

Market Connection



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The impact of the sweeter side of American history

New England, and perhaps most notably Massachusetts, is steeped in American history. When you come to the Boston 2005 conference, you'll expect to learn about and visit lots of famous landmarks from the Revolutionary War days. NAFDMA's got that covered. But there's much more to see and learn about! It's amazing to trace back and recognize how simple, every day occurrences have shaped American life. And it's intriguing how something like a child's nursery rhyme or a cookie has affected how you do business today.

America's most famous nurseryman

Almost everyone has heard of Johnny Appleseed, although not everyone knows much more than the legend that he traversed the continent scattering apple seeds. In real life, John Chapman was much more. This nurseryman, who was born in Leominster, Mass., in 1774, found success because of his vision. He owned many tracts of land in Ohio and Indiana. He realized that waves of immigrant settlers were going to move into an area. He scouted out what he thought would be likely locations for the new settlements, and there he planted his apple nurseries. The apple trees grew from seeds he had collected from cider mills,

mostly in Pennsylvania. He planted them on good soil, fenced in the nursery with fallen logs, and sometimes stayed with the nursery. When the settlers moved in, he sold them trees. Settlers were required to plant 50 apple trees their first year on a homestead. Apples were a staple of the settlers' diets.

Johnny Appleseed never settled in one place. He appeared to not have any money, yet he always had plenty. Today, visitors to Massachusetts can honor the legend by following the Johnny Appleseed Trail along Route 2 in the northern portion of the state. Farm direct marketers can more fully appreciate John Chapman, the visionary, the entrepreneur, and one of the first North American continent "globetrotters" who planted the way for so many of us today.

A real life nursery rhyme

There really was a Mary, and she really had a little lamb that she brought to school! In 1816 or so, on a farmstead about a mile from the center of Sterling, Mass., Mary Elizabeth Sawyer and her father found a newborn lamb that was rejected by its mother. Her father agreed to let her try to save the lamb, who then became her pet and constant companion. One day, Mary and her brother noticed the lamb following



Some public sculptures, such as Make Way for Ducklings in the Boston Public Garden, are meant to be touched and played with—even by members of the NAFDMA board of directors!

them to school. Mary's brother, Nat, convinced her to bring the lamb into the school, and she hid it under her desk, covered with her shawl. However, when she went to the front of the room, out trotted the lamb. Everyone, including the teacher, laughed, then Mary brought the lamb out to a shed for the rest of the school day.

Much controversy has surrounded the actual author of the poem. A visitor, John Roulstone, is now credited with writing the first three stanzas. Sarah Josepha Hale published the poem with three more stanzas in *Poems for Our Children* in 1830. Today, visitors can see a bronze statue of Mary's lamb on the

Sterling Town Common.

The sweet nursery rhyme of Mary Had a Little Lamb provides the setting for many sheep displays and school tour lessons on our farms. It's fun to note, too, that a little bit of silliness can make for a memorable story and lots of press. How many of us have tried to create a similar story to capture the hearts of children.

He sowed—others reaped

One of New England's most famous native fruits is the Concord grape. Developed by Ephraim Wales Bull, the Concord grape was selected from thousands of seedlings of native grapes. In 1849, Bull had created the

Continued on page 2

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The sweeter side of history

Continued from front page

perfect grape. In 1853, four years after it was selected, Bull entered the grape into the Boston Horticultural Society exhibition—and won.

Despite the success and popularity of the new grape variety, Bull became bitter as others reaped big profits from his creation. In 1869, Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch created the first pasteurized unfermented grape juice for use as a “sacramental wine.” In 1892, Dr. Welch’s son adopted a new label, “Welches,” and introduced the juice to the public at the Chicago World’s Fair. In the 1940s, point of sales advertising introduced the public to a new taste combination: peanut butter and jelly. The rest, as they say, is history.

On Bull’s tombstone, the inscription reads: “He sowed—others reaped.”

