

People in Focus .

By: Deborah Caso

With his face crinkled in the familiar wide grin, eyes twinkling and another quip about to spring forth from his lips, the Cambridge Springs farmer talks about his 222 acres on McClellan Street Extension and reflects, somewhat reticently at times, about his stint in the Army Air Corp. during World War II.

Although he admits he is 58 years old, the jolly, amiable "Bunk" Mathews, so dubbed by his Grandfather Crow, with his outdoors complexion and quick wit, seems at least ten years younger. He works, as does many an area farmer, from sunup to past sundown running his dairy farm, and he readily admits that the cost of farming today is rapidly rising, as are all other costs. Most equipment, he said, has doubled in cost in the last five years, and, he laments, the modern equipment is necessary to carrying on farming today.

His biggest concern, and the one that pushes his costs skyward, is the fact that he sells his product wholesale and must buy everything retail—a 40 percent difference.

Mathews believes there should be less government intervention in the farming business. "That fellow in D.C. doesn't know what's going on out there," in the fields, he stated good-naturedly. He advocates letting the process of supply and demand run the crop business, along with crop control. "We'd be many times better off," he stated.

He added that all farmers in the country work together to forecast what any given year will look like.

When Mathews began with his father's farm back in the early 40's, he remembers that milk cost \$1.75 per hundred. Now that price had escalated to \$13 per hundred. In those days, \$.40 an hour was con-



Bunk Mathews

sidered a good wage. Mathews employs one helper to care for his 80 head of dairy cows, but otherwise runs the farm by himself.

Before it became necessary for him to run the family farm, Mathews aspired to be an engineer and enrolled in Alliance College. He had been helping out at the farm since he was 18 and a senior in high school, milking the cows early in the morning and then leaving for school. After a series of heart attacks, his father was unable to carry on the strenuous business of running the farm, so Mathews took it over after he returned from the war.

Although once he had other aspirations, he doesn't regret his years of hard, sometimes back-breaking work on the farm and added that he prefers outdoor work; his job, he says, "has to be outdoors."

Although most days a total of about 12 hours are spent on farm related work, Mathews likes to be his own boss. He credits his wife with helping out tremendously on the farm, adding with a smile: "It's been a full life with a good wife."

An interested mate, he maintains, is a necessary ingredient for a successful farming venture. Otherwise, "she can hold you back," he replied. His wife worked right

alongside when it was necessary to hand milk the cows, he remembered. Without all the fancy gadgetry was farming less complicated? Surely it was less expensive, he said. However, "you can't say you prefer it that way—it's evolution."

Mathews and his wife, Helen, whom he has known since the first grade in a one-room schoolhouse in Drakes Mills, live in his grandfather's house, built in 1840. It's really three houses in one, he explained. Many years ago, part of the house was a barn, but has since been rebuilt many times. The house contains three sets of rafters that "even a bat can hardly get through," he said.

Although they are currently in the process of redecorating the stately house, Mathews remarked that it is solidly built—that he can hardly hear a milk truck come up the drive when he's inside. The structure contains five bedrooms and is big by today's standards, he said.

To keep costs at a minimum, they burn wood and coal, which they haul themselves. They project they save \$25 a ton by hauling it themselves for the 60 to 100-mile round trip, Mathews stated.

They look forward to

drilling a gas well on their property to make them really energy sufficient.

Besides his farming, Mathews is a nut on nuts. A member of the Pennsylvania Nutgrowers Association, he works with the nut trees he and his father planted which are now grown to 40 to 60 feet tall. His interest in nuts could be extremely profitable, he said, as nuts are used the world over for food.

But perhaps the least-known fact about the kindly farmer is his role in World War II. He functioned as a radio operator and gunner in a B-25 bomber. He received his radio training in Chicago after he was drafted in 1942 upon graduation from Alliance--then a two-year college.

Participating in raid after dangerous air raid of enemy camps, Mathews escaped without any serious injuries. He points down to his knee and remarks: "I've got a piece of Germany right there."

While flying over 65 missions over Italy, Southern France and the Balkans, he remembered, sure there was danger, but, with eyes lowered, he declined to speak about the death of fellow fliers.

"You learned to pray. When you come home, you don't shoot ducks and geese," he said simply. All he would say was: "You couldn't hide up there. There were no windows and it was cold."

"When they said go home, you just said, when," he reflected.

After his year overseas tour, he was sent to Florida to fly training missions.

Each year Mathews travels to different parts of the country to be united with fellows from the 57th bomb wing. He has been attending the functions for the last ten years. Last year in San Diego, some 600 people at-

tended.

What do they talk about for the four-day celebration? War, of course, memories and improvements in today's Air Force. They tour air bases to view the latest equipment. "I probably had more interest in what went on than most men. I wanted to know what went on," Mathews replied.

At one such reunion, the group took a side trip to Hawaii and visited Pearl Harbor. The reminiscing "gets pretty deep," he joked. "long as there are two people."

Mathews doesn't believe the draft should ever have been stopped. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," he prophesized. The all-volunteer army is incompetent, Mathews believes. "It never will work. You get the deadbeats in there who just want a free meal," he charged.

Does he foresee war? "There are always going to be wars," he predicted, "as long as there are two people."

Mathews and his wife have three sons from her previous marriage, Victor Kwiatkowski, a contractor from Edinboro, Vernon, a teacher in central Michigan and Vincent, a pharmacist at Corry General Hospital. They enjoy visits from their three grandchildren. At their home, they have at least 25 bushels of toys for the tots.

Although Mathews sees the area remaining rural, he is prepared for the growth of subdivisions and the resulting influx of people. "I don't want to be squeezed," he cautioned, however.

He works every day, including weekends, but has gradually sold parts of the family parcel of land off, as the work becomes harder. "As you get older, you wear out quicker."

With another saying springing to his lips, Mathews quipped: "Our wants are many, our needs are few."