

NEWSLETTER

HOWARD COUNTY FARM BUREAU

VOL. 21, NO. 4 SEPTEMBER, 2011

HOWIE FEAGA, PRESIDENT, (410) 531-1872;
JAY RHINE, VICE-PRESIDENT, (410) 442-2445;
MERHLYN BARNES, SECRETARY, (410) 489-4465;
DONALD BANDEL, TREASURER (410) 531-7918;
ALLAN BANDEL, NEWSLETTER EDITOR, (410) 489-7875
WEB SITE - www.howardfarmbureau.org

Howard County Agri-Business

Breakfast

by **Maura Cahill**

Breakfast Program Coordinator

The next Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast is scheduled for **8:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 8, 2011** in the Dining Hall of the Howard County Fairgrounds. Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to join us.

Our guest speaker will be **Mr. Kurt Fuchs, Assistant Director of Government Relations for the Maryland Farm Bureau**. He covers various issue areas including: energy, transportation, wildlife, land use, and local concerns such as changes in the septic issue. He is a registered lobbyist and, as one half of MFB's two-person lobbying team, helps track between 200 and 250 bills each year during the 90-day General Assembly Session in Annapolis.

Kurt graduated from Western Maryland College in 2004 with a degree in Political Science and has worked for MFB since 2003 when he came on board part-time prior to graduation. He is currently Chairman of the MidShore Regional Council, is a volunteer Board member of Shore Gourmet, Inc. (a food marketing enterprise), and is very active in his local Ruritan club. Kurt lives in Caroline County on the Eastern Shore.

The breakfast on September 8th will be an excellent opportunity for interaction with MFB's representation in Annapolis. So, bring your spouse, and/or a friend, your questions and concerns. Enjoy the food and fellowship, and plan to join in a friendly exchange of information.

Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m. and the program's at 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. Please **RSVP by noon, Tuesday, September 6** by calling either Charlotte Mullinix, at (410) 489-4510 or Martha Clark at (410) 531-3455. The cost of the breakfast is \$10.00 per person, payable at the door. We look forward to seeing you on Thursday, **September 8**, at the next Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast.

Congratulations to:

Katie Loveless

2011 Miss Howard County Farm Bureau

Ellie Feaga

2011 Little Miss Howard County Farm Bureau

and to

Kevin Spicer

2011 Future Howard County Farmer

These outstanding young people were chosen to receive their respective honors on Sunday, August 7, at the 66th Annual Howard County Fair. Photos of the event and a brief write-up describing some of their worthy accomplishments are tentatively scheduled to be included in the November issue of this Newsletter. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient time to prepare everything before the printing deadline for this issue.

President's Message
by **Howie Feaga, President**
Howard County Farm Bureau

Well, the end of summer is fast approaching. Where did the summer go so fast? We have had a pretty good summer here in the Glenelg area, but just a few miles away, the season has been very different. The lack of rain has left its mark on all the crops and pastures. As I write this though we are getting some rain that has been very widespread over our whole area. So, I hope these rains have helped everyone, even though for some, it may have arrived a little late.

I would like to congratulate the new Howard County Miss Farm Bureau, Katie Loveless, she was selected from a group of seven contestants. All of the girls did a great job. But, of course, we could only have one winner to represent us. The girls were all very helpful to one another and it was almost like the movie "Miss Congeniality". We can look forward to a great future for this contest. We must hope that this trend will continue with the next groups of contestants.

I would also like to congratulate the Little Miss Farm Bureau winner, Ellie Feaga, and Kevin Spicer, the winner of the Future Farmer award.

It was nice seeing so many of you at the fair, and the kids did a really great job with all their animals, baked goods, and exhibits that they entered in the hopes of perhaps picking up a blue ribbon or even a championship. Good job, kids, and hope to see you next year.

I hope everyone can spend a little time this fall harvesting and enjoying the cooler weather. Try to slow down and take your time. You have always gotten your work done before and I'm sure it will get done again this year. So like I always remind you, "Keep your plow in the ground. We're all pulling for you." We will see you soon.



Howie Feaga (center), Howard County Farm Bureau President, accepts recognition for being selected as the 2011 Howard Soil Conservation District Cooperator of the Year. Some of the officials participating in the presentation were, from left to right, County Council Member Greg Fox, Howard SCD Manager Robert Ensor, and County Council Member Mary Kay Sigaty.

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD)

Recognizes

Kathy Zimmerman

by **Kristal McKormick**

Howard Soil Conservation District

At its summer meeting, the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts recognized Kathy Zimmerman, Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Howard County Economic Development Authority, with the Outstanding Contribution Award for 2010. From educating the community to promoting agriculture in its many facets, Kathy has her hand in many activities.

