

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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## American agricultural crisis causes financial problems and stress for county farmers

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Editors note: This is the first article of a four part series on the financial crisis facing farmers in Perquimans County.

Perquimans County is deeply dependant on its farmers and farm families for most of the jobs, and business generated within its boundaries.

Farm land and machinery make up a high percentage of the tax base. Farmers, themselves, are heavily involved in the government and day to day operations of our county. Yet our farmers are finding themselves caught in a financial squeeze that is driving them from the land; ending farm businesses which have been in the same family for generations; driving up jobs and business in this rural county; reducing our tax base and robbing us of potential leadership.

The stresses faced by all farmers cannot be fully understood without actually being in their shoes. How many people begin each year knowing that they will invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in hopes of making a profit; invest this money in producing a crop which can be a success or a failure based on one or two timely rains; invest this money in producing a crop which is priced by

the whims of the government, the large grain companies and speculators on the futures market?

Farmers have been and continue to be men and women of great faith. They had to have this faith to take the risks they have endured over the years. However, present conditions are testing their faith to the limit of human endurance. Our farmers need not just understanding from us; but positive thinking which will help them move toward the future.

Many people not associated with agriculture do not understand the financial crisis our farmers are experiencing. I want to set the record straight—The Primary Cause Of Current Agricultural Financial Problems Is Not Poor Management. Certainly, careful management is crucial and some farmers are better managers than others, but today even the best and most financially solid farmers are feeling the pressure of losing money.

Following is the historical overview of the agricultural situation prepared by Dr. Charles L. Moore, Specialist In Charge, N.C. Extension Economics Department. This overview will help put the current agricultural situation into perspective.

The rapid growth in U.S. agriculture in the 1970's and early 1980's was fueled by a large expansion in ex-

ports. Between 1945 and 1971 U.S. exports increased a rather steady rate from \$2.3 billion to \$7.7 billion. In the next ten years exports jumped to nearly \$44 billion at an annual growth rate of five times the rate prior to 1972.

There are several reasons for this expansion of export demand. In the early 1970's there was improved economic growth worldwide. In 1973 the dollar value of U.S. exports doubled, primarily due to a policy shift in the USSR. The Soviet chose to buy grain to make up for a production shortfall rather than tighten their belts and slaughter their livestock. Developed countries followed a loose monetary policy where officials were more worried about maintaining economic activity and growth than about controlling inflation. There existed low (in some years negative) real interest rates and commercial banks' lending to less developed countries increased drastically. A cheap U.S. dollar in foreign exchange markets gave the United States a very competitive position and resulted in the United States realizing an increased share of an expanding world market.

U.S. productivity increased rapidly during this time. Even so, the rapid expansion of export demand bid nearly 67 million more acres into production in 1981 than in 1971.

As a result of this expansion in the production sector, we saw similar expansions in agricultural support businesses such as farm input suppliers, machinery suppliers, banks, and many businesses in local communities. As the volume of agricultural exports rose from 60 million tons in 1971 to a peak of 164 million tons in 1981, there were sharp increases in all phases along the lengthy marketing channel (storage, handling and transportation) from farm gate to the foreign consumer. Very little attention was given at that time to the stability or 'life expectancy' of this sudden prosperity.

In 1982 U.S. agricultural started 'paying the price' for this unchecked expansion. The costs involved in this increased dependence on exports have become painfully apparent since then. U.S. exports have declined from the \$44 billion peak in 1981 to an estimated \$26.5 billion in 1986.

Volume of exports dropped from 164 million tons to an estimated 108 million tons. The reasons for this decline are also many. An economic recession hit worldwide. The 1979 oil price shock hit, and developed countries responded by tightening monetary policies to counter inflation. Real interest rates rose sharply, and the price of the U.S. dollar rose to an

all-time high in early 1985. The expensive U.S. dollar, coupled with U.S. farm programs holding commodity loan rates high under the presumption of high inflation, caused our competitive position around the world to decline drastically. Importing countries shifted their purchases to U.S. competitors where the same product could be bought at a reduced price. Many importing countries imposed very restrictive controls on imports, demanded price and credit concessions of exporters, and implemented incentives for their farmers to increase production and become less dependent on imports. In fact, this occurred and many countries actually became exporters in direct competition with the United States.

