

# NEWSLETTER

## HOWARD COUNTY FARM BUREAU

**VOL. 15, NO. 3**

**MAY, 2006**

PHILIP JONES, PRESIDENT, (410) 442-2679; HOWIE FEAGA, VICE-PRESIDENT, (410) 531-1872;

MERHLYN BARNES, SECRETARY, (410) 489-4465;

TIMOTHY BARKLEY, TREASURER (301) 829-3778;

ALLAN BANDEL, NEWSLETTER EDITOR, (410) 489-7875

WEB SITE - [www.howardfarmbureau.org](http://www.howardfarmbureau.org)

**Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast.** The next Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast is scheduled for **8:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 11, 2006** in the Dining Hall at the Howard County Fair Grounds. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us.

Our guest speaker for this final breakfast meeting of the 2006 spring season and until next fall will be our own **Delegate Gale H. Bates** who, along with Delegate Warren E. Miller, represents Howard County's Legislative District 9A in Annapolis. Now that the regular 2006 Maryland Legislative Session has come to an end, Delegate Bates will bring us up to date with a summary of actions (and inactions) that took place this year regarding some of the session's most important issues.

This promises to be an extremely informative presentation featuring details about some of the favorable measures that passed and became law as well as a discussion of some of the "not so good" things that happened relative to Howard County. It is anticipated that Delegate Bates might possibly discuss topics such as veto overrides, elections, fiscal responsibility, education, wineries, pensions, electricity rates and veterans' tax credits.

Don't miss what assuredly will be an informative and interesting program. Bring your spouse, and/or a friend. Enjoy the food, the fellowship and the lively exchange of information. Breakfast will be served at 8:00 AM as usual and the program will begin at 8:30 AM.

Please RSVP by noon, Tuesday, May 11, by calling either Charlotte Mullinix, at (410) 489-4510 or Martha Clark at (410) 531-3455. The cost of the breakfast is \$8.00 per person, payable at the door.

The formal part of the program is expected to conclude by 9:00 a.m., but you may stay longer if you wish. We are looking forward to seeing you on **May 11** at the next Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast.

### Farm Bureau President's Message

by **J. Philip Jones**

**Howard County Farm Bureau**

I am very happy to report that both the state and the county Farm Bureau have had a very good 2005. Both membership and revenues were up and we are operating in the black. Mel Hollingworth, our new administrator, has settled in and is doing a good job.

On the county level, I would love to see more growth in the Young Farmer programs. There are a fair number of young people interested in one or the other segment of agriculture. But in general, they belong only to organizations pertaining to their own field of interest. Farm Bureau Youth programs offer a much broader view of agriculture while helping people realize the problems as well as the opportunities in areas other than their specialties.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006, The Baltimore Sun ran a big article on atrazine, an important corn weed control chemical that has been in widespread use for at least the past 50 years. It seems that the European Union is now moving to ban atrazine. This is not a new controversy. The EPA has done a lot of research on atrazine and believes it to be of little threat to the environment.

However, in order to settle a lawsuit, the EPA has agreed to study atrazine's effect on turtles in the Chesapeake Bay. The article stated that Round-Up could be used in place of atrazine. We farmers know that Round-Up works best in conjunction with genetically modified (GM) crops. I wonder if the folks who don't like atrazine will like GM crops any better.

My dermatologist took time out from burning things off my skin to opine that farmers were too production oriented for their own good. By that, he meant that we give top priority to getting the job done with health and safety concerns a distant second. This helps to explain why farming is so dangerous.

Every farmer that I know, including myself, has experienced some farm-related injuries. Tragically, a fine young farmer lost his life in a Howard County farm accident just last summer. Be very careful and have a safe and bountiful summer.

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**2006 Howard County Farm-City Celebration**  
 by **Ginger S. Myers**  
**Howard County Economic Development Authority**

The 2006 Howard County Farm-City Celebration Council held its re-organization meeting in March and will continue to meet on the first Wednesday of each month until the Celebration in September. March was a busy meeting with the Council voting to schedule the celebration to encompass three weekends - **Sept. 23 – Oct. 7**.

