

"Maybe Next Year": Farmer's Theme Song

by Peter Romme

November 15. Work all caught up. Corn picked and stored or sold. Silos and haymows full. Manure spread and plowing finished.

Nothing to do now all winter but chores in a nice, warm barn, overhaul some machinery, blow a bit of snow and play cards.

Alas, this ideal picture of a farmer's life hasn't been achieved on my farm yet. Maybe next year.

This is the time of year to reflect on 1980, find out what if anything, went haywire and why. If everything went according to plan, take a bow. And then, take some time to set out objectives for the year ahead.

One of the significant changes this year involved the dairy industry. In March, milk quotas began selling by auction. Since then, the price has nearly doubled, from \$60 per litre in March to \$114 at the last sale. Quite a fee for the right to produce and sell one litre of milk per day.

As I am a farmer of different persuasion — corn, beef and pigs — I have some rather strong views on supply management and quota values, views which sometimes get me into trouble. Since my wife told me to be nice, I won't inflict them on you.

Last year saw a number of farms sold to immigrants with the results (at least partly) that farm prices have skyrocketed. The farm being our pension plan, this has augmented or indexed our pensions nicely. So far, no one has been around to my place looking for a cash crop farm.

To add interest to injury, interest rates went through the roof. This is still going on. With most farmers in hock to the bank to some degree, it created real hardship for a lot of us, especially the younger farmers with heavy debtloads. Wish the wife would win her lottery now, so we could get rid of those prime plus "2" notes at the bank. Maybe next year.

Prices for our inputs jumped all over the place. Unfortunately, the jumping was always in the same direction — up! Planting time brought quite a shock, with seed, fertilizer, chemicals and fuel up in price from the year before. The fertilizer most widely used as cornstarter, 18-46-0, went from \$200 per tonne to \$380 in one year.

Happily, prices received for farm products increased to take up some of the slack. Milk and eggs are priced in accordance with a cost of production formula and eventually rise to compensate for increased costs.

Finished beef was fairly steady throughout the year. Not too much money to be made there, with the high interest rates. Feeder cattle are off considerably from last fall, when they sold for record prices.

Pork has recovered from disastrously low returns that saw many young pork producers throw in the towel, to where it is selling at \$70 a cwt.

With weaners bringing \$1 a lb. and feed the way it is, that is still below the cost of production.

Corn and feed grains have also recovered from the setback they received through the U.S. Grain Embargo, which our government followed like sheep. This was one of the stupidest political moves inflicted upon farmers in a long time. The Embargo dropped the price of corn by at least \$15 a tonne. With 300 tonnes stored, it cost me, for one, \$4,500. Some price to pay because Carter got mad at the Russians. Our farm organization stood by and said nothing