Welch’s helped revolutionize the sale of jams and jellies. It gave us PB&J and grape juice.

Make way for ducklings!

Many generations of children grew up with the story of Mrs. Mallard and her ducklings: Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack. Although this story may not have been *exactly* true, Robert McCloskey was inspired by true stories about ducks trying to cross the busy Boston streets to get to the ponds in the Boston Public Garden. McCloskey wrote, “*I had first noticed the ducks when walking through the Boston Public Garden every morning on my way to art school. When I returned to Boston four years later, I noticed the traffic problem of the ducks and heard a few stories about them. The book just sort of developed from there.*” His book received the Caldecott Medal in 1941.

In 1985, artist Nancy Schön was commissioned to create a sculpture to commemorate Mrs. Mallard and her ducklings. The bronze sculpture was installed on old Boston cobblestones in 1987. Schön strives to make her sculptures interactive. She wants people to touch her sculptures, not just walk by. Interaction is the point of most successful displays. When more of the senses are involved, more learning takes place. Are your displays in-

teractive? Do they beg to be touched or climbed upon to create a lasting memory? When you arrive at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, be sure to walk the two blocks to the Boston Public Garden and make way for ducklings.

America’s favorite cookie

According to the Kitchen Project Web site, people eat *7 billion* chocolate chip cookies each year. We can thank Ruth Wakefield of Massachusetts for inadvertently creating the Toll House Cookie. She and her husband owned the Toll House Inn in Whitman, Mass. It was the 1930s, and Ruth was baking Butter Drop Do Cookies for her guests. She grated some chocolate that she had been given as a gift from Andrew Nestle of the Nestle Chocolate Company. Instead of melting like the baker’s chocolate that Ruth usually used, the chocolate softened and held its shape. Ruth’s Toll House Chocolate Crunch Cookies were born. The cookies became hugely popular as the recipe was reprinted in newspapers. Nestle’s sales went up, and the company kept striving to make its chocolate easier to use. It even included a small chopper in the package before it started producing chocolate chips. Ruth sold her recipe to Nestle in exchange for a lifetime supply of chocolate.

Nestle embodied the quest many farm marketers are on to make their goods to simplify packaging, to make things easier for their customers. Wakefield, when she created her cookie, also embodies the spirit of the marketer. Farm direct marketers are really all about creating tradition. Many families have made Toll House cookies a tradition. Many families have also made visiting certain farms for their produce or entertainment a tradition.

**Apply now for the
Earl Tywater
Scholarship.**

See page 4 for details.

Get feedback from your farm's fans—your customers

By Rob Leeds
Delaware, OH

The headline read, "Immigrants didn't find way to forum." The story was about a governmental conference held to educate foreign immigrants on how to eliminate discrimination in immigrant communities. They had a great location, several good speakers and excellent food, but no immigrants showed up. What was the problem? Well, a good place to start would be the \$75 registration fee. To this type of clientele, \$75 would be a month's worth of groceries. The moral to this story is "Know your customers' wants."

I think most of us are in the farm marketing business because we just love the lifestyle. Ok, you're right, we may not love it, but I think it is safe to say that most of us enjoy what we are doing. That is why I think it's important that we step back and make sure that the people who allow us to do what we love are happy, or at least satisfied. Those people would

be our customers. I am sure everyone who attended the 1997 NAFDMA conference in New Mexico remembers Lowell Catlett's immortal words, "Give your customers, what they want, when they want, where they want."

It's been very interesting for me to watch the rise of NASCAR and country music. Here are two industries that have really focused on their fans. Country music has its fan fest, and I can almost guarantee that the winner of the next Nextel Cup race will say, "I want to thank the fans, without the fans there would be no NASCAR." And he is right. If you take the fans out of NASCAR, if country music had no fans, what would you have? I am sure there is a joke there somewhere, but to keep me from getting into trouble I'll let you fill in the blank.