Due to several religious holidays falling on or around September 23, the official kick-off of the Celebration will be held on September 26 with the "County Executive Job Exchange" and luncheon.

This year's theme is "Farms, Families and Friends" and will promote folks getting out to Western Howard County to visit farms and many of the over 30 different events already planned. These include farm tours, demonstrations and educational opportunities, bus trips, an "Iron Chef" contest featuring "Howard County Grown" products and much more.

The Farm-City Celebration highlights our farm/city interdependence and promotes understanding and appreciation between people on both sides of that imaginary boundary separating town from country.

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**Attention – All Eligible "Miss Howard Farm Bureau"**  
**Contestants!**  
 by **Merhlyn Barnes**  
**Howard County Farm Bureau Women**

August will be here before we know it and our annual "2006 Miss Howard Farm Bureau" contest will kick off the opening of the 61<sup>st</sup> Howard County Fair. This year's contest will take place on Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup>. Any interested single girls between the ages of 16 and 19 should contact Annette Fleishell, (301) 854-6741; Jennifer Crivelli, (410) 960-2459; or Dawn Watkins, (301) 253-2921.

In order to participate, the contestant or the contestant's

family must be a member of Howard County Farm Bureau. Cash awards, a scholarship and prizes are available to all participants.

This is a great opportunity to promote agriculture in Howard County and to represent Howard County Farm Bureau and the Howard County Fair.

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**Young Farmers Announce a New Contest.**  
 by **Jennifer Crivelli, President**  
**Howard County Farm Bureau Young Farmers**

Howard County Young Farmers announce the Future Farmer and Little Miss Howard County Farm Bureau Contest. The contest will be held the first weekend of the Howard County Fair in August, 2006.

Applicants must be between 8 and 11 years of age by August 1, 2006 and the applicant's family must be a member of the Farm Bureau. Each contestant will be required to present a display board highlighting Howard County Agriculture and complete an interview with a panel of judges.

For an application, please contact Jen Crivelli, Howard County Young Farmers Chair, at (443) 285-3426, or by email at [jcrivelli@comcast.net](mailto:jcrivelli@comcast.net). Agricultural scholarships will be awarded to the winners.

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**Winning Maryland Livestock Judging Team**  
**Headed to Europe -- Needs Financial Help**  
 by **Caragh Fitzgerald**  
**Extension Educator**  
**Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Having placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the National Contest, Maryland's Livestock Judging Team will soon be traveling to Europe to compete internationally. We are extremely proud of these young people, especially since three of the four team members, Rebecca Hamilton, Ben Warfield and Lindsay Smith, are all from Howard County. The fourth member, Maria Stevens, is from neighboring Frederick County.

The Marylanders were the high team in Sheep, and Rebecca Hamilton was the high individual in Sheep. The team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in Swine, and Ben Warfield was the High Individual. The team placed 6<sup>th</sup> in Beef, 3<sup>rd</sup> in Oral Reasons, and Rebecca and Maria were All-Americans (in the top 20).

The team has obviously brought great honor to the State of

Maryland, and especially to Howard County locally.

Unfortunately, the cost of this "once in a lifetime" trip will be approximately \$30,000, most all of which must be raised privately. At its last meeting, the Howard County Farm Bureau Board of Directors voted unanimously to contribute \$1,000 toward meeting the team's goal. But this still leaves quite a ways to go.

It is not often that we have a winning national team like this, especially one so well represented by Howard County youth. The team would greatly appreciate, and highly deserves, all the financial assistance that we might provide.

If you would care to make a personal donation toward helping the members of the Maryland Livestock Judging Team to offset the expenses for their trip to Europe, please make your check payable to the **Maryland 4-H Foundation** and mail it to:

J. Willard Lemaster  
c/o International Livestock Judging Trip  
Maryland 4-H Center  
8020 Greenmead Drive  
College Park, MD 20740-4000

**Seminar Scheduled:**  
**Horse Health and Disease Prevention**  
by **Caragh Fitzgerald**  
**Extension Educator**  
**Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Recent outbreaks of contagious equine diseases have highlighted the need for every horse owner to have a sound health plan for their animals. On Thursday, June 8, from 2 – 8 PM, Maryland Cooperative Extension and other agencies and businesses will sponsor the "Horse Health and Disease Prevention Seminar."