Kathy organizes Howard County's five farmer's markets. She has also created an agri-tourism group for the county and leads the Howard County Farm-City committee. As part of Farm-City, she organizes the Job Exchange Day between the County Executive and a local farmer as well as the Student Day on the Farm. Along with her counterpart in Montgomery County, Kathy edited the "From My Backyard to Our Bay" brochure for

Howard and Montgomery Counties. She also worked to help obtain the necessary funds for the publication. Kathy revamped the Howard County Farms & Agriculture Activity Book with sketches of real photos, in many cases, and facts about agriculture in Howard County. She keeps the Howard County Farm & Services Directory up to date. In partnership with Joy Levy, Director of Agricultural Land Preservation, they produce a quarterly newsletter, "Howard Ag", and have an informational booth at the Howard County Fair.

Kathy continues to push for the return of agriculture to Howard County classrooms. She worked with Sheryl Bennett, 4-H Extension Agent, to create a "Youth Ag in Careers" video. She is involved in the Our Environment in Our Hands and Days of Taste programs for fourth graders. Kathy worked with other individuals and farms to create a camp for 13 to 15 year olds teaching basic agriculture, farm skills as well as emphasizing leadership. She applied for grants to help fund it but to date has not received the necessary funding.

Kathy works hard to get surrounding counties to collaborate on providing regional development opportunities for farmers. She organizes the Central Maryland Women in Agriculture Forum each year, bringing together women who play a significant role on the farm and in the family whose needs may be overlooked otherwise.

Kathy attributes her many "successes in Howard County to the ability to partnership."

Howard Soil Conservation District Recognized

There are twenty-four (24) Soil Conservation Districts in the state of Maryland. This year, the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts recognized the Howard Soil Conservation District with the *MidAtlantic Farm Credit Outstanding District Third Place Award for 2010*. This award "emphasizes the concepts of

planning for service, organizing to give service, and evaluating district services and activities."

Howard County is very unique in its composition of land use and development. For such a small county, though not always traditional, there is still much agriculture present in the county. The Howard Soil Conservation District is as unique as the county it serves.

Short Term Job Opportunity

The Howard Soil Conservation District is advertizing for several positions to help with a special project from September through November (maybe longer). The job would be to meet with local farm owners and inventory all the Best Management Practices on the farm, determine if the land meets the Chesapeake Bay TMDL threshold and data entry into a database. Additional practices needed to meet the TMDL would be noted as well as excess nutrient or sediment credits available for possible sale by landowners. Pay would be \$25 per hour. Call Bob Ensor, District Manager, Howard Soil Conservation District, 410-489-7987 for more information. The deadline for resume submission is August 30, 2011

News Release: Soil Phosphorus Research Project

JULY 18, 2011 - University of Maryland Extension, in conjunction with the Laboratory for Agriculture and Environmental Studies at the University of Maryland, is recruiting local farmers to participate in a study aimed at updating and improving Maryland's Phosphorus Site Index. The goal of the study is to update and improve this useful site-assessment tool.

The University of Maryland research team will be partnering with county nutrient management advisors and Extension educators to identify farmer participants, gather information about farm operations and arrange to visit farms. Participation

in the study is completely voluntary and all information collected will remain confidential and participants will remain anonymous. All data will be summarized and reported as averages across an entire region or county. Working with participating farmers, the University research team will gather information about current management and cropping practices on a field by field basis, collect a soil sample from each field, and complete P Site Index evaluations.

For more information and details about this project, feel free to contact Dr. Frank Coale at the University of Maryland by email (fjcoale@umd.edu) or by phone at (301) 405-0505. Anyone interested in participating in this study should contact Nicole Fiorellino, University of Maryland project coordinator, by email (nfiorell@umd.edu) or by phone at (301) 405-3998 or your University of Maryland Extension nutrient management advisor.** Farm visits will be taking place during the summer and fall of 2011, so please sign up to participate as soon as possible! Without the help of Maryland farmers, this critical research cannot be completed.

**University of Maryland Extension, Howard County's Nutrient Management Advisor: Krista Mitchell (kristaw@umd.edu) or (410) 313-2709.

Agricultural Entrepreneurial Business Plan Course

An *Agricultural Entrepreneurial Business Plan Course* will be taught on October 17, 24 and 31, 2011 at the Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood from 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

The course is for the agricultural entrepreneur who is thinking about starting an agricultural based venture, needing to expand a current business, or considering an opportunity to diversify. The course is designed to enhance entrepreneurial skills and assist in the development of a business plan. It will help those individuals who are searching for

innovative ideas and enhanced marketing opportunities in the area of agriculture. The course will be taught by University of Maryland Extension Faculty.

The cost for course is \$25 for up to two people from the same family/business. The registration deadline is Friday, October 14, 2011. Make checks payable to Carroll County EAC and mail registration and payment to Carroll County Office, University of Maryland Extension, October AEBP, 700 Agriculture Center, Westminster, MD 21157.

For more details please call 410-386-2760. If you need special assistance to participate in this program, please contact the Carroll County Extension office at 410-386-2760 by September 30, 2011.

University of Maryland Extension programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin.

MDA Seeking Nominations for the Maryland Agricultural Commission

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is seeking nominations to fill nine positions on the Maryland Agricultural Commission. Those nine positions represent aquaculture, direct farm marketing, equine, Farm Credit, food processing, Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland State Grange, nursery, and poultry. Interested parties must have experience in the field of the position that they are interested in filling. The appointments are made by Governor Martin O'Malley and each member is eligible to serve two, 3-year appointed terms.

