

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of the SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FARM BUREAU

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

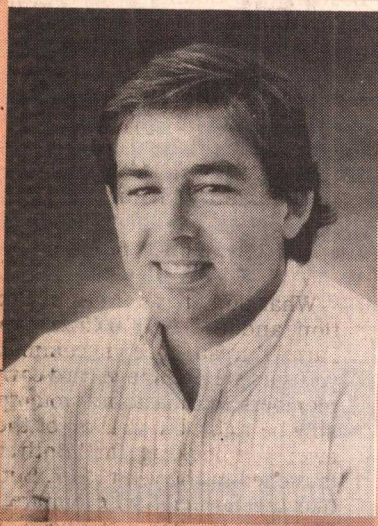
By Jeff E. Brothers

What do Lenin's Russian Revolution and the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau have in common? If you said we both have card-carrying members in the county, you'd probably be right, but that's not the answer I'm looking for! Both were launched in the year 1917. But, unlike the former Soviet empire, this Farm Bureau has never been stronger.

We're strong because we must be. The challenges confronting agriculture in our community are legendary. We must maintain our vigil so that the next straw — whether it be workers compensation abuse, congestion management strategies or school impact fees — is not the straw that breaks the camel's back. I am not aware of a better climate to grow the tremendous variety of high cash value crops that flourish in Santa Cruz County. I cannot envision a cleaner, safer, more desirable industry. And, I cannot imagine a more tragic loss than not to preserve and protect agriculture.

I'd like to think that 15 years from now, the farmers and community members of the county will look back and say "What a smart bunch of folks to have taken the steps they did to make sure ag remained viable."

What does it mean to remain viable? It's not enough to zone land CA (Commercial Agriculture) if the farmer is not allowed to plant what he or she wants on it, or to convert crops readily. I've seen the valley change from apples and sugar beets to head lettuce, celery and cauliflower and strawberries, bushberries, cut flowers and high-density apples.



The crops are far more intensive in nature these days, but they have to be. The cost of doing business in this county is now far too high to survive producing anything but the most profitable crops. Labor, overhead, capital, virtually every input is not too great to go anywhere but straight ahead into the world of high tech agriculture.

What will ag look like in 75 years? A lot more environmental enhancement devices. Smaller farms (the average size farm is already one of the smallest in the state at 68 acres). Less water consumption due to technology and biotechnology. Less labor due to increased mechanization. What crops will be grown? I'm not sure, but I'd bet the farm that you'll still find strawberries, bushberries, cut flowers and high-density apples. Beyond that, suffice it to say it will be the most demanding crops, grown by the smartest farmers and the best field workers in the union. There just aren't any better than what you find here.

I hope we're all around to compare notes in 2067. Until then, may God bless you with health and prosperity.

From the presidents:

The Farm Bureau contacted as many past presidents as possible, and asked what were the big issues during their terms of office. Here are their replies:

1953-54 LEWIS NELSON

"Membership has always been one of the prime things and Juvenile Hall was a prime concern because it was in deplorable condition. The County Hospital and the old folks home were in terrible shape.

"Also, county employee wages, especially females, were so far below those in surrounding counties, so the turnover was about 30 percent.

"Those things were not being addressed by anyone and the Farm Bureau was very much interested."

"About that time, it was the state law that we counties must have a planning department and planning commission; we were also involved in forming a planning department and planning commission."

1960-61 BRUCE RIDER

"In August '62, we bought the property at the corner of Ford and Walker where the Farm Bureau office was, and rented it back to the Farm Supply Company.

"We were meeting with the apple growers from Watsonville and Sebastopol areas which finally resulted in the marketing order."

1968-69 CHARLES BARR

"At that time we expected the Farm Bureau was going to go on forever so we bought the lot next door at Walker and Kearney with the idea that the Farm Bureau Supply and Farm Bureau would have somewhat better quarters.

"Farmers were much more accepted at that time, and politics wasn't the necessity it is today. Politics is much more a part of farming today and a necessary part of farming today, whether its a question of building a greenhouse or spraying a crop."

"There was also a lot of labor unrest during a period with the UFW. It was the big problem of the times."

1977-78 CAL WIKSTROM

We hired Jess Brown as secretary (now executive director) and we started work on the first Country Crossroads map for Santa Cruz County, to guide people to farms where they could pick their own produce.

1979-80 CHARLES BARR JR.

"Wilder Ranch was scheduled to be developed and Henry Mello put in the state budget the money to buy it. The guys who rented the benchlands had been farming it and the state wasn't going to be able to develop the park but wanted those farmers out. We took the position this farmland should be preserved. They came around, and leased it back to the same farmers.

"During my term work also began on the implementation of the Local Coastal Plan, following passage of the Coastal Act."