In the fast food industry we also have some great examples of businesses focusing on the consumer. Earlier this year, Wendy's and McDonald's introduced salads to the menu, and added healthy items to their kids meals. According to the staff in my office, the salads at both rival any in town. Meanwhile, the other national fast food burger competitor, Burger King, has come out with a new Angus burger. Yes, it costs more, but customers prefer the taste over traditional ground beef.

One of the classic



stories about a company not listening to its customers is IBM. Back in the early 80s IBM let several smaller companies steal market share while they focused internally rather than on their customers.

IBM was good at producing large mainframe computers, and this was their focus. But in the 80s customers wanted smaller, more user friendly personal computers. It took IBM over a decade to recover from this lack of customer recognition.

So, as you can see, I think getting feedback from your customers is very important to improving your business. And when you put this information together with your farms' mission statement and business philosophy, you have a strong operation that can be great for both workers and customers. There are several ways to get feedback from your customers. On our farm, as well as most of the markets I work with, surveys, focus groups, or personal interviews are used to gather information.

Surveys

We like to conduct a survey every two or three years to get an idea of what our customers think of our operation and how we can improve. We always offer some mini pumpkins or gourds to encourage people to participate in the survey. It is helpful to see what people like about the business and what new activities or products they would like to see. However, what was interesting was tracking the location of our customer base as our business matured. It defi-

nately affected our advertising efforts.

When putting together a survey, it's important to remember a few rules:

1. Get only information you will use. Too many times we get caught up in asking questions that are nice to know, but are of no real value in decision making. For the most part, customers are willing to give you their opinions, but we are all busy and don't want to fill out a 3-page survey.

2. Ask your most important question first. If a person fills out only part of your survey and then quits, make sure you get the most important questions answered. Too many people start out asking demographic information or trying to set up more important questions, and customers never make it to the more important questions. Start with what you really need to know first.

3. You don't need to poll every one of your customers. From a statistical standpoint, if your market has any where from 10,000 to 1,000,000 guests, a random sample of 375 to 400 customers will yield you a reliable sample. The important thing to remember is to make sure it is truly a random sample. This means that you must randomly pick the people you are polling. For example: You could choose to survey the third customer after the top of the hour, at each check out. Then you could do this on random days throughout your strawberry season to get your 400 customers

Focus Groups

Focus Groups are another way to get good information on what your customer

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Continued on page 4

Apply now for the Earl Tywater Scholarship

NAFDMA is now accepting applications for its 2005 Earl Tywater Scholarship, which provides financial aid for two members of a farm family to attend the 2005 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference & Trade Show. The conference will be held Feb. 7-14 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Mass.

Applications are being accepted now through Sept. 1, 5 p.m. EDT. Applications are available in the Back Forty of the NAFDMA Web site at www.nafdma.com. You can also request an application by calling the NAFDMA office at 888-884-9270.

The scholarship, valued at more than \$1,200, pays for two people from a farm fam-

ily to attend the conference, the pre-conference bus tour, workshops, and the awards banquet. (Scholarship recipients pay for transportation to and from the conference, as well as hotel and meals not included with conference registration.)

Last year's scholarship recipients were Blaine and Leona Staples of The Jungle, Innisfail, Alberta, Canada. "The scholarship made it possible for us to attend the conference," says Blaine. "It was an excellent experience to meet so many people so enthusiastic about agriculture and who had so many ideas."

The Jungle had primarily been a U-pick farm. "We came back with a new perspective," Blaine says.

"We're enthusiastic about improving our farm retail location and diversifying our products and stepping up the entertainment we offer." Some of the big changes the Staples are implementing as a result of attending the conference include setting up an elaborate children's play area using some of the ideas they saw on the bus tour and upgrading their sales center. They're also making some little changes, including better signage at the end of their lane telling passersby their hours and what's available.