The Maryland Agricultural Commission consists of 30 members who represent various commodities and organizations across the state and serves as an advisory body to Maryland's Secretary of Agriculture. The Commission includes both a

consumer and a University of Maryland (ex officio) representative. As a group, the members address legislative and policy issues that affect Maryland agribusiness. The commission meets monthly.

For more information, contact Florence Jordan, 410-841-5882 or jordanfm@mda.state.md.us.

Source: *Farm Notes*. University of Maryland Extension, Carroll County Office.

Nutrient Management Update

by, Krista Mitchell

**UME Nutrient Management Consultant
Howard & Anne Arundel Counties**

Good news! Funding has been allocated to continue the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program for the 2012 fiscal year. The Agricultural Nutrient Management Program is part of the University of Maryland's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and provides a nutrient management consultant in each county University of MD Extension (UME) office. The UME nutrient management consultants provide no-cost nutrient management plans, minus the cost of analyses, to producers who are required to have a nutrient management plan for their operation. The UME consultants also assist with manure spreader calibrations, yield checks, and the Pre-Sidedress Nitrate Test for corn.

Agricultural operations that make or exceed \$2,500 gross annual income or have 8 or more animal units (1 animal unit = 1,000 lbs. live weight) are required to obtain and implement a current nutrient management plan. Nutrient management plans balance nutrient inputs with plant nutrient requirements by examining nutrients in soil and organic materials, estimating residual nitrogen from leguminous crops and setting realistic yield goals. Nutrient management plans can be written for a maximum of 3 years for operations that utilize commercial fertilizer only and for producers that know what their crop rotation will be for the next

3 consecutive years. Operations that utilize manure or other organic nutrient sources should have their plans updated annually. The MD Department of Agriculture is the agency responsible for enforcing the nutrient management regulations by ensuring that farmers obtain and implement current nutrient management plans and keep records of yields and rates of nutrient applications as well as filing the Annual Implementation Reporting form, due March 1st each year.

If producers would like to obtain a nutrient management plan for the 2012 growing season, it is highly recommended that they contact Krista Mitchell (410-313-2709 or kristaw@umd.edu) at the Howard County UME office as soon as possible. Due to Howard County's nutrient management consultant being shared with the Anne Arundel County UME office, and in order to accommodate all Howard County producers who are required to have nutrient management plans, 2012 plan updates for commercial fertilizer only operations should be started now. Operations utilizing manure as a nutrient source have their plans compiled later in the winter and early spring, as manure samples need to be taken as close to the time of application as possible. A wait list usually begins in November, and there are a finite amount of plans that can be completed prior to spring planting, therefore; the earlier a producer calls, the better their chances are to have a no-cost nutrient management plan developed, minus the cost of analyses, by a UME consultant. Nutrient management plans must be completed prior to planting and nutrient applications.

Other options for obtaining nutrient management plans are to hire a private nutrient management consultant, or become certified to write your own nutrient management plan. Farmer Training and Certification (FTC) courses will be offered this fall and winter at various locations state-wide. Visit the UME Agricultural Nutrient Management Program website for dates of upcoming events and FTC trainings: www.anmp.umd.edu.

Nutrient Management Plans for Maryland Horse Farms

Listed below is a link to a new UME Extension Brief “Nutrient Management Plans for Maryland Horse Farms”. This link should be a valuable resource for Nutrient Management information directed especially at equine clientele. For further information, contact Jennifer Reynolds <jenreyn@umd.edu>

CREP Offers Income to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas

by Alisha Mulkey
Maryland Dept. Of Agriculture

Have you heard that the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) now provides even more financial incentive to protect sensitive lands? CREP is a voluntary program that helps Maryland producers plant streamside buffers (grasses and trees), establish wetlands, protect highly erodible land, and create wildlife habitat while receiving the benefit of dependable income.

Through a state-federal partnership, producers enroll eligible land into conservation practices for 10-15 years. In exchange for maintaining practices, participants receive the local soil rental rate (SRR) plus an additional incentive payment that ranges from 80 percent to 200 percent of the local SRR, depending on the environmental benefits of the practice installed. A one-time signing bonus payment of up to \$200 per acre for enrolled lands is also available.

Financial help to cover the costs of installing buffers and other best management practices (BMPs) is also available. Maryland’s Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program and USDA’s Farm Service Agency will provide landowners with up to 87.5 percent cost-share to install BMPs on enrolled lands. Incentive payments worth 40 percent of the eligible costs of installing

certain practices are also being offered. Cost-share is even available to help farmers install livestock fencing, stream crossings and watering troughs to protect local streams from animal traffic. Free technical assistance to install BMPs is provided by local soil conservation districts.

At a time when every dollar counts, CREP is an excellent way for Maryland producers to protect local waterways and earn extra income. If you have marginal cropland or pasture that is next to a stream or highly erodible land that is within 1,000 feet of a stream you may be eligible to participate in CREP.