The seminar locations will be announced and will include a central location and electronic broadcasts to outlying locations. The preliminary agenda for the program includes discussions of standard equine health programs, vaccinations, and other activities to prevent disease. The seminar is appropriate for owners of operations of any size, from pleasure horses to breeding operations.

For more information, please contact the Howard County Extension office at 410-313-2707.

**Howard County Farmers' Markets**  
by **Ginger S. Myers**  
**Howard County Economic Development Authority**

Featuring the season's freshest, locally grown produce, baked goods, fruits of the season, flowers, transplants, organically grown produce and specialty items.

**Oakland Mills Village Center**  
5851 Oliver Place, Columbia  
Tuesdays, May through October  
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**Mt. Pisgah A.M.E. Church**  
5901 Cedar Fern Court, Columbia  
Tuesdays, May through October  
3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

**East Columbia Library**  
6600 Cradlerock Way, Columbia  
Thursdays, May through mid-November  
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM

**Glenwood Library**  
2350 Route 97, Glenwood  
Saturdays, June through October  
9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

**Come for the Food**  
**Come Meet the Farmers**  
**Come for the Fun**

WIC and Senior FMNP Checks Accepted at all of these markets.

**Cruise for Agriculture**  
by **Jen Crivelli, President**  
**Howard County FB Young Farmers**

Sponsored by the Maryland Young Farmers, plan to join a fun-filled seven-night Western Caribbean Cruise aboard the luxurious cruise ship Voyager of the Seas. Cruise proceeds will also benefit YF scholarships, leadership conferences and retreats.

Departing January 13, 2007 from Miami, Florida, ports of call will include Labadee, Haiti; Ocho Rios, Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands; and Cozumel, Mexico. Enjoy eight fun-filled and relaxing days aboard this well-appointed cruise ship. Visit Seven Mile Beach and Stingray City on Grand Cayman, Jamaica's famous Ocho Rios, home of

Dunn's River Falls and go snorkeling or visit the Mayan Temples in Cozumel, Mexico.

For a price quote and more detailed information, and to make your reservations, contact Jen at The Cruise Web, Inc. (800) 377-9383, ext 234 or by email at [jenniferc@cruiseweb.com](mailto:jenniferc@cruiseweb.com)

An initial deposit is due by June 8, 2006 with final payment required by October 4, 2006. Don't miss this great opportunity for a fun-filled and relaxing time with Maryland Farm Bureau friends.

### **Conservation Accomplishments for 2005**

by **Jim Myers, USDA-NRCS**  
**District Conservationist**  
**Howard SCD**

The Howard Soil Conservation District and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service announce the following conservation-related activities that were completed in Howard County during 2005.

- Fence – 4,300 feet
- Stream crossing – 1
- Watering facility – 5
- Heavy use areas - 1
- Filter strip - 0.3 acres
- Cover crop – 216 acres
- Pond reconstruction – 2
- Crop Rotation – 335 acres
- Pasture planting – 50 acres
- Waste storage structures – 2
- Conservation cover – 7 acres
- Prescribed grazing – 29 acres
- Grassed waterways – 2 acres
- Underground outlet – 235 feet
- Roof runoff management – 2 sites
- Nutrient management – 219 acres
- Residue management – 359 acres
- Best management practices installed – 45
- Farmers applying best management practices – 22
- Conservation plans written – 28 plans on 2,585 acres
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management plans written – 2
- Comprehensive Nut. Management plans completed – 1

If you have any questions about these conservation practices, or would like to receive more information, please contact the Howard Soil Conservation District Office at (410) 489-7987.

The Howard Soil Conservation District, the Howard County

Cooperative Extension Service and the local USDA, NRCS office also conducted several educational activities during 2005. These functions included a mid winter ag meeting, a horse seminar, and a horse pasture walk.

### **Pesticide Resistance Explained** by **Caragh B. Fitzgerald** **Extension Educator** **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

The rapid increase in weed resistance to the herbicide glyphosate has farmers focusing on pesticide resistance in a new way. Still, resistance is nothing new. And, while Maryland grain farmers are used to accommodating certain weed resistances, such as triazine, resistance to pesticides spans all pest types from insects to fungi to vertebrate. Resistance can be a complicated mechanism, and this article addresses some questions I have received.