1985 SHERRY MEHL

"The Santa Cruz City Council decided to support the grape boycott and it was the big issue that we didn't even grow table grapes in this county. We didn't think they should take a stand on the issue. The Farm Bureau said 'if you're going to do that, we'll do that with tourism and tell tourists not to come to Santa Cruz.' I don't know if it was the economic climate or what, but there was a drop in tourism from the Central Valley."

1987-88 THOMAS AMRHEIN

"The thing I remember is being able to work with the people in the agricultural community who were good people who think about what's good for the whole community. We're not selfish people.

"Also, a discouraging aspect was that we were always on the defensive, like with DeVor, Pacific Mariculture, the Murphy Labor Camp, SPCA, in spite of the fact the ag community tries to do what's best for the whole community."



Past presidents (l. to r.) Frank Siri, Bruce Rider and Don Hagerty.

1981-82, 1986 FRANK SIRI

"In 1982, the Medfly was the big one. That was the hot topic at that time. The Farm Bureau assisted in dissemination of information to growers and from growers, mainly in apples. The Farm Bureau played an important role and our involvement strengthened our role as the voice of Santa Cruz County agriculture.

"In 1986, water was becoming an issue. And, I recently found my 'Save the Thurwachter Bridge' T shirt from then."

1983-84 DON HAGERTY

"One of the big issues was the Hazardous Materials Ordinance.

"I was really into public relations involvement. We started the crop identification signs. Also, we didn't have any involvement with the North Coast growers and I felt they needed to be represented. We brought several of those people onto the board."

"Agri-Culture was formed during my tenure. It has been a very successful model program on bringing agriculture education to those not in agriculture."

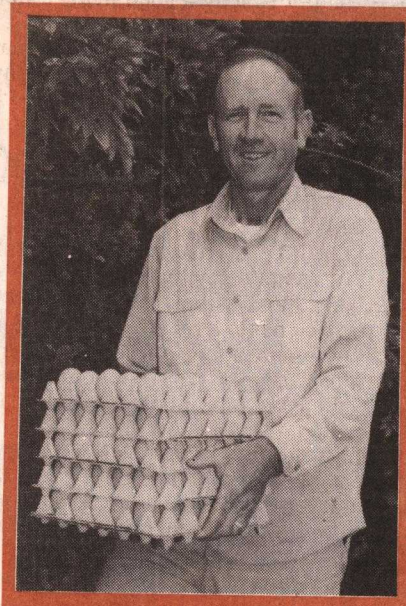
1989-90 STEVE SIRI

"De Vor Nursery, Pacific Mariculture, the earthquake — I had a good run there. They were more land use type issues than anything. Both DeVor Nursery and Pacific Mariculture were applications for permits for agricultural operations on agricultural lands, but both faced stiff opposition and a long battle."

1991-92 JEFF BROTHERS

"The freeze made for an interesting baptism by fire. The Farm Bureau should be proud that we were instrumental in getting (Rep. Leon) Panetta to add language to the disaster relief act to help some people in this area."

"The three issues that I worked on were land use issues, water issues and farm labor housing issues."



Past president Bob Harris

1972-73, 75-76 BOB HARRIS

"What got me involved was the labor problem with (Cesar) Chavez. Charlie Barr told me if I'd be in charge of the labor committee he'd work with me. Probably the first term I was president that was the issue.

"By the second term, land use



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
Farm Bureau

MARKING OUR 75th ANNIVERSARY

To help commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, a special logo was commissioned. We wanted something to symbolize the progress Farm Bureau has made in the last 75 years, said Bill Ringe, chairman of the committee overseeing the anniversary celebration.

Farm Bureau, like agriculture, has to change with the times, he said. We can't still farm with a horse and plow. Likewise, the family chosen for special honors at the

Farm Bureau annual meeting is the Resetar family, which in many ways symbolizes the changes in agriculture, Ringe said, because, over the years, the Resetars have been changing crops with the changing climate for agricultural products.

Plans are also being made for an old-fashioned Farm Bureau picnic. There will also be an open house at the Farm Bureau office this year, both in honor of the anniversary and because many members may not have had a chance to visit the office since the Farm Bureau moved there last year.

County Farm Bureau, a special log was commissioned. We wanted something to symbolize the progress Farm Bureau has made in the last 75 years, said Bill Ringe, chairman of the committee overseeing the anniversary celebration.

Farm Bureau, like agriculture, has to change with the times, he said. We can't still farm with a horse and plow. Likewise, the family chosen for special honors at the

changing crops with the changing climate for agricultural products.

Plans are also being made for an old-fashioned Farm Bureau picnic. There will also be an open house at the Farm Bureau office this year, both in honor of the anniversary and because many members may not have had a chance to visit the office since the Farm Bureau moved there last year.

WITHOUT YOUR VOTE;

1972-73, 75-76 BOB HARRIS

"What got me involved was the labor problem with (Cesar) Chavez. Charlie Barr told me if I'd be in charge of the labor committee he'd work with me. Probably the first term I was president that was the issue.