Maryland has recently hired two staff members to promote the CREP programs goals. If you have an interest in the program, contact your local soil conservation district or Farm Service Agency today for more information.

Weed of the Week

by Chuck Schuster
Extension Educator, Montgomery County

Johnsongrass, *Sorghum halepense*, is showing its ugly seed head in many areas now. This perennial weed can reach six feet or more in height, has a dense rhizome and produces a large number of seeds.

From the southwest, it has been used as a forage, but when moved to the east it quickly became a noxious weed. This weed tolerates many settings, from low fertility to high, from low moisture to high and even tolerates a wide array of pH levels.

Johnsongrass is a weed that needs to be controlled. It is found throughout the United States in agronomic and horticultural settings and in fringe areas of lower management.

The leaves are rolled in the shoot, and will be without auricles. Each leaf can reach twenty inches in length, and up to three quarters of an inch in width. Leaf blades are without hairs, but some may be found at the base of the leaf blade.

Johnsongrass will have a jagged-edged and membranous ligule. The stems are round, but may be flattened. Sheaths will be green to maroon in color, and the plant will have a fibrous root system with a dense thick rhizome that has orange scales.

The flowers/seedhead is a large open panicle with a reddish to purple color. Seeds are oval and dark red in color. Similar to barnyardgrass and fall panicum, johnsongrass will not have hairs on the lower leaf blades as Fall Panicum does. Also, johnsongrass has a membranous ligule and neither of the two other weeds do. It may also look like shattercane, but shattercane does not have rhizomes.

Control of johnsongrass can be achieved using several different products. The pre emergent proflaminate (Barricade, Factor - be cautious with some varieties of turf) can be used. Post emergent control using a glyphosate product can achieve control, but monitoring for seed production the following year is important.

Culturally johnsongrass can be managed using proper mowing which prevents it from going to seed.

“Batch 14” Ag Preservation Easement Settlements Complete

by Joy Levy

**Ag-Land Preservation Administrator
Department of Planning and Zoning**

The Howard County Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP) is pleased to announce that as of August 23, 2011, the Batch 14 easement acquisition cycle has been completed. The Batch began during the summer of 2009 with a two month application period, which attracted 13 applicants, the largest pool of interested property owners in well over a decade. After scoring the properties and review by the Agricultural Land Preservation Board in the fall of 2009, offers were made to 7 of the 13 applicants, based on

projections of how many easements the ALPP could afford to acquire.

After formal offers were made and accepted, the next step in the process was approval by the County Council. This began during the summer of 2010, and by the end of the year, four of the properties had gone to settlement. These preserved farms are: 1) the 88-acre Stedding property in Sykesville, 2) the 162-acre Rea property in Ellicott City, 3) the 54-acre Carroll property in Ellicott City, and 4) the 70-acre Ferguson property in Lisbon.

In addition to the Batch 14 purchased easement properties, a very special opportunity presented itself to the ALPP in the form of a donated easement. In November 2010, Calvin Murray donated an easement on his 53-acre farm in Mt. Airy, which means that he extinguished his development rights without being compensated.

The three remaining Batch 14 farms all went to settlement this summer. They include: 1) a 500-acre portion of the Doughoregan property in Ellicott City, 2) the 107-acre Mannarelli property in Woodbine, and 3) the 186-acre Zepp property in Sykesville.

Including Mr. Murray’s donation, the Batch 14 property owners added 1,220 acres to the land in the Rural West that is permanently preserved, bringing the current grand total to 21,637 acres. The ALPP would sincerely like to thank the Batch 14 farm families for making the commitment to agricultural land preservation.

University Website for Maryland Public Information Act Requests

<http://www.umd.edu/pia/index.cfm>.

As a state agency, the University of Maryland is subject to the Maryland Access to Public Records Act, State Government Article, § 10-601 to 10-630, of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This law, which is commonly referred to as the Maryland Public Information Act or “PIA,” gives the public the right

to review and obtain copies of disclosable public records.

The University processes PIA requests in accordance with the campus Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Inspection of Public Records, found at <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/VI-500A.pdf>. The Office of Legal Affairs is responsible for administering the campus Guidelines and Procedures and for responding on behalf of the University to all PIA requests.

In spring 2011, the University Senate revised the Guidelines and Procedures to permit PIA requests to be made by email as well as surface mail. The University has developed a website to accommodate email requests and to explain the process for requesting and obtaining public documents. The website is found at <http://www.umd.edu/pia/index.cfm>.

Please refer requests for University records, documents, data and all other materials to this website. Questions regarding the administration of PIA requests may be made to PublicInformationAct@umd.edu.

Source: J. Terrance Roach, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief Legal Counsel

New Agricultural Laws **Effective July 1, 2011**

On July 1, 2011, numerous laws and regulations regarding agriculture went into effect. These laws define locally grown food, allow wine to be shipped in and out of state, transfer Seafood Marketing and Aquaculture Development to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and increase Weights and Measures registration fees.