I sprayed my herbicide/insecticide/fungicide/etc. and it didn't work. Does that mean the pest is resistant? Not necessarily. As you know, there are many reasons for pesticide failure, and you should check those first. Did you mix anything else in the tank? What is the pH of your spray water? Is your spray equipment working properly and were the rate and timing of application appropriate? If it's a pest new to your farm, double-check that you have identified it properly. If all these are OK, then you might indeed be dealing with resistance. Be extra-careful before your next application, and be sure to take good notes. Contact my office if you still suspect resistance.

I think that the plants in my field get more tolerant to the herbicides I spray on them—the same plants, within a single year. Can that be true? Resistance development is actually a type of evolution. It happens to groups (populations) of pests and their offspring, not to an individual. An individual plant's degree of resistance does not change during its life.

What does it mean that resistance happens to populations, not individuals? A few individual organisms may carry some natural resistance to the pesticide and do not die. That means that even after the pesticide is applied, they are still around and able to reproduce. Over time, if you continue to spray that pesticide, there will be more and more resistant pests, since the susceptible ones won't live long enough to reproduce. The population actually shifts and contains more resistant pests.

If I have a resistant pest population, and I stop using that particular pesticide, the resistance will eventually 'un-

evolve' and not be a problem, right? Sometimes that is true. For example, maybe plants that are resistant to a particular herbicide produce half as many seeds as plants that are not resistant. As long as you are spraying the pesticide, more resistant plants will grow than susceptible plants. Stop spraying the herbicide, and eventually the weed population will shift back to the susceptible biotypes, since each susceptible plant produces more seeds. However, sometimes the resistant pests grow and reproduce just as well as the susceptible types. So even if you stop using the pesticide, the population will not change quickly.

With the development of glyphosate resistance and the possibility of fungicide use on soybeans, we are facing increased opportunity for pest resistance in our farm systems. Now is a good time to brush up on what resistance means to pay attention to recommendations about avoiding it. If you have any questions or suspect that you have developed some resistance on your farm, please contact me at 410-313-2710 or [cfitz@umd.edu](mailto:cfitz@umd.edu).

**Medicaid Changes**  
by **Timothy S. Barkley, Sr.**  
**JD, CFP, CSA**  
**Attorney at Law**

In February, Congress passed the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. As predicted in this column last year, access to Medicaid benefits has been restricted.

There are four major areas in which the law has changed. First, and most notably, it will be more difficult to make transfers to qualify for Medicaid.

Under prior law, transfers for less than full and adequate consideration within thirty-six months of application could trigger a period of disqualification from Medicaid. The period of disqualification was computed by dividing the amount or value of the asset transferred by the imputed monthly cost of care, \$4,300 in Maryland. The disqualification period ran from the date of the transfer.

Under the new law, the "look-back" period is extended to sixty months. The disqualification period runs from the date the applicant would otherwise be qualified for Medicaid. Because the date of qualification is not necessarily the date of application, it can be difficult to plan a transfer that will not create a disqualification.

Further, transfers made before the new law went into effect are not "grandfathered." Rather, the new look-back

period applies to those transfers.

Assume that a healthy couple gave their half-million-dollar house to their child four years ago upon entry into a continuing-care retirement community. Under prior law, they could apply for Medicaid now and the transfer would not even be noted, much less produce a period of disqualification.

Assume that the same couple had given their grandchild \$20,000 to help with college tuition one year ago. Under prior law, the period of disqualification, five months, (\$20,000 divided by \$4,300, rounded up) would have run from the date of transfer, and there would be no actual time during which Medicaid would not pay for care.

This result does not prevail under present law. Because the look-back period is now five years, both transfers would be discovered, and would result in a period of disqualification of 121 months – over ten years! Further, this period of disqualification from Medicaid payment would start to run from the date of transfer. The couple would likely never qualify for Medicaid.

