interactions and conversations with folks on the farms, schools, shops, restaurants and hotels.

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NFRBMEA EXCHANGE OF IDEAS
NFRBMEA Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado

\$100 will be awarded to the first five (5) individuals submitting an outstanding idea for the Exchange of Ideas activity by **May 1, 2001**. To qualify, have an idea and complete the form below including a brief description of your idea. This is not a contest.

Individuals applying for the "Exchange of Ideas" award must agree to the following rules:

1. The first five qualifying entries by NFRBMEA members for the Exchange of Ideas activity will receive a \$100 award. The award will be presented June 13, 2001.
2. Applicants will complete the following registration form (or a copy) and submit it as soon as possible. Recipients will be notified of award status by May 4, 2001.
3. "Ideas" need not be original, but must have the applicant's work evident in its adaptation. "Ideas" must be of professional quality and scope.
4. Applicants will make a five-minute overview presentation on their "Idea" on Wednesday morning, June 13, at the 4th General Session. This presentation will be from 8:00 to 9:30 AM. Be prepared to answer questions from conference participants.
5. Award recipients must submit their "Idea" in a format suitable for inclusion on the conference proceedings CD to Ira Beckman by May 10, 2001.
6. Send your Exchange of Ideas entry to:

Ira Beckman
1720 West 195th Street
Jordan, MN 55352
952-492-2141
fbmira@aol.com

..... detach here

Exchange of Ideas Application
Due May 1, 2001

NFRBMEA Applicant (Please Print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State or Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Briefly describe your "Idea": _____

I agree to the Exchange of Ideas rules above. Signed: _____

2001 NFRBMEA First Timers' Scholarship

The NFRBMEA will be awarding \$200 scholarships (Free 2001 Annual Conference Registration) to five (5) individuals attending our Annual Conference for the first time. *Dues to the NFRBMEA of \$20 are not covered by the scholarship and must accompany this form.*

The rules are simple:

1. Be the first person to submit this form from your state or province.
2. Pay NFRBMEA year 2001 dues of \$20 in U.S. currency. (Make checks payable to NFRBMEA.)

Please give this sheet to anyone interested in the conference in Breckenridge Colorado who has never attended a NFRBMEA conference before. Speed is important, as only the first five people from different states and provinces are eligible. The postmark will be the tiebreaker. Let us see how many new individuals we can encourage to attend the Breckenridge Conference. The program appears to be outstanding.

Applicant (Please Print): _____

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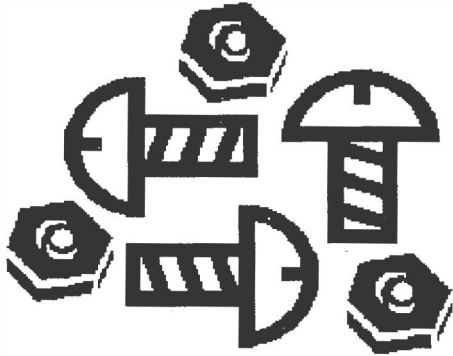
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Page 10

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