As Dr. Moore indicated there was much demand for agricultural expansion during the seventies. Our farmers were literally encouraged to prepare to 'feed the world.'

They responded with true patriotism and American spirit. Now, in 1987, our farmers are left 'holding the bag.' Among the most independent people in our nation; they are forced to participate in government acreage reduction programs just to survive. Added to the humiliation of being told what and how much they can plant is the public opinion that many farmers are getting rich from government

payments.

This simply is not true! Without these payments many more farmers would be out of business. Following the fate of these farmers would be more fertilizer and chemical dealers, more agricultural chemical dealers, rural banks and many other small businesses in rural America. The ultimate effect could be food production controlled by a handful of large corporations. If that happens the 'cheap food' we are presently able to purchase will suddenly become much more expensive.

We have many farmers here in Perquimans County who are experiencing financial stress. We need each one of them to stay in business. Some will not be able to do so. These people will experience great personal difficulties in going through this transition.

All of us, friends, neighbors, and fellow farmers need to be positive with them and help them to realize that there is hope; that there are options and alternative for them and most importantly that they are not alone.

Next week's article will discuss the stress associated with financial difficulties and some positive ways to deal with these stresses.

## Copeland receives Distinguished service award

The Perquimans County Jaycees held their Distinguished Service Awards Banquet on Thursday, January 22nd at the Hertford Fire Department.

Approximately 50 people were on hand for the annual banquet which is held during National Jaycee week each year.

Mr. Lewis Evans of the Farm Bureau Insurance Company was the guest speaker for the evening. Mr. Evans who is a former Jaycee, and a former winner of the Distinguished Service Award spoke briefly on the importance of each of the awards given at the banquet. He also spoke about the benefits of belonging to the Jaycees.

Each year the Jaycees select people and honor them for service to the community, and service to humanity. This year the Jaycees presented nine awards to members of the community.

The awards presented included: The Joseph R. Rogerson Memorial Award, Outstanding Young Educator, Outstanding Person in Government, Outstanding Young Rescuer, Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer, Outstanding Young Fireman, Outstanding Teenager, Outstanding Senior Citizen, and the Distinguished Service Award.

The recipient of the Outstanding Young Educator's award was Daphne Higgins. Higgins is a special education teacher at Central Elementary School in Winfall. Mayor Bill Cox received the award for Outstanding Person in Government. Mr. Cox is the mayor and town manager of Hertford. Todd Tilley received the award for Outstanding Young Rescuer. Todd is an EMT and a member of the Perquimans County Rescue

Squad. He is a student at Perquimans County High School. The award for Outstanding Young Fireman was presented to Mr. Billy Layden. Mr. Layden is a member of the Hertford Fire Department, and has received several honors from the department including Fireman of the Year. Outstanding Young Law Enforcement Officer was awarded to Mr. Jack Staley. Jack is a wildlife enforcement officer here in Perquimans County. The award for Outstanding Teenager went to Sharla Tilley. Tilley is a student at Perquimans County High School. She is a member of the Beta Club, and is also active in other school activities including student government. The Outstanding Senior Citizen's award went to Mrs. Lillie Mae Yates. Mrs. Yates is 81 years old. She is a native of Weeksville, NC, a 1922 graduate of ECU Training School, is a former school teacher, and currently makes her home at Morgan's Rest Home in Winfall.

The Joseph R. Rogerson Memorial award which is presented to an outstanding male softball player each year, in honor of Mr. Rogerson who died in 1977, was awarded to Mr. Milton Hunter.

