

**Smörgasbord**



Harold Johnson  
Editor

If you've been wondering how those widely ballyhooed "essay contests" for selling farms, ranches and other real estate are working out, here's the "score" on four separate contests we checked out shortly before this issue went to press.

**Ferryville, Wis.:** "It was a great idea except it didn't work," reports Amy Cisney who, along with husband Jim, tried unsuccessfully to give their 51 acre farm away as the grand prize in an essay contest. To win the contest (which we told you about last fall in FARM SHOW's Vol. 5, No. 6 issue) contestants had to send in a \$50 entry fee and explain, in 25 words or less, "I want to own a farm in Wisconsin because . . ."

The Cisneys spent about \$1,000 to have entry forms printed up and on promotion and legal fees, and another \$1,000 to buy out of their real estate contract so they could go ahead with the essay contest. Because lotteries are illegal in Wisconsin (and in most other states) the Cisneys introduced "an element of skill" by requiring a written essay, along with a \$50 entry fee. Entries were mailed direct to the Cisney farm and were to be judged by an independent firm.

In promoting the contest, the Cisneys said it would take 1,700 entries at \$50 each, for a total of \$85,000, to make it work. They ended up with right at 450 total entries, or about 26% of their goal. They've called the contest off and refunded all the entry money.

Says Amy: "We're not sorry we had a go at it, even though it didn't work out. We learned a lot and met many interesting people. We've got the farm listed with a local realtor for \$76,000."

Here, in 25 words or less, is one of the 450 entries the Cisneys received: "Fifty bucks for heaven on earth? Friends, you've got a winner! A home again in my state of birth at 98 cents an acre."

**Valley Springs, Calif.:** After balking at the \$20,000 commission a real estate broker wanted to sell their 10 acre boysenberry farm valued at between \$180,000 and \$200,000, Daniel and Joyce Steward decided last fall to give it away as the grand prize in a sweepstakes contest. On the advice of their lawyer, they incorporated the element of skill (an "I would like to win a 10 acre Central California farm because . . ." essay in 25 words or less) and a \$150 entry fee. They also announced at the start that the contest would be called off if they received less than 1,000 entries. The original Jan. 31 deadline was extended to April 30. Three judges from a local college were to pick the winner.

When FARM SHOW talked to them two weeks ago, one week before the April 30 deadline, the Stewards were teetering on the horns of a dilemma:

"We've received only 617 total entries at \$150 each, which is quite a bit short of our goal of 1,000 entries. We've also run into a serious snag with postal officials who have threatened to press charges if we go ahead with the contest and give the farm away. Their quarrel seems to be that we

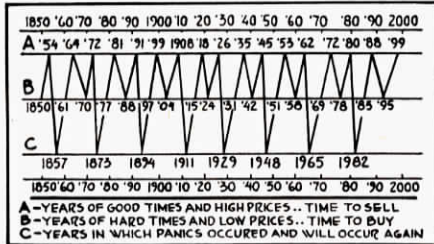
had entries addressed to a P.O. box number. That, apparently, was a big mistake on our part. We should have had them sent direct to our farm, or to some other specific address," Joyce told FARM SHOW. "Because of the snag, we'll probably cancel the contest and refund the money. If it hadn't been for this problem with postal officials, we probably would have extended the deadline and tried to get the 1,000 entries we needed."

The Stewards say they've spent \$12,000 on legal fees and for printing and distributing 130,000 contest entry forms. Their 10 acre boysenberry farm is located several miles from their 300 acre headquarters olive ranch and is being sold because it's inconvenient for them to operate — not because it isn't profitable: "We think it can provide \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year profit to the owner and is a good buy at the \$150,000 we were hoping to net from the contest," Joyce told FARM SHOW.

**Tony, Wis.:** "We only got seven entries. We needed at least 2,000," laments Louisa Ostrowski. She and her husband Phil decided last fall to conduct an essay contest as a means of eliminating the debt load they'd acquired since buying their 160 acre dairy farm in 1977. For \$100 and 25 words or less, they offered to give away the farm or \$100,000, whichever the winner wanted. The minimum number of entries was set at 2,000, and the maximum at 5,000. The Ostrowskis figure the contest, which ended March 15 a dismal failure, put them about \$800 deeper into debt.

