

3/8/64

"GEESE FOR PEACE"

The Associated Press called me "a one-man foreign aid program".
Newspapers captioned my picture "farmer-diplomat". Radio and TV stations
from coast to coast and around the world invented their own compliments.

Maryland

I am the ~~small~~ poultry farmer whose personal agricultural assistance
to unknown, poorer farmers in less developed countries succeeded and, for
a while, seemed to capture the national imagination. In what I consider a
full life, nothing has given me as much satisfaction.

Perhaps the most gratifying experience was the ready help provided
by people of all ages, many then and still unknown to me, who pitched in
as each of an incredible sequence of emergencies arose. Without them the
first of my projects would never have succeeded. That was important to me
and, if the statement of a government official is true, to the then fledg-
ling Peace Corps, for he credited this project with getting the Peace Corps
its first good publicity "break".

"Geese For Peace" is what Martha Cole, the Associated Press's warm-
hearted Washington correspondent who wrote the first story, dubbed my adven-
ture. That phrase stuck. It was also applied to my subsequent efforts.

"Why geese?" you may wonder, especially when my wife and I are
championship chicken raisers and cooks. Because geese have the unique
capacity to live and reproduce themselves on vegetation alone. They can
convert what would otherwise be waste - weeds and grass - into animal pro-
tein. And animal protein is probably the greatest single deficiency in the
diets of all the underfed peoples of the world.

What prompted a farmer to do something as off-beat as this?

I drew my inspiration from two presidents, Eisenhower and Kennedy. When "Ike" came back from Southeast Asia, he made a fine speech in which he said that government-to-government aid was essential, but each American should also think how he could help. I'm probably the only man who took him seriously. But my efforts came to nothing after two years of trying, and I had given up when JFK's inaugural address stirred us all, especially his unforgettable line, "Ask not what your country will do for you - ask what you can do for your country." I hope I'm not the only one who took this injunction to heart.

In giving the Peace Corps my beautiful flock of 25 White China geese, I also had less obvious purposes. I wanted to get people thinking about our expensive official foreign aid. I wanted fewer millions in the pockets of crooked politicians who never stay bought. I wanted more food in empty stomachs. I wanted our fine agricultural scientists to realize their twentieth-century skills and techniques cannot be successfully superimposed on almost medieval economies. and I wanted at least some people in the rest of the world to understand that, regardless of what they might have heard, Americans are not motivated by only mercenary and selfish considerations.

How well I succeeded can be measured by the prominence world-wide news media gave the story and by the hundreds of letters, not one of which was a "crank" letter, from friends I hadn't seen in years, from other farmers in remote areas of far-away lands, from governments, and from just wonderful, plain people who stopped their daily work long enough to send me a few encouraging words. The United States Information Agency has told me how much these projects have helped our national image. We have seen this personally in communications from every continent except Australia.

Why I decided on the White China geese - their swan-like beauty, higher productivity, and other special characteristics, with humorous anecdotes about them.

Taking it up with the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), fore-runner of the present Agency for International Development (AID). Good reaction but nothing happened. When it was too late to send geese, offer of eggs for hatching. All the red tape that bogged it down, ending with joyous acceptance of fertile eggs for 4-H Club prizes in Korea, but inability of ICA-Washington to get from ICA-Korea names and addresses of recipients, even after I had arranged free air transportation of eggs.

Informal admission of reasons: No opportunity for local graft; no justification of large sums appropriated - preference for expensive projects which made striking statistics; not the type of project that justified time of highly educated, well salaried Washington personnel or impressed Congress at appropriation time.

Phone call to Peace Corps public information office a half-hour before the working day began. Found a man at work. He liked the idea, said he knew of two places it would work in well, and promised to be in touch. It happened as he said, and I heard from the Heifer Project that they were to arrange for transportation of geese to St. Lucia, perhaps the tiniest and poorest of the British West Indies.

Notification geese to be shipped from Friendship Airport, near Baltimore, only an hour from our farm; explanation of high costs and yet necessity of air transportation (over \$2.00 per gross pound, or more than twice the value of the geese, from F.O.E. only). I conceived special crates weighing less than half as much as ordinary crates. My feed company supplied raw materials, high school shop teachers made actual design

to my specifications and had their students fabricate as part of school work.

Two days of logistics by Heifer Project to locate and buy shipping space, which was available only at Idlewild Airport in New York in six days. Geese had to be there 10 a.m. Tuesday, December 19. Cooperation of publisher of Frederick, Md. paper in arranging transportation to New York from Frederick airport by local Civil Air Patrol, which located and borrowed five small planes for operation.

Wednesday, December 13, AP broke story from coast-to-coast, and Thursday TV cameras were at our farm, showing its location and where geese were confined. Theft of some of geese Friday night by world's nastiest man. Offers from others who had my stock to make up losses. Use of party-line phone to spread word that I knew who had geese but would do nothing if they were returned in time - an empty threat.

While I was in Frederick Saturday afternoon arranging for transportation of geese in bitter weather from farm to airport, local vet called to report loss in Christmas mail rush of prerequisite health certifications from Agriculture Department.

Saturday night spent until almost midnight telephoning ^{ING} unknown officials of the Agriculture Department at their homes until I located the right one. Persuaded him to cut red tape and telegraph clearance to animal health officials at Idlewild on threat of ire of President's brother-in-law (whom I then had not met) if, after all the publicity, he fell on his face.

Sunday spent chasing and catching replacement geese on ice (while I was on crutches) in case stolen geese weren't returned in time. They were put back in the same building from which they were taken Sunday night!

Monday morning rainy, Frederick Trucking company took geese to airport, only to find planes fogged in. With air space already bought and

paid for, trucker volunteered two men and a truck and took geese to New York, 600 miles of travel. He, like all others who helped, did it free.

Meanwhile, with all the emergencies adding to interest in story, wire services and metropolitan newspapers were calling hourly, tracking me down wherever I was, until late Monday night.

Interest so great by time geese got to New York, there was a "watch" on them. The play in the New York papers was up to a five-column page-one cut. The New York Times remade the cut as they remade editions. After the plane took off for Antigua, the closest commercial airport, Pan American found interest so great they cabled reports on progress to United States. At Antigua the geese were transferred to a waiting private plane, for there was no regular commercial air or sea transportation to the island.

Meanwhile, preparations underway for shipment of gift of incubators with a capacity of 6,000 chicken eggs to be used for both goose-egg and later chicken-egg hatching, contributed by friend, disinfected and crated by shop class at a different (Damascus) high school with materials contributed by two civic organizations.

Safe arrival of geese followed by flood of mail and phone calls from all around the world. Few more touching, picturesque samples. My favorite is the one of a Lawton, Okla., housewife, Mrs. Marilyn Wood, who had been raising prize-winning Basset hounds to buy herself a Ceil Chapman gown she had long dreamed of, while her husband planned to use the proceeds to buy a brood cow for the beef herd he was trying to build up. Of course, the kids also expected their share of the loot. Family meeting and decision to give the money to the Heifer Project, which bought a young milk cow and flew it to Ecuador.

Pictures available: me holding gender, flock leader; flock in St.

Lucia with Peach Corpman in charge and native helper (these are good shots);
my own snapshots of the Chinese, including shepherding their young; snap-
shots of Basset hounds with Wood children.