Regulations concerning the **advertisement of “local” foods go into effect June 27**. If advertising a food product as ‘local’, the new

regulations require businesses to have point-of-sale signage indicating the state of origin of its product. These products include raw meat, eggs, fish, fruits, vegetables, shellfish and processed dairy products. Given the growing interest in buying locally, the regulations support Maryland farmers and enable consumers to determine for themselves whether or not they consider a product “local”.

Additional laws that went into effect on **July 1, 2011** include the following:

- HB 1175, The Direct Wine Shipping law allows wine to be shipped to Maryland citizens from in- and out-of-state wineries. The law stipulates that the wine must originate from a winery—not a retailer or auction house—and must be limited to 18 shipments per year per household.
- HB 1053, Seafood Marketing and Aquaculture Development will be transferred from the Maryland Department of Agriculture to the Department of Natural Resources. The purpose of this law is to streamline the development, oversight and permitting process for the aquaculture and seafood industries into one agency.
- HB 293, Weights and Measures registration fees will be increased for scales with a capacity of up to 100 pounds and retail motor fuel dispenser meters of under 20 gallons per minute. Some of these measuring devices include deli counter scales and gasoline pumps. The bill also repeals a general fund reversion provision and will now allow any unspent money in a given fiscal year to be used the following year.

For more information on the Buy Local Regulations, visit: www.mda.state.md.us/pdf/buylocalfaq.pdf, or call Mark Powell at 410-841-5770.

Source: *Farm Notes*. University of Maryland Extension, Carroll County Office.

Mom's Out of Money!

by **Timothy S. Barkley, Sr.**

**JD, CFP, CSA
Attorney at Law**

"Mom's living at the nursing home and she's out of money," said the caller in a tight, stress-filled voice. "We don't know what to do. Can we meet?"

The children – Tom, Mary and Joe – met with the family lawyer the next day. Sue, who lived in Atlanta, listened in by phone.

"Tell me about your mother's situation," urged the attorney. "I haven't talked to your parents in well over 10 years."

"Dad died a few years back," volunteered Joe. "Mom was on her own until 2009. Then she fell and broke her hip. We'd always call her every day, but that day nobody called until late, and she must have fallen in the morning. By the time we found her, she had laid there for hours. She's never been the same since."

"Didn't you have an alert system to call an ambulance?"

"We tried to get her one, but she said she wasn't old yet, and didn't need to be coddled."

Sue chimed in. "Mom went to the hospital for a few weeks to get her stabilized, then to a nursing home for rehab. The nursing home said Medicare would pay for up to 100 days, but Medicare only paid for 19 days. We got a letter that said because Mom wasn't making progress in rehab anymore, Medicare would stop paying before the 20th day, and that's exactly what happened."

Mary handled the money. "We've been paying about \$7,000 a month on top of Mom's social security and her part of Dad's pension. After 2 years, we've gone through her and Dad's savings and investments. We haven't sold the house yet, but we're down to about \$10,000 in the bank. What do we do next?"

"How's your mother's health," asked the attorney.

"She doesn't walk hardly at all," said Joe. "She takes a lot of pills, but she seems like she's healthy. The doctor says she doesn't have anything life-threatening, just old age."

"Is there a mortgage on the house?"

"No, it's paid off. Mom and Dad always said they didn't want anything that could take their house away."

"Who lives in the house right now?"

"I do," said Joe. "I lost my job last year, and my wife left me, so my kids and I moved in to Mom's house around February of 2010."

"Are you paying rent?"

"When I can. There's not a lot of money around now that my unemployment stopped, but I've been able to find some odd jobs and part-time work."

"As you know from reading my column," commented the lawyer, "there's a government benefit called Medicaid or Medical Assistance to pay for the cost of care of indigent folks in nursing homes. Your mother has to clear three hurdles to get Medicaid."

"The first is the medical hurdle. Does your mother need skilled nursing care – from an RN or LPN – at least once a day?"

"Her medications are adjusted for her blood levels, so she gets a blood test about 4 times a week, more if she's having problems. Is that enough?"

"Probably," nodded the lawyer. "The second hurdle is the income hurdle, and you've already told me that her income is less than the cost of care."

"The only obstacle to Medicaid is the asset hurdle. Your mother can only own \$2,500 of what are called 'countable' assets. In the next article, we'll talk about

what assets are 'countable' and whether the house – surely worth more than \$2,500 – is countable.”

One of Dad's “Self-Propelled Wagons”

Catches Fire!!

by Allan Bandel

Spending most of my youthful, mostly “formative”, years on the family's Howard County dairy farm during the decades of the mid-1900s, for the most part, was an enjoyable and valuable experience. Those years were highlighted by numerous events, many of which were routine. But some cases evolved into highly memorable experiences. Although the exception, an unusual event, such as a truck fire for instance, really added some out-of-the-ordinary “spice” to those otherwise mostly routine days.