The scholarship is open to any NAFDMA member who has never attended a NAFDMA conference. Applicants must meet several eligibility requirements, includ-

ing an established need for financial support and a willingness to share the NAFDMA experience with farmers in their home state.

The Earl Tywater Scholarship Selection Committee will review the applications, and the recipient will be announced on Nov. 1.

The Earl Tywater Scholarship Fund was established as a memorial to Earl Tywater of Earl's Fruit Stand, Franklin, Tenn. Earl was a founder and director of NAFDMA whose appetite for learning and becoming a better marketer was endless. In honor of that passion, the NAFDMA board of directors, in cooperation with the Tywater family, established the fund in Earl's memory.

Get feedback from your farm's fans

Continued from page 3

wants. The basic idea of focus groups is to bring a group of people together to discuss certain topics. A co-worker of mine, Tom Archer, OSU Extension Evaluation Specialist, recommends focus groups for uncovering information on human perceptions, feelings, and opinions. However, he cautions against using this method if you are looking for the answer to a technical problem. If you have questions like:

- What do our existing customers think about the addition of our new roller coaster?
- Will our new school tour curriculum work?
- How should we promote our cherry blossom festival?
- How well is our corporate party program working?
- Is our employee training program effective?

These are all questions that can be effectively answered by conducting a focus group.

We have used focus

groups on our farm several times when considering making major changes. In one instance, several years back, we were considering making some major changes in the traffic flow of our market. During the focus group, a customer, and a few of our employees, came up with ideas that had never before been mentioned. I almost dismissed the idea as being too expensive, but after some investigation I found it was cheaper than some other ideas on the table. We went ahead and implemented the change, and it has worked great. Of course, everyone in the operation still reminds me of the idea I tried to kill.

Personal Interviews

Personal interview is just what it sounds like. You just randomly select customers and interview them about their expectations and experiences at your operation. This is a quick and dirty way

to get information. One decision that is critical to the success of getting quality information from an interview is the selection of the interviewer. Ideally it would be an owner or manager of the operation who has an appreciation of what information is needed. However, if another employee is used, make sure he or she has good people skills and a good understanding of the objectives for the interview.

The big advantages to using this method are:

- You get a very high response rate
- You can ask open-ended questions that are difficult to include on a survey.
- You can ask follow-up questions to clarify their response.

The biggest disadvantage is the cost of doing the interview. It most often will be the most expensive of the three methods.

We have used personal interviews on our farm, and I

was pleased with the information we received. A variation of this method has helped us refine our picture areas and identify some safety concerns. We handed disposable cameras to random customers, let them take pictures, and had them turn in the cameras on their way out. When looking at the pictures we had several "A ha!" moments about where they chose to take pictures and a few "they did what?" moments as we saw what they were doing in the pictures.

These are only three of the many ways to get information from your customers about your business, but the important point is that you need to listen to your customers. Every customer who comes to your market has a set of expectations, and our job is to not only meet, but exceed those expectations. It is always good to take time to gauge those expectations and to see how we are doing.

Thoughts on selling at farmers' markets, Part 5

Nina Planck, Founder
Local Foods

Note: This article concludes a five-part series that began in the January 2004 issue.

Bring Photos of your Farm

Bring not only your food, but also your farm to market. Pictures of crops, animals, processing (say, making cheese), and workers with crops and animals are interesting and charming to non-farmers and bring life to your stand. Pictures also reinforce the message that we are all linked to farmland through food.

Be Cheerful and Active

A bored, sullen person behind the counter is fatal. Without being a hyper salesmonster, be enthusiastic and friendly. You must move about the stand. Walk to the front of your stand every 10 minutes for the customer's view. Pick up trash, even if it's not yours. You must demonstrate your high opinion of your products. You cannot be ignorant about products. You must give customers a reason to buy. Avoid sarcasm, indifference, smoking, music, and the impression 'I just work here.'

