

Successful farming for Pete Van Niekerk requires good business sense

by Nancy Arnold
Did you hear the story about the farmer who was asked what he would do if he won the million dollar lottery?
"I reckon I'd just keep on farmin' 'till the money was all gone," he replied. Well that may be funny, but it is not true. Today's farmer is a competent businessman, often as not head of a million dollar agri-corporation. Shares in some of the larger agri-corporations

trade on the stock market. Even the family farms that have survived the fast moving, constantly changing agricultural industry have had to adjust to new equipment, increased acreage, and more progressive agricultural methods to avoid either being forced to incorporate themselves or be swallowed up by a neighbouring agri-corporation. **Maple Grove Farm** A prime example of a

thriving family farm is Maple Grove on County Road 13 (Airport Road) three miles south of Stayner. Pete Van Niekerk bought the original family farm in 1956 for \$18,500, and has recently expanded from 200 acres to a 550 acre dairy operation. The original 200 acres is evaluated at \$225,000 today. This spring he added another 150 acres that he paid \$75,000 for bringing his total land holdings to a value of \$300,000. In addition, Mr. Van

Niekerk rents 200 acres including a 100 acre pasture on Collingwood's Blue Mountains. Everyday the farm ships out 2,500 pounds of milk from its 62 head of Holsteins. Pete likes cows. "My Work is my hobby," he said in an interview. "I enjoy working with cattle." Raised on a dairy farm He recalled memories of growing up on a small dairy farm in Holland helping his father care for thirty cows on their 50 acre farm. "My job was to make

the butter and cheese," Pete said. A process that became part of his life for eight years while he was employed by Bessie's Dairy in Stayner from 1951 to 1959. Pete attended Holland's Agricultural College and worked for the Department of Agriculture after graduation. In 1949, he packed his belongings and sailed for Canada with his new bride Maria and \$125 in his pocket. A three month course in dairy farming at Guelph was the first order of business.

"I stayed on one more month to take a course in ice cream making," he recalled. In 1953, Pete Van Niekerk purchased the 100 acre farm across from Stayner Collegiate that he worked for three years. But, finding this farm was not exactly what he wanted, Pete moved his family to their present acreage on the Airport Road. **Prize winning cattle** Three year old Holstein Wm. Master Glenda and two year old Happy earned awards in 1973 as "top producers". The

awards were presented by the Huronia Dairy Herd Improvement Association to Glenda for contributing 23,757 pounds of milk during the year with 729 pound of butter fat content. But records and awards are not his ambition. "I have made cattle my life's work," Pete stressed, "I like cattle—but not show business. It just doesn't pay." Most of the dairy herd at Maple Grove has been bred and raised at the farm. "This spring we had forty calves. Now we have 62 milk cows; 20 one and a half year old heifers that we will milk next year; 20 yearlings; and 20 calfs. Some of the stock are registered animals. Mr. Van Niekerk feels that artificial breeding invites

infections. "Natural breeding is the best," he commented. With 122 cows to feed, most of the farm land is used for feed grains. "We have 110 acres of barley, 55 acres of corn, and the rest is mostly hay and alfalfa. **Good equipment essential** Equipment is very important in farming today especially with a large operation. Mr. Van Niekerk believes in buying quality. "Sixteen years ago I bought a new tractor and it still purrs like a sewing machine. I believe in Massey Ferguson equipment." The huge automatic milking machines, three massive sylos, tractors and equipment, and fully modernized barns run into a six figure asset for Maple Grove.