"By the second term, land use was getting to be an issue."

1974 CLINT MILLER

"The Pajaro River was a big thing, trying to get the river cleaned out and to keep from building up the levees. This was (Fast President) Harry Farris' thing — he and other old-timers said if the levees were higher, the sediment would build up higher in the bottom of the river. We needed to clean it out and to dredge, we didn't want the water table to be higher than the fields. There was an Army project planned to raise the levees, but they didn't do it.

identification signs. Also, we didn't have any involvement with the North Coast growers and I felt they needed to be represented. We brought several of those people onto the board."

Panetta to add language to the disaster relief act to help some people in this area."

"The three issues that I worked on were land use issues, water issues and farm labor housing issues."



Santa Cruz County Farm Advisor Henry Washburn holds meeting with apple growers in apple orchard.
(Photo taken in 1930 or 1931)

The Early Years Remembered...

IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE COUNTY FARM ADVISOR

EDITOR'S NOTE: At the 1983 annual meeting, long-time Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau member Hulda McLean gave a talk about the history of the organization. This is an excerpt from her talk.

IT WAS 1917 and I was a small child when I first heard about Farm Bureau. We were living on the ranch (located above Davenport) when young Henry Washburn, the county Farm Advisor, came out to see my father, Theodore Hoover, to get my father's help in organizing the county Farm Bureau.

The agricultural colleges throughout the country were organizing farmers into something called Farm Bureau so that there would be a way for information on improved farming and marketing methods to get out where farms could put it to practical use. Farm Bureau was set up to be an organization that would bring farmers and Farm Advisors together.

My father took out a family membership and became one of the first strong Farm Bureau supporters in Santa Cruz. Other prominent men who helped Henry, especially with the Board of Supervisors' budget, were Sam Leask and Mr. Jeter. Maytie McPherson, Fred McPherson's mother, and Rose Roston, our first woman supervisor, were also his supporters.

My husband, Chuck, and I brought our family back to the ranch in 1943. Henry Washburn, 25 years older than when I had first seen him, was still a tower of strength. Farm Bureau had changed. The idea of Farm Bureau had caught on, and the organization had become strong all over the county. With strength came the desire to work for elected officials and laws that would help agriculture. The agricultural colleges could not

be involved in this type of activity and so Farm Bureau separated and became an independent organization.

At that time, and for some time afterwards, the county Farm Bureau was composed of local centers which held monthly meetings and had active social, legislative and educational programs. The center chairman was a member of the County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, so local center problems could get county-wide assistance.

Selling Farm Bureau was sometimes a hard job. The selling point was that working together we can accomplish more than working alone. There were no insurance services, nor the many marketing and legal resources available now.

One accomplishment of Santa Cruz Farm Bureau had been the establishment of the Farmers Cooperative Exchange. It was not officially part of Farm Bureau, but was very helpful because its cooperative competition reduced costs of supplies to farmers.

In 1944 I was asked to be Legislative Chairman of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau. This created a minor flap. Farm Bureau was a family membership, but the men ran all of it. In each center, the women had their own organization called the "Home Department" which was under the county Home Advisor in the Extension Office. The function of the Home Department was to learn home skills and to furnish refreshments at the center meetings. And I was County Legislative Chairman and on the County Board of Director!

In 1948 the secretary of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau disappeared. Just disappeared — no one ever found out where he went or why. The speculation was either that he'd just taken off, or that he had drowned himself in the ocean.

Anyway, The Board of Directors asked Chuck (McLean) if he'd be the County Secretary.

Farm Bureau had about 200 members and the dues were \$5 which means there was about \$1,000 to run the office, send young people to conference, send delegates to meetings, put out the bulletin. There wasn't much left over for salary, and if there was nothing in the treasury, Chuck worked for nothing until Farm Bureau could afford to pay him something again. It was not exactly a good living, but it was interesting.

In 1952, the state Farm Bureau established an insurance company. Chuck became agent and that made Farm Bureau easier to promote and also furnished a more reliable income.

Our county Farm Bureau had organized the Farm Supply company in 1950. The reason for Farm Supply was the very high prices of fertilizers. Farm Supply cut the prices to a reasonable level. This competition lowered everyone's price (but didn't make friends with the merchants.)

In 1956, an important thing happened. The county Farm Bureau had become very active and a strong voice in the county. We decided we wanted better representation in government. So, in 1956, we got three Farm Bureau members on the Board of Supervisors — myself, Fizz Nelson and Francis Silliman. The state had passed a law that every county must have a Planning Department and must adopt a General Plan. We were able to appoint three Farm Bureau members to the planning commission — Shep Quate, Elaine Reinelt, and Avery Shuey. That is why the Santa Cruz General Plan, though changed many times since then, is more favorable to agriculture than many counties General Plans.