The coveted award of the evening, the Distinguished Service Award was presented to Mr. Richard Copeland. Copeland is a member of the Jaycees, and is also a member of the Winfall Fire Department. He is active in both organizations and has held numerous offices since becoming a member. He has served as President of the Jaycees, and is active in all of their community projects.

Mr. Copeland is a Perquimans County native, and is employed with the Town of Winfall.

## Winslow attends meeting

Nineteen local school board leaders from North Carolina, including Clifford Winslow, Chairman of the Perquimans County School Board, were chosen to represent local school boards statewide in Washington, D.C. January 25-27.

Members of the North Carolina delegation joined about 600 other school board members from throughout the nation. The event was the 14th annual conference of the Federal Relations Network, a component of the National School Boards Association.

The theme of this 1987 conference was 'Making Local School Boards Count.' The primary purpose of the conference was to discuss and conduct briefings on key public school issues pending before the 100th session of Congress.

Participants devoted the last day,

## Robinson joins Commission

The Albemarle Commission recently announced that Sharon Robinson has joined the staff of the Aging Program as Employment Developer.

She will be working the 10 county area with individuals 55 years of age and older who would like to find full or part-time employment.

Mrs. Robinson will also be teaching interviewing and job seeking skills, as well as placing individuals in area jobs.

Any employers interested in hiring older workers, or any adults 55 or older seeking employment, please contact Mrs. Robinson at 426-5753 or P. O. Box 646, Hertford, NC 27944

Tuesday, January 27th, to face-to-face meetings with their Senators and Representatives on Capital Hill.

Issues discussed included relationships between education and the world economy, preparing students to compete successfully in an increasingly interdependent global economy, how to keep local boards high on the federal agenda, local boards recapturing the right to governance, changing demography and its implications for education, major federal education programs, and unfunded education mandates.

While this annual event provides a certain order to the process of local boards influencing federal legislation, most local school boards keep contact with their congressmen between each annual FRN Conference.



Pictured above are winners of Jaycee awards from left to right they are: front row - Daphne Higgins, Sharla Tilley, Mayor Bill Cox, and Lillie Mae Yates back row - Jack Staley, Todd Tilley, Richard Copeland, Milton Hunter, Billy Layden.

## Burn seminar held

On Wednesday, January 21, the Hertford Fire Department in conjunction with the Perquimans County Jaycees sponsored a North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center Seminar.

Dr. Hugh D. Peterson, Director of the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center at North Carolina Memorial Hospital, Chapel Hill, North Carolina was the guest speaker.

During the seminar Peterson discussed handling and treatment of burn victims as well as the facilities which are available to burn victims at the center.

Peterson's talk concentrated on prevention of accidents which occur at home. Peterson stated that approximately 90 percent of home accidents could be prevented if people would use caution, and common sense. Dr. Peterson offered the following suggestions for accident prevention: 1. Be extremely careful with water heaters. (Water heaters should be set at 115 degrees) 2. Be careful of loose or hanging wires, and high voltage wires. 3. Be careful when repairing T.V. antennas on the roof. 4. Use caution when pouring or working with gasoline or other flammable liquids.

## Residents to study incorporation of community

A group of Perquimans County residents attended the county commissioners meeting on Monday, January 19th to inform the commissioners they are looking into incorporating Holiday Island.

The group led by Mr. Edward Allen announced last week that they will be conducting a feasibility study on the question of incorporation, and noted that they are just beginning to look into the matter. The group added that they were not formed by the property owners association, but that the association was aware of the group's existence. They also stated that a member of the association is serving on the committee.

They intend to report their findings to the board at a later date.

Mr. R. E. Aiken was also on hand to present the 1985-86 audit for the county. Mr. Aiken reported that the county is in good financial shape with few problems. Those problems were administrative, and are being handled by Randy Keaton, County Manager. Mr. Aiken also reported that he feels the county is receiving a good return on money reserves which are invested.