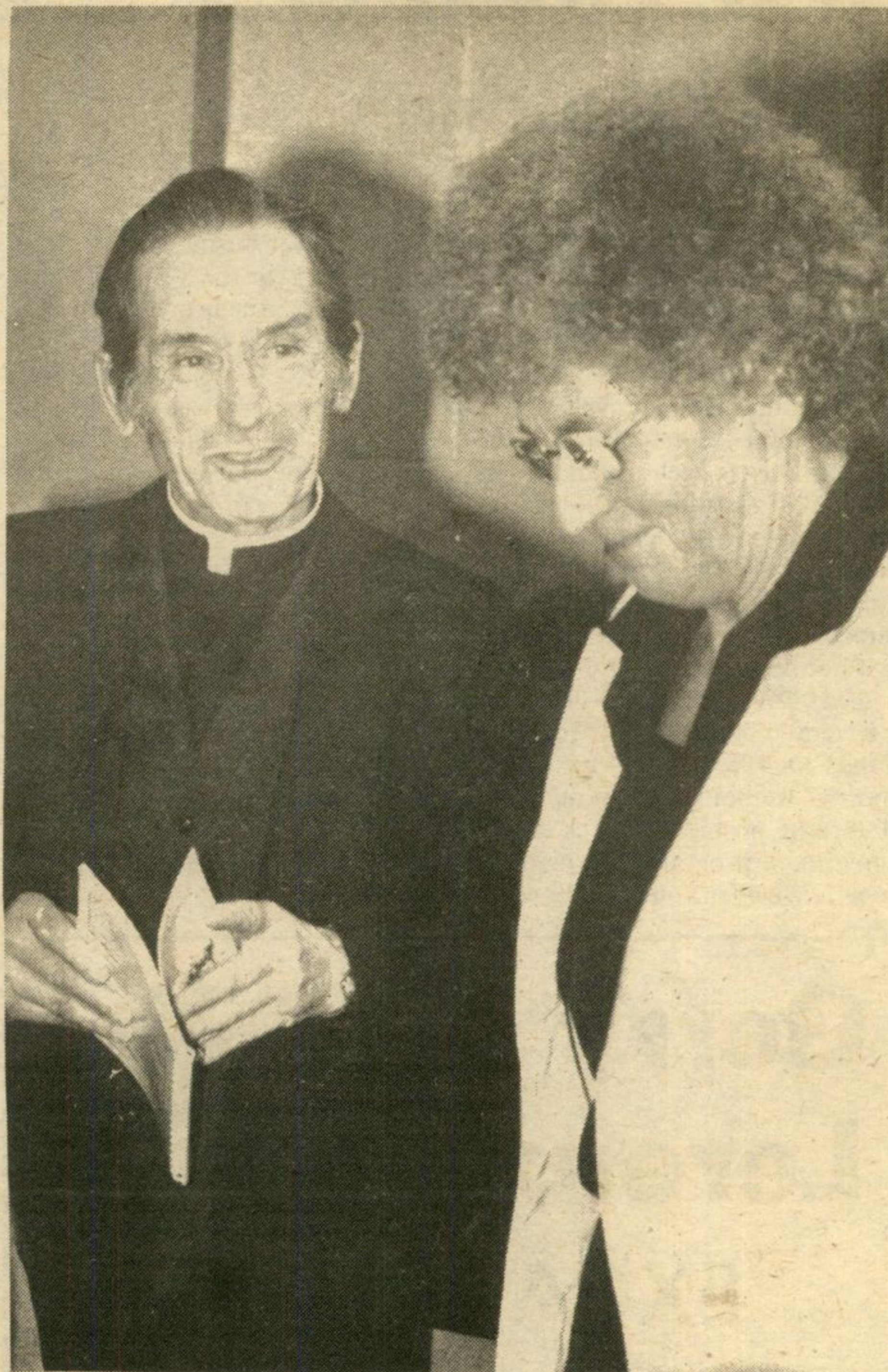
while the grain producer was used as a political pawn. To make matters worse, Russia got all the grain they needed from Argentina. They are still in Afghanistan and the U.S. is taking away the traditional Canadian grain market in China.

I may be dense but I always thought Russia was doing us a favour by buying our grain. Maybe I will be smarter next year.

I would like to suggest that should our leaders get provoked again, they see the postal clerks and collect a dollar an hour from them. Give them a chance to be patriotic also.

Crops in Russell County seemed to be average except for new seeding which suffered from lack of snow cover. Corn crop may be a little better than last year, although some varieties suffered badly from stalk rot. I combined some that must have seventy-five percent broken stalks. That is hard on man and machine and the pocket book as well.