Perfect Your Marketing Equipment

Growing vegetables or raising animals is only half the battle. Do not neglect the infrastructure of marketing. Have a good sign box with

magic markers, blank paper, tape. We organize signs by product in a small plastic recipe box. The PEPPERS file, for example, contains all the pepper signs (bell, hot, frying) with various prices and quantities. When you get to market, you need only choose the sign you need.

Our market report tells how much you brought, what price you sold it at, and when it sold out. When we're loading for next week's market, we have a good idea of what the market can sell. We refer to the market reports year after year.

Bring enough change to get you through the early \$20 bills. Experiment with tarps until you find the right one. Bring wet towels to keep lettuce from wilting in the heat. Use white side tarps to keep everything shady. Make sure every market has the baskets, boards, and tables it needs. (We use a check list.) Our marketing equipment is modular; it works at every market. Usually it has two purposes: It's part of the load itself, and it becomes part of the display.

Some Modest Numbers

Like most small business owners, farmers seldom discuss how much they make. My parents, Chip and Susan Planck, have always believed that the success of farmers' markets depends on the success of farm businesses. We hope that by sharing information about

sales, we can encourage more farmers to sell at farmers markets.

On Aug. 29, 1999, my parents were in England to visit my first London farmers' market in Islington. Our summer college-age farm workers selling vegetables at Dupont Circle, in Washington, D.C., made \$4,800 in four hours. It was a market record (since surpassed).

Among many other things, they sold 1,250 lbs of tomatoes for \$2/lb—about \$2,500, or half the total sales. They sold out of tomatoes.

Lesson 1: Specialize. (We grow 25 varieties of tomatoes.)

Lesson 2: Grow the best varieties. (If it isn't delicious, we don't grow it.)

Lesson 3: Give samples. (Our customers ask for tomatoes by name.)

Lesson 4: Treat it properly. (Our tomatoes are ripe and unbruised.)

Lesson 5: Charge what it's worth. (We are not fancy, but customers think our tomatoes are worth \$2.40/lb. Some of our prices are higher than the supermarket or the stand next door, some lower. Between you, the competition, and the customer, you learn what it's worth.)

They sold 6 bushels of basil, about 180 bunches the size of two hands, at \$2 each.

Lesson 1: Grow what the customers want. (We used to try to sell whole basil plants, with the muddy root and all the stems still on, for \$1. Now we cut just the leaves, wash and bunch them and make ten times more money per plant.)

Lesson 2: Grow high-value crops on small pieces of ground. (Basil is also light

and small to carry to market.)

Lesson 3: Grow something the supermarkets don't. (Basil in supermarket pots dies before you can use it; the cut basil is old, overwatered and over-fed with nitrogen. It doesn't last, and it's bland.)

The Plancks pay a fairly substantial fee at this market. We are glad to do it. With markets like this one—and 13 others, including somewhat slower weekday markets—my parents are able to farm for a living. Average annual sales from 1998 to 2002 were about \$325,000, and in 2003, a bad year for weather, sales were a record high of \$350,000. (The biggest expense is labor, about \$110,000.) They sell only at farmers' markets and have no other income. Farmers markets' saved our farm.

That is why we have worked hard, not only to sell more vegetables, but also to convince customers and communities that farmers need a stable network of well-managed farmers' markets in every suburb, town, and city. Every farm selling direct has different means and needs, but we all rely on convincing customers to buy local foods. It is notable how diverse farmers markets are. Many farms smaller and larger than ours—in acreage and sales—rely on at farmers' markets too.

That is why I am glad to share these thoughts on marketing.

**VISIT THE FARMERS' MARKET
COALITION FORUM AT
WWW.NAFDMA.COM FOR CONFERENCE
DETAILS AND FMC INFO.**

You can reach Nina Planck at 212-982-6462 or via e-mail at planck@rcn.com

LOCAL FOODS is a non-profit dedicated to developing the market for local foods.

Is it time to start a revolution?