If ever there was a downside to farm life, it had to have been related to the fact that farming was then, and still is, one of the ten most dangerous occupations in the U.S. Fortunately, only on a very few occasions did I, as a youth, experience any farm-related incidents that came close to being really terrifying or life threatening, at least that I recognized as such at the time. I have wondered sometimes though, how some of the more daring members of our generation ever survived that phase of their lives without something unfortunate happening that could have put their personal safety and future, in jeopardy. One such personally exciting event that had dangerous potential, but fortunately left everyone physically unscathed, is still firmly imprinted in my memory.

In an earlier newsletter, I reminisced about some of Dad's old farm trucks, trucks that were so unroadworthy that they were restricted largely to use only around the farm. Dad jokingly referred to these old vehicles as his motorized “self-propelled wagons”. The engine in one of them burned so much oil that we nicknamed it “**OLD SMOKEY**”.

“**OLD SMOKEY**” was a beat-up old 1934 Ford

truck that for many years had been used daily to haul heavy loads of 10-gallon milk cans into Baltimore. A distinct characteristic of “**OLD SMOKEY'S**” nearly worn out old V-8 engine was that it had a hefty “thirst” for large quantities of engine oil and thus left a great cloud of blue smoke behind it most of the time. Of necessity then, we always carried a gallon jug of SAE 40 motor oil in the cab just to quench the noisy old V-8's endless demand for lubricant. Acquired fairly cheaply for use around the farm, this old truck was really quite a “junkner”.

You might also remember from the earlier newsletter that “**OLD SMOKEY**” had a few other peculiarities that were distinctive. Its vacuum booster-assisted mechanical brakes (not hydraulic) always kept us guessing about whether or not we could get it stopped safely in an emergency before running into something immovable. Its one missing front fender, dangling headlight, and twisted front bumper, were all reminders of some of the many close encounters that we had previously experienced while operating it.

This event in which “**OLD SMOKEY**” played a rather dubious starring role, took place on one of those hot, dry, summer afternoons in July, 1953, a perfect day for combining wheat. Dad and our hired man were running the combine in one of our farm's long narrow fields that for some distance, ran parallel to the ¾-mile-long gravel farm lane of one of our next-door neighbors. This particular lengthy, uniformly wide, strip of land was one of our favorite fields to farm. We liked this field because of its unique, uninterrupted length that seemed to go on forever. We liked the gentle manner in which it followed the general contour of the land. There were few overly steep grades to contend with, and our equipment could be operated over relatively long distances without the need to stop or slow down even when crossing the gentle grass waterways or when making those sometimes difficult-to-negotiate right angle turns at the ends of the field.

The configuration of this field was especially desirable when operating PTO-driven machinery. These tractor/machine combinations could

sometimes be problematic when it was necessary to make a near right angle turn. The straighter that the PTO shaft could be kept aligned between the tractor and the machine, the easier it was on the equipment. When there was a sharp turn to be made at the field's ends, if great care was not exercised, damage to the PTO shaft's loudly "chattering" and protesting universal joints always occurred.

On this fateful day, Dad was harvesting soft red winter wheat, with our 1948 John Deere model "A" tractor and a fairly new Case model "F" (or perhaps it was a model "F-2") combine. It was a PTO-driven harvester equipped with a bagger platform and a five-foot cutter head (a modest swath by today's standards perhaps, but not unusual for the mid-1950s). There were very few larger family farm-size combines available at that time, nor were there many combines around yet equipped with the more modern bulk grain tanks either.

The best combining weather typically occurs after a long series of hot, dry days. The hotter and drier the weather, the more easily and thoroughly the small wheat seeds can be separated from the grain heads. If the grain is not dry enough, either because of plant immaturity, or because of high atmospheric humidity, the grain may be too "tough" to combine. It will be soft and not thresh out well, nor will it store safely in the bin without quality deterioration due to mold formation.

When the straw is really dry, the wheat kernels will most easily "shatter" out of the heads. Dad taught us that you should always pay close attention to the sounds made by the combine and listen to hear the grain "rattle" as it passed by the rapidly spinning cylinder. As the grain was threshed, the hard kernels were thrown with force against the metal interior surfaces of the combine. He considered the "rattling" sound to be a desirable indication that the kernels were hard and dry and were just right for the most efficient threshing.

On one of those ideal July combining days, Dad had instructed me that after he had been combining for a couple of hours, he wanted me to bring "**OLD SMOKEY**" out to the field and begin loading the heavy sacks of wheat that would by then be lying about all around the field, dumped there off of the combine's bagger platform. After 5 or 6 sacks had been filled and tied on the combine, this became a load and the bags had to be dropped to the ground, gently sliding off the end of the bagger chute when a trip rope was pulled. The filled bags of grain were thus scattered about over the field, usually in groups of 5 or 6 sacks in one spot.

In the process of moving the truck back to the far end of the field where I was to begin loading, I at first followed the neighbor's narrow gravel lane as far as possible, then gently guided the old truck across a shallow ditch and into the field. As I approached the area where the combine was running, I had to drive across some of the harvested part of the field. The truck rolled over a lot of freshly-cut loose straw that had been freshly deposited in heavy windrows by the combine. Being a hot day, all of this straw was tinder dry. Some of it, because of the large volume, brushed against the underside of the truck's frame, especially against its hot broken-off exhaust pipe. There was no muffler, of course, having rusted off years ago. Isolated in the country as we were, rarely did anyone complain about an occasional noisy farm truck passing by minus its muffler.