The commissioners approved a one

percent land transfer tax. The proposed tax document will now be sent to the general assembly for their approval. If approved the tax will cover all land transfers within the county, and will go into effect on the first day of the month following adoption by the general assembly.

Keith Haskett was also on hand to give a report to the board. Mr. Haskett reported that as of January 17, 1987, 86 percent of the county's 1986 taxes have been collected. Mr. Haskett and the board feel that this is a good rate of collection. Mr. Haskett also proposed to the board the idea of photo mapping the county. This procedure is used in identifying land parcels, and is most helpful to the register of deeds, and to attorneys.

The board will discuss the issue at a later meeting.

The commissioners voted to increase the cost of residential water taps effective February 1st. The new rates are as follows: 3/4 inch tap - \$300.00, one inch tap - \$375.00, and two inch tap - \$750.00.

The board also appointed Jean Umphlett to the Library board.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

## Local students make bands

Seven Perquimans County band students have been selected for the North Carolina Bandmasters Association All-Eastern District Bands.

Locally the district is made up of all junior and senior high schools in Eastern North Carolina.

In the Senior High School Symphonic Band Lynnette Riddick, a clarinetist, was selected. Lynette is a senior at Perquimans High School.

In the Senior High School Concert Band, Tim Byrum was selected on Baritone Saxophone, Tony Boone on Baritone Horn, and Tracie Brown on mallet percussion. All three students are sophomores at Perquimans High School.

In the Junior High (grades 8 and 9) Symphonic Band, Damion Burke on

Tuba and Matt Matthews on Trombone were selected. Damion is a freshman at Perquimans High School, and Matt is in the eighth grade at Perquimans Union School.

In the Junior High School Concert Band, Chad Bundy was selected on French Horn. Chad is a freshman at Perquimans High School.

All of these students will take part in a band clinic in Greenville at the East Carolina University School of Music on February 6th and 7th.

A concert by the All-District Band will be given on Saturday night before returning home.

Damion Burke, placed first on his instrument in the district try-out and will go on to try-out for the North Carolina Honors Band in March.

## Lane receives scholarship

Dean N. Lane has been selected to participate in the Modern Farming Short Course.

The Modern Farming Short Course is sponsored by the NC Agricultural Extension Service in conjunction with the North Carolina Bankers Association. The Agricultural Extension Service provides the teaching portion of the program, and the NC Bankers Association provides financial support for the program.

Mr. Lane received a \$350.00 scholarship to the program which is a two week school held at the McKimmon Center at NC State University in

Raleigh.

Lane and the other students attending the school will be exposed to a general overview of the agricultural situation facing farmers. The students will also have an opportunity to study specific course which they have chosen. Mr. Lane's electives include courses in swine, peanuts, corn, and small grains.

Mr. Lane is a self-employed farmer in Belvidere, and a native of Perquimans County. He was chosen to receive this scholarship by the Perquimans County Agricultural Advisory Council.



## Writing to Read workshop held for students' parents

On Tuesday, January 20th, parents of kindergarten students from Hertford Grammar and Central Elementary Schools were orientated to the IBM Writing to Read program.

Expectations of the program were outlined for parents, and they were given an opportunity to operate the

new computers. Students began working with the program on Wednesday, January 21st. They will continue to work with the computers throughout the year, and hopefully by the years end many students will not only be reading but composing their own stories.

## Team to participate in quiz bowl tournament

On February 4th the Perquimans County High School quiz bowl team will compete in the quiz bowl tournament at Creswell High School.

The tournament will be double elimination, and winners from Creswell will advance to the district competition on March 7th. State finals for quiz bowl will be held in Raleigh on April 11th.

This year's quiz bowl team members are Calvin Hobbs, Captain, Alan Kirby, Bob Lube, Stuart Rayburn, and the two alternates are Alex Cahoon, and Carl Terranova.

Other interested students who have been practicing with the team include Richard Arneson, Kathy Wood, Cindy Pierce, and Ernie Hobbs.