A family farm for the family Pete and Ria raised six children. Marion is the eldest and the only girl. John, 23, discovered farming full time was not for him. John is employed by the TD Bank in Elmvalle. Peter, 21, and Gary, 19, are their father's right hand men. Both boys farm full time. Pete hopes to eventually have both boys attend the agricultural college in Guelph. Seventeen-year-old Andy and Ron, 15, are students at Stayner Collegiate. A few goats, rabbits, and chickens take up residence in the barn yard to compete with the boys' attention. Ria tenses in her flower garden when she

has a few spare moments out of her busy day. Pete likes to keep track of the newspapers—especially the financial report. The big old farm house is undergoing renovations at the moment but the uniquely quaint atmosphere dominates the setting. The wall ornaments and furnishings declare the family's Dutch heritage. A huge fishing net imported from Holland adorns the dining room ceiling; demi-tasse china tea sets picturing tiny windmills peek out from a beautifully carved cabinet brought over in 1949 from Holland. Mr. Van Niekerk said "My pleasure is to see the boys continue farming...and I like to drive a good car."

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New Flos 4-H Garden Club gets tips on good gardening

by Mrs. Archie Wanless
The third meeting of the New Flos 4-H Garden Club was held at the home of Connie Giffen on Tuesday evening, June 10. All eight members and their leaders, Mrs. Porretta and Mrs. Wanless were present. The president, Pat Giffen opened the meeting by asking everyone to repeat the 4-H pledge. The girls then answered the roll call. "A report on the progress of my garden". Afterwards everyone adjourned to the garden where Connie gave a demonstration of thinning radishes and Nancy Giffen transplanted calendulas into a flower

bed in the front lawn. Special garden culture (staking tomatoes, pruning cucumbers, hilling etc.) was discussed also Food Preservation - Freezing and Common Root Storage. Darlene Del Mastro and Edina Vander Wielen offered to prepare and package rhubarb for the freezer and then Lisa Keeney and Linda Porretta offered to prepare and package asparagus to be frozen. Insect and Disease Control for Garden Vegetables and Vegetables for Good Health according to Canada's Food Guide were topics of discussion. The girls answered the

"Freezer Quiz" and did a "Flower, Fruit and Vegetable" Crossword. Nancy Giffen offered the use of her home for the fourth meeting on Wednesday evening, July 2.

4-H Homemaking conference

by Susan M. Stanbury
Home Economist
North Simcoe County
An enthusiastic group of 200 girls from across the province will be gathering at the University of Guelph from June 17th to 20th. They will be attending the annual 4-H Homemaking Provincial Girls' Conference. North Simcoe County will be represented by five Club girls: Anne Giffen, Edenvale; Debbie Adams, Minesing; Marie Quinlan, Crown Hill;

Mary VanCasteren, New Flos; and Brenda Simpson, Edgar. The Conference theme is "Images '75". Delegates will be actively involved in group discussions, interest groups, panel discussions, tours, and an opportunity to hear a variety of speakers. A busy week for these representatives of 4-H clubs across the province but one which represents a special opportunity to meet other 4-H Homemaking Club members.

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Vasey Vegetarians hold a meeting

by Alberta MacDonald
The Vasey Vigorous Vegetarians met to hold their third meeting Tuesday evening, June 3, at the home of Mrs. Grant Robinson. Five members and the two leaders opened the meeting with the 4-H pledge. The minutes of the second meeting were read by Alberta MacDonald and approved by vice-president, Brenda Simpson.

Roll call. "A report on the progress of my garden," concluded that some crops had already been attacked by insects or disease while others were ready for use such as lettuce, radishes, and onions. During the business a few ideas were mentioned for record book covers and for the exhibit to be presented at Achievement night, August 18. Mrs. Grant Robinson then took the members on a tour of her garden and demonstrated thinning radishes. Mrs. David Jones showed how to transplant using young broccoli plants as an example. With the members and leaders working together, one bag of rhubarb was frozen using the dry pack method as well as some asparagus which was prepared, blanched, and frozen. Topics for discussion included special garden cultures such as staking tomatoes, tying cauliflower heads, hilling potatoes and thinning and transplanting; vegetables and good health, sources and functions of vitamin A and C, the proper methods of cooking vegetables, and freezing and storage principals.

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