In this example, then, the simple answer is the same as under prior law. The couple should either purchase long-term care insurance to cover at least the period of disqualification, or retain enough to privately pay that same period of time. Thus, no application is ever made in a period during which the transfer will be discovered.

However, as is the case now, future changes to the law extending the look-back period will likely not grandfather prior transfers. It becomes difficult, then, to plan with any assurance.

The public policy of this country is becoming more and more explicit. For all but the very poor, the purchase of lifetime long-term care insurance is all but mandatory. Congress has made it clear that long-term care funding is more important than a comfortable retirement or even any retirement at all.

The national and state budgets simply do not contain enough dollars to pay for publicly funded long-term care. And, given the experience of citizens in countries where medical care is publicly funded, perhaps that is not a bad result.

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**Medicaid's Teeth**  
by **Timothy S. Barkley, Sr.**  
**J D, CFP, CSA**  
**Attorney at Law**

As mentioned in the preceding article, the rules for Medicaid qualification have changed to make it more difficult to receive medical welfare benefits after giving away large assets or significant sums of money. In brief, the application "looks back" sixty months for "transfers" prior to the date of application. The period of disqualification from medical welfare begins from the date one would otherwise qualify, not the date of transfer as under prior law.

The public policy of this Country is clear: one must pay for one's own care to the extent of one's own assets before expecting others to do so through tax levies supporting medical welfare. This makes perfect sense. If a neighbor approached, asking us for donations to pay for his long-term nursing home care so that he could be free to give his money to his children, we would all look askance.

Yet many of this author's clients expect just that when demanding that "the government" pay for care so that they have the "freedom to transfer their assets" to their children. Yet "the government" only gets money from us, the citizens. So demanding that "the government" pay for our care after transfers is really a demand that we all pay for the care of some, so that they can keep their wealth in their family.

Of course, that is not the real issue. The real issue is that folks feel that the high cost and long duration of care are unfair, and that they should not be expected to sacrifice their hard-earned assets "to the nursing home." Until a better answer than high-cost nursing home care is found, however, it seems more than just to expect those who can afford to pay to do so before dipping into the pockets of the rest of us for the cost of care through government exactions to pay for medical welfare.

Medicaid qualification requires clearing three hurdles: medical, income and asset. An applicant is medically qualified if he or she needs skilled nursing care every day. This eliminates many who need regular custodial care but only sporadic skilled nursing care. An applicant is income qualified if his or her income is less than the cost of care. This is a fairly routine inquiry for unmarried applicants, but can be more difficult for married applicants or applicants supporting a disabled child.

An applicant is asset qualified if his or her non-exempt assets do not exceed the threshold. For an unmarried

applicant, that threshold is \$2,000. For a married applicant, the spouse can keep the family home and other assets, and a certain amount of cash. These assets and amounts have changed, and will be discussed in a future article.

In the last article we discussed a hypothetical Medicaid applicant who transferred her \$500,000 home to a child before applying for Medicaid. If that transfer fell within the sixty-month "look-back" period, the parent would be disqualified from Medicaid for a period of 117 months (\$500,000 divided by the imputed cost of care, \$4,300, rounded up), or nearly ten years. However, the disqualification period does not begin to run until the applicant is otherwise qualified.

Suppose the applicant was determined to need only custodial care, as is often the case with an applicant suffering from dementia. She would not medically qualify until she needed skilled care. If she did not need skilled care until a year had elapsed, the period of disqualification for the transfer would not start until a year after application. Because the prior application had "caught" the transfer, though, it would still be in the records, even if the transfer were made more than sixty months before the actual date of qualification.

There are obvious solutions to this dilemma, the most straightforward of which would be not to give away assets of significant value. Another would be to purchase sixty-month or lifetime-coverage long-term care insurance, which would free one to give away other assets. Another would be to defer application until sixty months had elapsed since the transfer, requiring the retention of the cost of sixty months of care, in this geographic area between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

All of these strategies have their benefits and pitfalls. You should consult with qualified counsel to determine which might work for you.

The Deficit Reduction Act has been dubbed by some the "nursing home bankruptcy bill." This assertion presumes that those disqualified due to transfers would already require skilled nursing care, presumably already in a nursing home. They would also by definition be destitute as a condition of qualification for medical welfare, with income insufficient to pay the cost of care. This dire result might occur, but this author thinks that there will be a different outcome.