NAFDMA has created an annual conference widely regarded as the most enthusiastic and beneficial event in our industry. Ours is where farmers and their colleagues gather to smile and laugh and defy many of the problems associated with large-scale production agriculture and a struggling agriculture and food policy. It's the shining star because many leaders have stood up over the years and challenged us to make changes where change makes sense. It shines because our members have found the confidence to take some risks and to cut against the conventional grain just enough to prove that unearthing new approaches can create new successes. Our conference success is directly proportionate to the creativity of all the people in and around our association. Its winning recipe is clearly a responsible mix of establishing new partnerships, clinging tightly to old traditions, and at the same time being fearless to try brand new approaches to age old problems.

For 20 years now, the association's leadership has dedicated the lion's share of attention and resources of the association to our conference. The membership has matched that energy by participating. You've volunteered as speakers who share with others, opened your farms for visits from your peers, and just plain been the active ingredient that makes the NAFDMA conference what it has become today.

NAFDMA may need to find ways to apply many of those same attributes to our work outside of the conference. The face of farm direct marketing is changing. And the truth is, it's changing from the outside, in.

Twenty years ago, the NAFDMA conference was one of perhaps five national, state, or regional conferences held

each year highlighting farm direct marketing. Today it's one of literally a couple of hundred conferences and workshops available in the United States and Canada each year for farmers and others interested in the many aspects of farm direct marketing. Today, many of these conferences and workshops attract as many folks from academia, local, state and federal government sectors, media, and agriculture service industries as they do active farmers. Just two decades ago there might have been 2,000 farmers and 200 agricultural service professionals across North America who uttered the term farm direct marketing. Today, easily 200,000 farmers are fully engaged in some form of direct marketing, and every agricultural college as well as capitol building in every single state and province in the U.S. and Canada has had some variation of the term used inside its halls. More important to your home, local governments in the majority of town halls and county seat buildings across the continent have either recently discussed the municipal nuances associated with retail farming and agritourism or will do so within the next five years. Farm direct marketing, together with all the spawned activities that fall within its umbrella, is no longer the best-kept secret in agriculture. It's now arguably the most publicly visible sector in agriculture.

Our industry is beginning to grow around us faster than our association, as a whole, has been willing to grow and adjust with it. What takes place naturally when any industry becomes successful in both the United States and Canada is more media attention, more



government interest, more academic study, and more political inquiry. In turn, this prompts internal fear that competitors will rise on every rural street corner, concern that bureaucrats will seek to levy more regulation, and there is caution that each existing business will lose market share. Sure there is cause for concern, but there's also time to take the necessary actions that will keep our industry on an even keel.

For many members, the thought of having our association aggressively step outside the safety of our own conference and our own membership circles can seem a bit overwhelming. I am perfectly aware that most of our members are resistant to change. But wasn't it awkward for those of us who love being alone in an open field on a tractor, the first time we had to stand inside a building and greet customers in order to sell our produce? Wasn't it a bit nerve racking when we opened our farm up to the public and started watching all those playful kids screaming through the orchards, pumpkin fields, and ranches? That was a new era for each of our farm families back then. It's played out well.

This is a new era for our association now. NAFDMA needs to be astute and be responsive as farm direct marketing changes. Our office is receiving an ever-escalating number of calls from members seeking guidance or letters of support as they are challenged with more and more zoning issues, insurance challenges, and other needs. Most of those calls are coming from long-time members who are very successful in their own right. Plenty are coming from

new farmers just beginning to look at direct marketing. We will need to invest in other creative ways that will help to manage the responsible growth of this industry. A solution to find affordable liability insurance for family farmers is not likely to come without support from government institutions. A comprehensive strategy for handling zoning issues, which is responsive to the evolution of retail farming and agritourism, can't happen until we face the questions it raises head-on. Public safety concerns with regard to food, contact with animals, injuries on the farm, and traffic in and out of the farm gate are not going to go away. Simply put, our challenges won't ever again be limited to agricultural concerns until the day we stop inviting the public onto our farms. Obviously, that's not our objective.