**St. Paul, Minn.:** Home-owner David Brass got very few takers on his recent offer to give away his three bedroom home as the first prize in a "\$100 and 25 words or less" essay contest. He had hoped to get a minimum of 800 entries at \$100 each. He also offered 10 second-place prizes of \$200 each. Despite nationwide publicity, the contest had only attracted 135 total entrants when Brass announced he was calling it off and would refund the entry fees.

FARM SHOW has tracked down an amazing chart which has predicted this country's economic health with uncanny accuracy. Drawn in the early 1800's the chart predicted "good and bad" to the year 2000. Its unknown author has proved to be



unbelievably accurate in predicting — almost 200 years into the future — the annual ups and downs of our nation's business climate. The original chart, which was reportedly found in an old desk in Philadelphia back in 1902, starts with the year 1810. We chopped off a few years, picking it up at the year 1850.

You'll note that the chart is right on target in predicting, way back in 1810, that 1982 would be a year of low prices and hard times.

The top "A" line indicates years of good times and high prices — the time when, according to the chart, stocks should be sold. The "B" years reflect low prices and hard times — the time to buy stocks. The "C" years are panic or depression years.

As predicted, we went from "good times" in 1980 to "hard times" in 1982. Some of you plungers will remember 1929. Note also the accurate peaks predicted for 1918 and 1926. Or, how about 1972, another peak year when the Dow Jones Industrial average rose above 1,000?

Best news of all is that, now that we've hit the predicted bottom for 1982, the forecast is for "good times and high prices" for most of the next 20 years.

**Early last March**, a disastrous fire ripped through the hog breeding and nursery buildings on the Butler Brothers farm near Austin, Minn. Within a few hours, the fire destroyed their \$750,000 facility, killing more than 4,000 hogs.

During the fire, the Butlers risked life and limb by going into the burning buildings to carry out about 200 pigs and to drive out 17 valuable breeding sows.

The good news is that most of the loss was covered by insurance. The bad news is that the Butlers would have been better off financially if they'd forgotten about those hogs they managed to save, letting them die in the smoke and flames.

"We were told by the vet that the lungs of the rescued hogs were shot from smoke inhalation and that the animals would have to be slaughtered," explains Jim Butler.

In stepped the insurance adjuster who promptly decreed that the rescued hogs wouldn't be covered by insurance: "They didn't die as a direct result of the fire. They were slaughtered."

The Butlers did collect insurance on about 625 other sows, plus 21 boars and 3,700 pigs that died inside the burning buildings.

"If we would have had more time and more people, we could have driven out all the 645 sows we lost, and it would have cost us thousands of dollars had we done it."

**Feathered fly control** — "It works and has cost hardly any money," says European hog producer A. Wybenga, of Holland, who keeps birds in his hog house to control flies. "Flies pestered us all year around. I used to spray the hog house continually with fly repellents but these were expensive and, after a time, had no effect," explains Wybenga who brought in fly-catching birds (Mexican golden orioles and American mocking birds) to solve the problem. He modified the hog house to prevent their escape and installed special watering trays for the birds. Now that they've gotten rid of most of the flies, he's had to start feeding the birds. (Excerpted from Pig American Magazine)

**What happened to farmers' rights?** — "The law is impossible to follow," says Jonathon Constable of Newdegate, England, the first English farmer to be convicted of cruelty to animals under a strict new "animal rights" law that may be the forerunner of future U.S. and Canadian laws.

Passed in 1978, the law says farmers raising livestock in confinement must check each and every animal "personally" every day, even if they have thousands of animals under one roof. Constable raises some 33,000 layer hens and, if he followed the letter of the law, would be required to look in on each bird in every cage every day.

"Farmers in this area can't comply with the law and don't intend to," says Constable.

**Don't Miss A Single Issue**

Many new subscribers have asked if they can obtain back issues of FARM SHOW. The answer is yes. Here's what's available:

1977 — Three of the 6 charter-year issues (Vol. 1, No. 3; Vol. 1, No. 4 and Vol. 1, No. 6) are still available.

1978 — All 6 issues still available.

1979 — All 6 issues still available except one (Vol. 3, No. 5).

1980 — All 6 issues still available except one (Vol. 4, No. 6).

1981 — All 6 previously published issues still available

1982 — All back issues for the year still available.

Send your check for \$2.00 per copy to: Back issues, FARM SHOW Magazine, Box 704, Lakeville, Minn. 55044. Make your check payable to "FARM SHOW".