While slowly rolling across the tinder dry straw, and without forewarning, I was suddenly startled when I sensed through the thick soles of my work shoes, that my feet were becoming a lot warmer than they should be. A quick glance down through a large crack in the wooden floor boards of the rusty old cab, confirmed my worst suspicion. Beneath my feet, and under the floor boards, there was a raging fire, now completely engulfing the engine compartment, and "licking" hungrily at the soles of my shoes.

I allowed the old truck to coast to a stop before jumping out of the cab. Looking back across the field to where the truck's recently made tire tracks were clearly visible, I was horrified to see a smoking, smoldering, fiery trail of burning straw, all the way back to the neighbor's gravel farm lane. Dad, with the hired man who was working the combine's bagger, was some distance away, and unfortunately, was heading away from me toward the far end of the field and was not yet aware of the fire. Alone for the moment with the blazing truck, my initial concern was for the wheat field. The truck itself wasn't of great value. But, would the whole field soon be set ablaze, perhaps resulting in the loss of our wheat crop? I pondered about what I should do. Even if I could have reached it, there was no fire extinguisher in the truck. In fact, very few of our neighbors even thought of carrying a fire extinguisher on their tractors or in their trucks in those days.

Another immediate concern was the truck's gas tank. It was located inside the cab, immediately behind the seat, not far from the intense flames. What if the highly flammable gasoline in that tank caught fire and exploded, further spreading the fire?

Considering that the fire might soon grow completely out of control if we didn't get help soon, and since there was no apparent way available for me to extinguish it, I did the only sensible thing that I could think of. I set off running across the field towards our distant farmhouse where the nearest telephone was located. Why not use my cell phone to call for help? What cell phone? In the mid-1950s, even the comic strip character Dick Tracy's futuristic "Two-Way Wrist Radio" was no more than a bit of "Buck Rogers" space fantasy. Who would have ever thought back in the 1950s that such a device as a mobile wireless telephone would ever become a widely used reality?

When I finally arrived at the farmhouse, I

breathlessly explained to my mother about the fiery emergency out in the wheat field, and told her she had better call the local fire department. I then raced back out across the fields, on foot, with the intent of helping Dad and the hired man to try and control the fire, if possible.

To my vast relief, when at last I caught sight again of the once fiercely burning truck, I discovered that Dad and the hired man had already managed to extinguish the blaze and were now just standing by, with big relieved grins on their faces as I approached. They had used their wits and put the truck fire completely out with the resources they had at hand. How did they put the fire out? First, without getting burned, they managed with a long wooden pole to push aside the loosely fitting hood to expose the flames. Then, they emptied several bags of wheat over the blazing engine, (which they had a good fresh supply of on the combine). The fire was soon smothered out. Puffed wheat, anyone? Fortunately, the burning straw around the truck had not spread. Those small fires had gone out mostly on their own. All of us were enormously relieved then that the apparent danger was over.

Still breathless from my run across the field, I informed Dad that the West Friendship Volunteer Fire Department had been summoned and that they were on the way. We could now clearly hear the high-pitched siren in the distance. Dad's initial reaction was one of astonishment over the ridiculous, or as he might have put it, "cockamamie", action that I had taken. Secretly however, I believe that he was relieved that the fire department had been summoned. He realized that had conditions changed, if the wind had suddenly picked up, or reversed, for instance, the fire could have conceivably been "fanned" quickly out of control.

Nevertheless, I was thoroughly humbled and embarrassed when I was told that I should proceed back across the field to the main road and intercept the fire truck. We could now hear its shrill siren

coming closer. Since I had summoned them, Dad wanted me to be the one to personally thank the volunteer firemen for responding, to inform them that the emergency was over, that there was nothing more they needed to do. There was no need now for them to drive the rest of the way out across the field. Finally, he wanted me to suggest that they turn around and return to the fire house so that they could get back to their regular jobs. He didn't want the volunteer firemen to be inconvenienced any more than they already had been.

Of course, since the volunteers had already interrupted whatever projects they had been working on before the alarm had sounded, and since they had already taken time to come this far, they were not inclined to simply turn back now without first checking out the damage. The firemen believed that their most prudent action was to personally check on the status of the fire (which they agreed was actually the right thing to do). After all, they had not planned to come all this way just to be told by an inexperienced, excited, still "wet-behind-the-ears", but now very humble teenager, that they should just turn around and calmly go back to the fire house. They wanted closure!

The smiling firemen, all of them our neighbors, just shook their heads, then put their shiny red International KB-6 fire truck in gear and continued on out to the wheat field where they checked on the damage to the burned-out truck, soaked some of the few remaining hot spots in the field, had a brief and friendly visit with Dad, and then departed for the fire house.

