

Smörgåsbord



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Publisher and
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**Tough Times Producing
Bumper Crop Of Humor**

It's refreshing to know that, despite staggering debt, falling prices and collapsed land values, farmers are still managing to keep their good sense of humor. Despite all the heartache and anguish, they're still able to laugh at poverty, hard times, and bad weather.

"The reason we have such a bumper crop of humor in Nebraska is because our fields have been manured by so much adversity," notes Roger Welsch, University of Nebraska English professor and folklorist. He speculates that people turn to humor because "there is really nothing more to do. And if you can laugh at yourself in this kind of situation, then I think you have gained some kind of perspective."

Bankers, politicians and farmers themselves are on the receiving end of "coffee shop" jokes making the rounds these days.

Just last week, for instance, a farmer friend asked if I knew the difference between a dead skunk and a dead banker on the highway. His answer: "There are skid marks in front of the skunk."

"How's your banker treating you," I asked. His reply: "He's helping me get back on my feet -- just yesterday he repossessed my pickup."

Among politicians, former Secretary of Agriculture John Block was a favorite butt of countless jokes, including this one:

More than 100,000 farmers had gathered in a huge stadium for a farm protest rally. Block and his aides were circling the stadium in a plane, the story goes, when the secretary was stricken by a burst of compassion. "I think I'll just throw this \$100 bill out the window and make at least one farmer happy," Block said.

"Wait Mr. Secretary," an aide called out. "I've got two \$50 bills. You could throw them out the window and make two farmers happy."

The pilot, hearing all this, couldn't resist: "Why don't you open the door and all jump out? You'd make everybody happy."

And then there are the stories about farmers poking fun at themselves and their plight. For instance, did you hear about the farmer who got arrested for child abuse for trying to give his farm to his children?

A South Dakota reader with a sense of humor sent



FARM SHOW a "farmer's money clip" which he makes and passes out to his friends. It's made from a pop can tab folded in half to hold a penny -- which

represents the kind of money we're carrying around in our pockets these days," the farmer pointed out.

In case you haven't heard it, there's this story about the farmer who went into a hardware store and bought 3 hammer handles one day, 12 the next and 24 the third. A clerk asked him what he was doing with all the hammer handles.

"We'll, I'm selling them," the farmer replied.

"For how much?" the clerk wanted to know.

"Fifty cents each."

"But you're buying them for a dollar each," the clerk said. "You're losing 50 cents on every hammer handle."

"I know. But that's still a lot better than I was doing farming?"

Tallest of all the "tall tales" making the rounds is the one about the farmer lamenting about how hot it had been out his way. How hot was it?

"It was so hot that popcorn popped on the stalk. Two mules saw popcorn on the ground, thought it was snow and froze to death."

Unusual New Products

As the saying goes, when times get tough, the tough get going. They're turning to their farm workshops to drum up some of the darndest money-making new products you ever saw.

Just last month, for example, we ran across a fellow who's doing a booming business making and selling wooden neckties.

If you're looking for something different that will make you stand out in a crowd, this "gravey proof" neckwear is just the ticket. Michael Garber says his



finely crafted neckties make a fashion statement that "puts you at the center of attention." And yet he claims his wooden ties are not just a gimmick. "They're so well made they'll fit right in with your Sunday best suit."

Garber makes ties from 15 different species of wood, including red oak, maple, ash, aromatic cedar, mahogany, black walnut and cherry wood. They're 17-1/2 in. long, 1/3 in. thick, and 2-1/4 in. wide. Bow ties, which are popular with both men and women, are 3-3/4 in. long by 1-3/4 in. wide. Both fasten with an elastic strap with velcro closure and fit a wide range of neck sizes.

Because his neckties are hinged in two places -- just below the "knot" and two-thirds of the way down - they're comfortable to wear, even in a sitting position, says Garber.

He sells patented "Garberwear" wooden neckties for prices ranging from \$28 to \$36.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW

Followup, Michael Garber, Satyrical Woodworks, P.O. Box 29, 286R Davis St., Greenfield, Mass. 01302 (ph 413 774-5606).

House Jewelry: If you're looking for something "new and different" to surprise your wife, mother or daughter, how about some "house jewelry". Designer-manufacturer Kevin Loughran "hit on the idea" as a way to "survive this sagging economy."

He now makes his living selling the hand-crafted "house jewelry" he makes to "fancy up" electric wall plates and switches. "They're attractive conversation pieces and make great gifts for birthdays, weddings, Mother's Day, Christmas and other occasions," he points out.

Hand-crafted plates for single outlets or switches start at \$18, and double switch plates at \$24. Decorative covers for rheostat control switches start at \$40 for both the plate and a round cover for the switch itself.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kevin Loughran, 816 East Figueroa St., Santa Barbara, Cal. 93101 (ph 805 962-9970).

Seed Finder: California farmer Bill Humes is doing a booming sideline business with his best-seller Seed Finder. At last count, he'd sold the device to 165 firms in 17 states and 4 foreign countries.

His Seed Finder is a pointed piece of plastic about 6-



3/4 in. long that you use when planting to dig out seeds to see if the planter's working properly. "I got tired of wearing out my fingers, or dulling the blade of my pocket knife," says Bill, recalling how he came up with the idea. It's marked in inches so you can use it as a ruler to measure seed depth in 1/4 in. increments.

Individual Seed Finders sell for \$1 each, including postage, handling and imprinting your name (up to 16 letters all caps, or 24 letters lower case). Bulk orders, including imprinting, are 65 cents each for 100, and 45 cents each in lots of 500 or more. They're available in gold, red, green or blue, and can be imprinted in the color of your choice.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hume Seed Finder, 2310 Olive St., Dos Palos, Calif. 93620 (ph 209 392-3181).

The Dairyman's Dilemma

"Do you know that the waitress who delivers a glass of milk to the table makes more money on it than the producer?"

With that, former Pennsylvania dairyman Harold Ealy got out pencil and paper and performed the necessary calculations.

"An 8 oz. glass of milk, served at a price of 60 cents. Take the customary 15% tip on that and you get 9 cents. Sixteen ounces in a pound, therefore 18 cents a pound. And that translates to \$18 per hundredweight."

Harold isn't very happy about the revelation. "A dairyman has hundreds of thousands of dollars invested to produce milk and he gets less for his product than what a waitress gets in tips for serving it," he said.

A former dairyman from Susquehanna County, Harold has been spending time lately giving farmers tips on how to improve their milk prices. (Farmshine).

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