Together we have changed the outlook on agriculture over the past 20 years from gloom and doom to hope and celebration on our farms as well as in the cities at our farmers' markets.

We are the public face of agriculture. Collectively, we show the bright side of agriculture to tens of millions of people every season. Collectively, we are among the most appreciated and embraced figures in our local communities.

The public, the academics, the bureaucrats, and the politicians want to see us succeed. It would be up to us to embrace the opportunity to proactively work together to address the merging worlds of agriculture and public activity.

So, instead of being defensive about each problem that is correctable in its own right, and being resistant to talking to our non-farming extended families, friends, and neighbors who happen to be

Continued on page 7

Who's right, who's wrong, and who's on first?

Last week during the Illinois Summer Orchard Day at Eckerts Orchard in Bellville, Ill., we heard Larry Eckert talk about pricing in Eckert's market. He explained about using the .99 instead of .75 or .95 and how the extra 4 cents would add up at the end of the day. On a good day there would be about 10,000 transactions and getting an extra 4 cents each time would put an extra \$400 of net profit in his pocket that day. This is a pricing philosophy I have heard about many times and is used at Tanners Orchard with good success.

Then on the way home, Marilyn wanted to stop at the new Dollar General store and pick up some cleaning supplies for our market. While shopping in the store, I noticed that most of the

products were priced in even dollars. This seemed contrary to the .99 pricing philosophy. Later we stopped at Wal-Mart, and I realized that many of their prices ended with double numbers, i.e. 44, 77, 88, etc. Then just this morning in the Kroger and Schnucks flyers I notice quite a few even dollar prices, i.e. hamburger-\$1.00/lb, grapes-\$1.00/lb, paper towels-2/\$3.00. I have heard that the Dollar Stores were becoming quite successful, and I am seeing them in many small towns along with the Casey's convenience stores.

Now just what in the world is a farm marketer supposed to do when it comes to pricing?

Just think, if Tanners went from their price of \$4.99 to \$5.00 (rounded everything up), then I would make another \$100.00 a day.

With that kind of money I could afford to hire a good manager and spend more days in my boat on the Illinois River! (Don't ask Marilyn about my boat.)

On one of Marilyn's favorite subjects: fly and insect control in the market and on the farm. In this day and age sanitation is a big issue. Many people are not excited about going places where flies and bees are in abundance. I read on the "Back Forty" about a biological method of controlling flies around animals. I have or-

dered these parasites and will give them a try. Hopefully I will not have to use as many chemical sprays as in the past to control the flies.

Last fall during our bi-annual insurance audit the underwriters noticed some bolts loose and damaged material on our giant slide. In their report the auditors requested that I remove the slide and if I wanted to have a slide I should get a manufactured one that meets the standards for playgrounds. I have found about three companies willing to talk about replacements or add-on slides. If and when I find one that is reasonable I will post the information on the "Back Forty" portion of the NAFDMA Web site.

Wishing everyone a profitable and safe summer marketing season.



Is it time to start a revolution?

Continued from page 6

lawyers, inspectors, legislators, regulators, and the like, perhaps we should cordially discuss with them the many more great things we represent about life in North American and build off that undeniable fact. We have roughly 100 million customers who visit our farms and farmers' markets collectively each season who would likely support us.

As we prepare to meet our challenges associated with industry success, I am hopeful that all our members will react positively and enthusiastically as you have all done with our conference. We have all applied our skills to show the public a really good time on the farm as we turn children's frowns into smiles and parents' tensions into relaxation. Our farmers' market members are fully capable of transforming an open parking lot or a

blocked off inner city street into a bustling place of activity, colorful interaction, and community spirit. Many of us have gone on NAFDMA tours, and after a cold and rainy day on the road we've turned a boring brick and mortar county fair hall into the biggest party in agriculture. Most of us call it "turning lemons into lemonade." I'm pretty sure we could do the same in the public arena.