The Maryland Code provides, in section 13-102 of the Family Law Article, that an adult child cannot refuse to provide a destitute parent with "food, shelter, care and clothing." This provision can be enforced by the State's

Attorney in Court. The provision of “food, shelter, care and clothing” can occur in a nursing home.

This author believes that this will be one of the nursing home funding mechanisms that alleviates the current crisis. Surely it is not unethical or immoral at least to require that the child who received the asset from the parent support the parent with the value of that asset. It is certain that Courts will follow this logic and compel payment.

Review your financial plan and be sure that you are not inadvertently caught by this change in the law. Consult with your professional advisor. In the next article: more on changes to Medicaid.

**Silo Filling Time - More Recollections  
from the “Good ol’ Days” of Rural Howard County  
by Allan Bandel**

During the 1940s and early 1950s, instead of the many new sub-divisions featuring expensive, modern new homes that we now see spreading across the Howard County landscape, primarily, we saw many traditional family-sized farms, mostly dairy and livestock. And standing erect beside the barn, were one or more tall cylindrical structures called silos. The silos were used to store animal feed, normally a pleasantly aromatic anaerobically fermented plant material known as ensilage. But do you remember what it was like to fill one of those tall structures 50 years ago? Or do you even care to know?

In contrast to today’s methods, silo filling back in those days was so highly labor intensive that the task often became a major community effort, an event at least as great as haymaking and almost as big perhaps as wheat threshing or hog butchering. Of necessity, because of the relatively high amount of manual labor required during that era, neighbors often combined forces and helped one another in order to complete the job as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Except in rare circumstances, very little, if any, hard cash ever seemed to change hands when neighbors helped one another in this way. One neighbor might bring a tractor to power the silage cutter/blower at the silo. Another might contribute a wagon or a team of horses to haul the loads of corn in from the field. Someone in the community usually owned the critically important silo filler, the ensilage cutter/blower that was used to simultaneously chop and blow the silage into the tall silo. Some neighbors might only contribute their labor. But everyone lent a willing hand with the certain knowledge that when their turn came, the neighbors would all be right there to help fill their silo too.

There could be an occasional extra hired hand or two who

were paid hourly wages. But for the most part, neighbors simply swapped labor and equipment on an honor, in-kind, basis. Neighbors willingly helped one another and the silos got filled, the hard work usually associated with a generous helping of good natured fellowship, fun and plenty of good food thrown in. In spite of the hard work, silo filling was usually a memorable, exciting and fun-filled affair (at least for us kids).

Throughout the 1940s at least, most Howard County silos were filled almost exclusively with chopped corn -- ears, stalk, leaves – the entire plant. Proper timing of the harvest was critical, ideally taking place when the grain was in the early dent (or soft dough) stage. If harvested too early, when the immature kernels were still in the “milky” stage, excess moisture contributed to improper fermentation and many of the feed nutrients were lost in the dark, liquid, foul-smelling material that drained from the bottom of the silo. But, if the corn plants were allowed to mature and become too dry, it would be impossible to pack the silage tightly enough in the silo to exclude excess oxygen. With too much air remaining in the loosely packed silage, the desired fermentation again, could not take place. Mold would develop and excessive spoilage losses would be the unwelcome result.

When silo filling day finally arrived, a crew of energetic men armed with specially designed, short-handled corn knives, headed into the field and began cutting the corn. Gathering an armful of stalks as they cut it a few inches above the ground, they loaded the stalks onto a farm wagon being driven slowly beside the workers. Horses pulled the loaded wagon to the silo where the green stalks were hand-fed into the noisy silo filler – the silage cutter/blower.

Some of the corn cutting labor in the field was reduced with the introduction of the horse-drawn corn harvester, a simple sled-like device equipped with a single fixed (and very sharp) horizontal knife. The knife sliced through the stalks a few inches above the ground as the sled was pulled forward. A strong man was stationed on the sled’s small wooden platform, sometimes supported by a tall sturdy seat or pole. His job, as the sled moved forward, was to gather the stalks in his arms as they were cut and drop them in neat piles behind the sled.