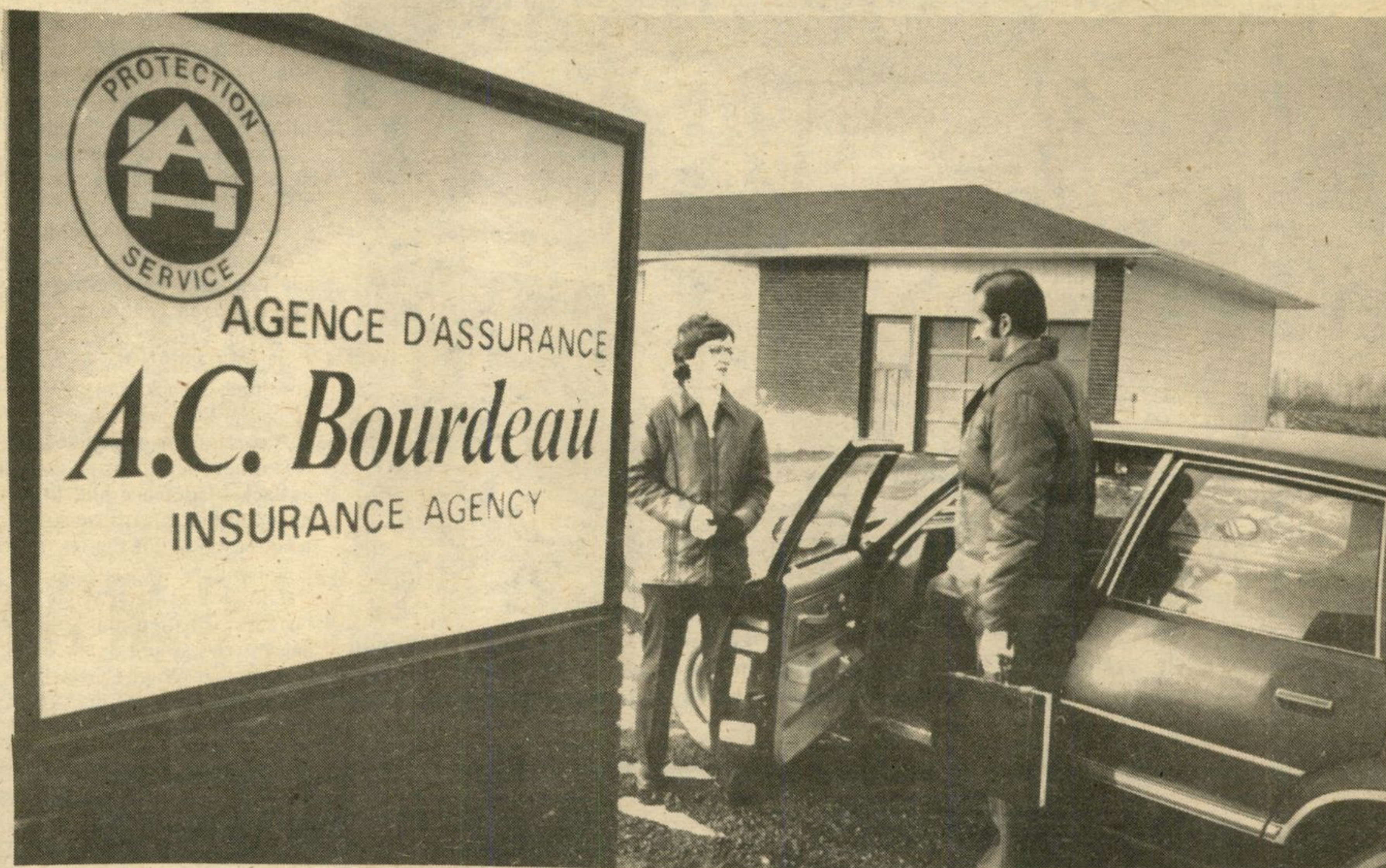
Well, folks, I hope you all made enough in 1980 to keep the wolf from the door and the banker happy, but if you didn't make your fortune, join with me and the Expos in saying, "Maybe next year."



Minvielle honored

Parishioners of Notre Dame Church, Russell, gathered recently to honor their former parish priest who is now at Metcalfe. Father Minvielle was recently released from hospital and is recuperating nicely. He is shown with Mrs. Dinny Achtereekte receiving the Book of Recipes published by the Catholic Women's League.

(Photo Mike Van Dusen)



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Best wishes to you and to everyone else as well in meeting the challenges of the '80's.



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