Yes, our world is changing around us. We won't prevent that from happening. But, I am convinced. As sure as a handful of grain farmers and apple growers 20 years ago created what our conference is today, a few hundred energetic and enthusiastic farm direct marketers can meet with our government leaders, corporate players, and community organizers to be sure that we ourselves, as well as all of our non-farm-

ing neighbors continue to smile when talking about farm direct marketing and agritourism.

The NAFDMA conference will continue to do incredible things for farm direct marketing internally. Our board has never had a stronger commitment to ensuring the conference will continue to address the most important emerging and evolving strategies and issues in our industry in order to keep our members on the cutting edge. The next frontier is external.

Does each of us have time to get involved? Can any of us shift our priorities to play a small roll? Is a newsletter column gonna change anything? It won't happen in one year. It won't come without setbacks. It will require courage and leadership, and occasionally overcoming our very worst fears. It will require an open discus-

sion among us as to whether we even want to step through this door when so many of us are either mistrustful or overwhelmed by what's on the other side. It feels a bit like opening the farm gate to the public did 20 years ago.

Everything comes in good time. For now, let's at least acknowledge we have a choice. We can either choose to be insecure and resistant as we watch things happen to our industry from the outside in, or be cheerful and proactive as we invest what it takes to responsibly manage our industry from the inside out. Most of us will still be here 20 years from now to see the results. What will we see?

If creating and perpetuating one of the best conferences in the world is a successful model in colonizing, is it time to start a revolution?



**NORTH AMERICAN FARMERS' DIRECT
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug. 10-12, New York

Empire Farm Days, Rodman Lott & Son Farms, Seneca Falls, N.Y. Call 877-697.7837 or visit www.empirefarmdays.com

Aug. 12, Ohio

Pumpkin Field Day, Western Agricultural Research Station, South Charleston, Ohio. (330) 263-3700.

Aug. 14, Pennsylvania

Roadside, CSA and Farmers Markets Workshop, Valencia, Pa. Call 717-664-7077 or e-mail pafarmlink@redrose.net

Aug. 17-19, Pennsylvania

Ag Progress Days, Rock Springs, Pa. Visit apd.cas.psu.edu, e-mail

AgProgressDays@psu.edu, or call 814-865-2081.

Sept. 26 - 28, Florida

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association Annual Convention, The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, Fla. Contact: Leslie Curry, 407-894-1351.

Oct. 17-19, California

PMA International Convention and Exhibition, Anaheim, Calif. Call 302-738-7100 or visit www.pma.com.

Oct. 18-20, Massachusetts

New England Greenhouse Conference, Centrum Centre, Arena and Convention Complex, Worcester, Mass. Call 802-655-7769 or visit www.uvm.edu/~pass/

greenhouse/negc.html.

Oct. 18-20, Vermont

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture and Education Conference, Burlington, Vt.

Contact: Vern Grubinger, 802-257-7967, ext. 13, vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu.

Dec. 7-9, Michigan

Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo. DeVos Place, Grand Rapids, Mich. Visit www.glexpo.com.

Jan. 17-19, New York

The NYS Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Conference, Wyndham Hotel, Syracuse, N.Y., Jan. 17-19. The conference will be followed by a post conference bus tour on Jan. 20. Contact:

NYSFDMA at 315-475-1101

January 24 - 26, Alberta

Explore Direct Provincial Conference 2005, Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer, AB.

Contact: Lisa Sharp, 780-679-1362, e-mail lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca, or www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Feb. 7-14, Massachusetts

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Conference & Trade Show, Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, Mass.

Visit the Web site at www.nafdma.com, e-mail info@nafdma.com, or call 413-529-0386. Registration begins Nov. 1. Preregistration deadline is Jan. 6.