Eventually, the mechanical horse-pulled or tractor-drawn corn binder took over this task. This machine mechanically cut the stalks, automatically twine-tied them into manageable bundles, and then dropped them on the ground. But the heavy bundles still had to be manually lifted onto a wagon and stacked firmly for the trip from the field to the silo.

Significantly more hand labor was eliminated when the PTO-driven or engine-driven field chopper became available in later years. These machines eliminated much of the heavy physical hand labor associated with cutting and hauling the crop from the field to the silo. But, during the early 1940s, the field chopper was still just a wishful dream and years in the future for most Howard County farmers.

The machine that actually elevated the chopped corn into the silo was a combination chopper and blower. The spinning chopper blades cut the corn plant into small pieces of perhaps ½-inch to 1-inch in length. The heavy belt-driven wheel containing the blades also had several paddles attached to it that physically threw the cut material, with a strong blast of air, in through the open top of the silo. A vertical pipe 6 or 7-inches in diameter was the conduit.

On our farm, an old *Papec* brand silage cutter/blower was belted to the largest tractor that we had available since the machine demanded so much power. This job usually fell to our little 1940 vintage John Deere model "B" tractor. Although small by today's standards, the "B" was our only tractor at the time. It had recently replaced a horse and a mule, both of which were still on the farm. Rated at a modest 18 horsepower, this little tractor really had its work cut out for it. Even though it was a tough little tractor, an occasional plugged blower pipe, or thrown belt, or even a rare stalled engine provided some unwelcome interruptions during the busy day.

A fairly large work crew was necessary for silo filling in those days. In addition to the group of men working in the field, another team of workers "wrestled" the heavy, awkward corn stalks off of the wagon and into the chopper, cut-end first. The chopper/blower had a mechanical conveyor to help feed the stalks into the "throat" of the machine. Close proximity to so many moving parts meant that these workers had to be constantly aware of where they placed their hands and feet.

The silo filler's conveyor featured an endless moving chain fitted with wide wooden slats. Forward and reverse movement was controlled by a lever located near the cutting blades. Some regulation of the rate of feed into the rapidly spinning chopper blades was thus possible. The operators had to prevent the stalks from being fed in too fast lest the chopper become overloaded and the blower pipe plugged.

When hurried along too much, plugging the blower pipe became an unwelcome interruption (except perhaps for the individual(s) who had "volunteered" to do the least pleasant task of all, working inside the silo, leveling and packing the silage as it was blown in). When plugging occurred, the pipe often had to be disassembled by removing several short bolts where the pipe was connected to the blower. The pipe was then cleared, often using the long handle of a pitchfork, or by gently beating on the pipe with a short piece of a 2 by 4. When clear, the pipe was then bolted back in place and silo filling was resumed.

The person working inside the silo spread the freshly cut silage with a pitchfork and packed it by foot, walking around and around the silo's circumference as the blowing silage swirled about him. As the level in the silo rose, the small square doors accessing the silo from the outside chute had to be re-installed. Usually, the bottom door was removed before filling began. Then, as the silo was filled, each door immediately above was taken out in turn and inserted in the opening below.

All of the doors were the same size, so this procedure normally worked well. Only when the last door was needed at the top of the silo was the extra door from the bottom opening lifted up the chute and put into place.

In some cases, a flexible "down pipe" was hung from the top end of the blower pipe to facilitate distributing the silage around the interior of the silo with less physical effort. Working the inside of the silo was typically not the most pleasant job since the flow of air from the blower blasted the silage around often helping it to find its way into the worker's eyes, ears, nose and hair as well as inside his clothes. But, at least there was plenty of air movement within the silo which was quite welcome on a hot late-summer day.

The blowing air also helped disperse the build-up of any highly toxic silo gas, a heavy low-lying yellowish or even red to dark brown nitrogen dioxide gas which is generated during the early fermentation process. Numerous cases of farm workers being killed by accidental asphyxiation upon entering an improperly ventilated silo have been well-documented over the years.

