

**Editor's  
Notebook**



**Mark Newhall**  
Editor & Publisher

**In Memoriam**

FARM SHOW lost a dear friend recently when co-founder Joan Johnson died after a courageous 22-month battle with cancer. Joan, 63, was the wife of Harold Johnson, who launched FARM SHOW in 1977 out of a small 1-room office with Joan's enthusiastic help and support. Despite the fact that Harold and Joan had three kids approaching college age at the time, Joan never hesitated when Harold told her he had an idea for a first-of-its-kind "no advertising" publication that would survive solely on support from its readers. She provided rock-solid support at a time when most publishing "professionals" thought Harold had gone around the bend.



Harold & Joan at their retirement party in 1994.

Joan helped manage the operation for 18 years, as FARM SHOW grew from a handful of subscribers to a major farm publication with 175,000 subscribers throughout the U.S., Canada and around the world. She kept the books, entered subscriptions, answered phones, and did any other job necessary. Whenever anyone needed help, care or encouragement, Joan was there with a kind word or deed. In 1994, when Harold passed on the business, Joan retired with him. Unfortunately, cancer struck soon after and she spent the last months of her life valiantly fighting it.

Even though she's no longer with us, Joan's good-hearted spirit still inspires FARM SHOW's staff today. She set a standard for customer service that we're all still trying to live up to.

**New Town Created To  
Defeat Hog Operation**

There is a new "town" springing up in north central Iowa. It won't have all the amenities that most towns have - no tavern, no stop lights, no grocery store. The only reason for its existence is to keep a big hog operation out of the area.

DeCoster Farms of Iowa wants to put a large hog confinement operation in Franklin County. Nearby residents hope to block construction by setting up a new town in the countryside to allow them to control zoning.

"All we want is local control and this is the only way I could think of to get it," Phillip DeMoss, a Sheffield, Iowa, attorney who came up with the idea, told FARM SHOW. "We got sixty-nine of seventy signatures of the eligible electorate on a petition to incorporate. We sent it to the City Development Board in Des Moines in June and we're waiting to see what their decision is, whether they'll require us to provide more city-type services than we outlined."

DeMoss and Sheffield-area farmers like Mary Ellen Sprung and Wallace Kreimeyer cite concerns about pollution, odor, and the economic impact of big confinements on family

farms. They claim DeCoster poultry operations have already polluted three wells in Franklin County, and they say the company has a poor environmental track record elsewhere in Iowa and the U.S.

Still, not everyone agrees with the group's tactics. "They all want to stop the 'factory farm', but what's the definition of a 'factory farm'?" said Norman Schmitt, Rudd, Iowa, president-elect of the Iowa Pork Producers Association. "I think it'll only discourage hog farmers from improving their operations."

Meanwhile, DeCoster Farms denies it has plans to develop the Big Hill area. However, there was some unexplained digging on DeCoster's land last winter. (By Jim Houtsma)

**Community-Owned Dairy  
May Eliminate Town's Taxes**

A small South Dakota town hopes to eliminate property taxes with income from a community-owned 1,200-head dairy operation.

Town leaders in Pollock, S. Dak., propose that the dairy be financed by state loans and local bonds. Talks are underway with state ag officials, South Dakota State University dairy specialists, and Northeast Council of Governments. A tentative site has even been selected outside town.

"We think we could all but eliminate property taxes," says Wayne Reiersen, beef cattleman and member of the Pollock Development Corp., which would operate the proposed dairy. Local tax burden is currently \$357,000 to run Pollock School.

There are a lot of gray areas involved in the brainstorm, which carries a start-up cost of \$3.2 to \$3.5 million. But backers say they're confident the dairy will make money.

The corporation would issue bonds to itself, which wouldn't require a public vote. The corporation retains ownership of the dairy and grants its profits to the school district for tax relief. The district would not be involved in operating the dairy.

The corporation might award scholarships to Pollock students and also hopes to use some of the dairy's income for a revolving loan fund for local businesses.

The dairy is expected to provide 15 to 17 new jobs, including two relatively high-paying positions - a herd manager and veterinarian.

Area farmers could sell feed to the dairy and provide bred heifers.

In addition, the dairy would help stabilize the local milk pool available for Pollock's Mid-American Dairy cheese plant, which processes 600,000 lbs. of milk a day, Reiersen notes.

If everything goes according to plan, the dairy will be up and running by the end of the year, but probably not up to full capacity of 1,000 Holstein milk cows and 200 dry cows. (Aberdeen American News)

**Farmers Win Battle  
Over Chemical Labeling**

A pesticide manufacturer recently settled a five-year-old class action lawsuit brought by a group of North Dakota farmers over questionable labeling practices of two of the company's popular herbicides.

BASF Corp. admitted no wrong-doing but settled with the farmers for an estimated \$1.5 million.

The case stemmed from the company's contention that the farmers were misusing Poast Plus, which it had introduced to compete with a competitor's low-priced product. Poast Plus is only labeled for use on soybeans and alfalfa. BASF's Poast, on the other hand, is labeled for a variety of crops including soybeans, sugar beets, flax, canola and potatoes.

Farmers quickly noted the fact that Poast and Poast Plus were virtually identical products, except that Poast Plus cost about \$4 less per acre. So, in the spring of 1992, farmers like Doug Daugs defied the product label and used Poast Plus on crops other than beans and alfalfa. When BASF found out, they complained to the state's ag department, which fined two dozen farmers \$100 each.

Soon after, however, ag department officials learned that the EPA had actually approved Poast Plus for use on crops other than soybeans and alfalfa. BASF, EPA said, made a "marketing decision" not to put those crops on the label.

So Daugs and two other farmers decided to fight back. "I can read a pesticide label just as good as anyone else can," he said. "When I read the label on one product and it's the

same as the label on the other product, it seems to me as they're the same product."

In addition to the cash settlement, BASF agreed to reimburse the fines the farmers paid and give them future price breaks. (Associated Press)

A fellow driving down the road came upon a farmer corraling hundreds of sheep for transport to market. The fellow got out of his car, went up and chatted with the farmer.

"I'll bet you one of your lambs I can tell you the exact number of sheep you had in the corral," the stranger said.

The farmer, not believing it was possible, said sure. The stranger looked over the corral for a moment, turned to the farmer, and said "463".

The farmer, who knew the count himself, was astonished. "Well, a deal's a deal," he said. "Go pick out your lamb."

On the man's way to his car, the farmer yelled to the stranger. "Double or nothing, I bet I can tell you what you do for a living and where you go to work."

"OK," said the stranger. "Go ahead."

"You're an economist and you work for the government in Washington, D.C."

This time it was the stranger's turn to be astonished. "How'd you know?" he asked.

"Well, you go ahead and put down my dog and I'll tell you."

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