Apparently, the fire had started when the old truck's faulty carburetor had over-flowed, spilling raw gasoline down over the V-8 engine's hot exhaust manifolds. Fortunately, the fire had not lasted long enough to cause irreparable damage this time to Dad's "self-propelled wagon". "**OLD SMOKEY**", like the mythical sacred ancient Greek

firebird, the "Phoenix", was destined to "rise out of the ashes" and be reborn.

After towing the fire-damaged truck to "Jr." Frank's nearby repair shop, we learned that about all that was needed to get the old engine running again was a little work on the malfunctioning carburetor, followed by installation of a new set of ignition wires, all of which was taken care of within a few days. There was no need to worry with replacing any of the burned off wires to the lights. The lights, what few there were of them, hadn't worked for a long time anyhow.

From that day forward, we were constantly reminded of the fire whenever we used that old truck. The brown rusty hood where the green paint had been burned off was never re-painted. Why bother? Our handy old "self-propelled wagon" was never supposed to be driven any significant distance off the farm anyway.

This old, but still useful truck, also nearly caught fire on at least one other occasion. Coincidentally, I happened to be operating it that time as well. By then, we had added a hydraulic dump hoist to make it more useful at silo filling time.

While unloading grass silage into a trench silo on a neighboring farm, I once again recognized that now all too familiar and unsettling sensation of smoke and fire (just smoldering this time fortunately) under my feet.

This time, it was discovered that the insulation had worn off some wires running under the wood floor boards. This caused an electrical short where they came into contact with the truck's metal frame. The hot wires had ignited some old tinder-dry chopped hay. The small blaze this time was quickly extinguished, and we soon resumed the task of filling the neighbor's trench silo.

After all is said and done, there are a few good things that can be remembered about "**OLD**

SMOKEY". Recognizing that this "self-propelled" wagon was not a very attractive old vehicle and that it was far from being perfect, while it was still in "running condition", "**OLD SMOKEY**" proved itself to be a highly useful, and very inexpensive "motorized wagon" to have on the farm – a valuable unit of farm machinery. In addition, while we had those matchless "self-propelled wagons" on the farm, they served their purpose exceedingly well and provided us with many unique memories, frequent excitement, even some moments of terror when we least expected it. Best of all though, on occasion, we were provided with some really cheap entertainment.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2011

Aug 26-

Sep 5 **Maryland State Fair**. Timonium, MD.

Sep 1 **Ayrshire Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 1 **Holstein Futurity Show**. Futurity (Maryland State Fair). Timonium, MD.

Sep 1 **Jersey Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 1 **Milking Shorthorn Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 1 **Red & White Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 2 **Brown Swiss Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 2 **Guernsey Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 3 **Holsteins Breed Show**. Maryland State Fair. Timonium, MD.

Sep 8 **Howard County Agri-Business Breakfast**. 8:00 to 9:00 am. Dining Hall, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD.

Sep 10 **2011 Horse Pasture Management Seminar**. 9 am to 3 pm. Central Maryland Research & Education Center, 4241 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD. Contact: www.ansc.umd.edu/ERG

Sep 19-
Oct 2 **Howard County Farm-City Celebration**. For information on sponsorship and a schedule of events, please contact Kathy Zimmerman at (410) 313-6500. Also, visit the Howard County Antique Farm Machinery Club website at www.farmheritage.org.

Sep 23-25 **16th Annual Howard County Farm Heritage Days**. Living Farm Heritage Museum Grounds, West Friendship, MD.

Sept 24 **Western Maryland Goat Day (Field Day, Sale & Skillathon)**. Washington County Agricultural Education Center, Boonsboro, MD. Contact: Susan Schoenian at (301) 432-2767 x343 or sschoen@umd.edu

Sep 28 **Delmarva Poultry Conference**. Roland Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD.

Oct 1 **The College in Your Backyard**. College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) Open House. 10:00 to 3:00 pm. University of MD Central Maryland Research & Education Center, Clarksville Facility. 4240 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD. Contact: call (301) 596-9330 or visit www.agnropenhouse.umd.edu.

Oct 8 **Small Ruminant Dairy Conference.** Carroll County Ag Center, Westminster, MD. Contact: Susan Schoenian at (301) 432-2767 x343 or sschoen@umd.edu.

Oct 9 **25th Annual Maryland Horsemen's Party.** 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Ten Oaks Ballroom, Clarksville, MD.

Oct 17, 24,31 **Agricultural Entrepreneurial Business Plan Course.** 6:30 - 9:00 pm. Gary J. Arthur Community Center, Glenwood, MD.

Nov 19 **Bi-Annual Lambing & Kidding School.** Chesapeake College, Wye Mills, MD. Contact: Susan Schoenian at (301) 432-2767 ext343 or sschoen@umd.edu.

[NOTE]: Some programs require pre-registration and/or a fee. For programs sponsored by University of Maryland Extension, if you need special assistance to participate, please contact the person indicated at least two weeks in advance of the event.



Smiling contestants in the Miss Howard County Farm Bureau, Little Miss and Future Farmer competitions participate in the 66th Annual Howard County Fair Opening Day Parade, August 7, 2011.