Because of today's vanishing dairy and beef farms in Howard County, there are not very many of those tall majestic upright silos remaining in use today. But, comparing how the few remaining highly mechanized modern upright silos are filled now with how they were filled in the 1940s and early 1950s, the former method appears formidable by today's standards.

All things considered, wouldn't you have to agree now that perhaps the only really "good" thing about those "good ol' days" were the many pleasant memories that those events of yesteryear generated? Time has a way of accenting the pleasant and gently "smoothing over" some of life's less agreeable experiences.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2006**

- May 6-7 **Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival.** Howard County Fairgrounds. West Friendship, MD.
- May 9 **Maryland Farm Bureau Women "Spring Fling"**. Bus trip to Washington, DC. Arrangements had not been finalized at the time this Newsletter went to the printer. Please contact Merhlyn Barnes for details if you would like to take part in this activity.
- May 11 **Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast.** 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM. Dining Hall, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD. (See details on page 1 of this Newsletter.) \*

- May 20 **Internal Parasite Management (Sheep and Goats) Workshop.** Location: Washington County, PA. Info: (724) 356-2284 or [geese@hky.com](mailto:geese@hky.com)
- Jun 1 **High Tunnel Production of Commercial Cut Flowers.** Audience: Commercial cut flower growers. Location: White House Flower farm, Brookville, MD. Info: (301) 596-9413 or [www.agnr.umd.edu/IPMNET](http://www.agnr.umd.edu/IPMNET)
- June 8 **Maryland Horse Health and Disease Prevention Seminar.** Locations to be announced. See announcement elsewhere in this Newsletter. \*
- June 17 **Maryland Grape Growers Field Day.** Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Upper Marlboro, MD. \*
- Jun 29-30 **Fundamentals of Nutrient Management Planning.** Location: Annapolis, MD \*
- Jul 28 (TENTATIVE) **Maryland Grain Checkoff Program Referendum.** Location: Howard County Extension Office (and other Maryland County Extension Offices). \*
- Aug 5-12 **61<sup>st</sup> Annual Howard County Fair.** Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD. \*
- Aug 24 **Crops Twilight Meeting & Barbecue.** Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Upper Marlboro, MD. \*
- Sep 11 **Annual MAEF Golf Outing and Fundraiser.** For details, contact George Mayo, MAEF Executive Director, at (410) 939-9030.
- Sep 14 **Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast.** 8:00 am. Dining Hall, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD. (Tentative date and speaker to be announced.)
- Sep 23-Oct 7 **Howard County Farm - City Celebration.** Official Kick-off - September 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Sep 23-24 **Annual Farm Heritage Days.** Howard County Living Farm Museum Grounds. Located on Route 144 opposite Howard County Fairgrounds. West Friendship, MD.\*

- Sep 30 **Open House – University of Maryland Clarksville Research Farm (CMREC),** Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD. \*
- Oct TBA **Deer Management for Nurseries.** Audience: Nursery and greenhouse managers. Location: To be determined. Info: (301) 596-9413, [www.agnr.umd.edu/IPMNET](http://www.agnr.umd.edu/IPMNET)
- Nov 18 **University of Maryland Horse Conference.** Location to be announced.\*

\*[NOTE] Unless otherwise indicated, contact Caragh Fitzgerald, Maryland Cooperative Extension — Howard County, (410) 313-2707 for more information. **Many programs require pre-registration and/or a fee.** For programs sponsored by Maryland Cooperative Extension, if you need special assistance to participate, please contact the person indicated at least two weeks in advance of the event.

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### Something to Think About.

A New York tourist ambled into a small town blacksmith shop and picked up a horseshoe without realizing that it had just come from the forge. Dropping it quickly, he put his sizzling hand into his pocket and tried to appear nonchalant.

“Kinda hot, wasn’t it?” asked the blacksmith.

“Nope,” said the New Yorker. “It just doesn’t take me long to look at a horseshoe.”

*And then, there was...*

The young city girl who told the farmer, “I found a horseshoe this morning.”

“Do you know what that means?”

“Yes,” the young girl replied, “some poor horse is walking around in his stocking feet.”

— from: *Country Chuckles, Cracks & Knee-Slappers*

Edited by Mike Lessiter