

NEW RACES TO RUN

By D. Howard Doster, March 13, 2013

“Always before, we’ve been looking forward to the next phase in our lives, but now...”, Barbara, my wife of 57 years, has pondered aloud recently. But, that isn’t the Barbara who gave the opening motivation speech at the Doster Leadership Conference in Indy last month to the top 100 students in the Purdue Management School and awarded the four Barbara G. Doster Positive Attitude Scholarships at the end of that biennial conference. And, that’s not the Barbara who, as president of the Ohio State Mortar Board Alumni Council, is planning for the 100th Anniversary Celebration of Mortar Board in four years.

It’s not me, either. I have new races to run. I decided to think/feel this way in the winter of 1986. While driving the Indiana back roads doing Extension meetings, and crying with 84 couples who had “bought one farm too many”, I decided to cheer myself up. Here’s what I wrote on the back of an old envelope.

THE FUN IS IN THE RUN

The fun is in the run.
Make your daily run fun.
Each day, at work or at play
It’s what we do, and what we say
that makes the difference
in our way.

The fun’s done when the race is won.
Daily we must find a new race to run.
What is the test?
Daily to do our best.
Anything less is a sin.
Run hard, run well, and win.

D. Howard Doster, February 9, 1986

I forgot about it, until I saw the poem hanging in Dave Allyn’s farm office.

Note the date. That's when I put the poem at the top of an accounting lecture for the Purdue Eight Weeks Short Course Farm Management Class I was teaching. Kevin Ramsey, the top student, included the poem in his valedictory speech. As he was inducting the students into the Purdue Ag Alumni Association, Maury Williamson, the Association Director, asked Kevin where he got the poem. "From Dr. Doster's Accounting Lecture," Kevin answered. "I might have guessed," responded Maury, "all one syllable words."

I smiled. That's still my goal when teaching, and the fun is in the run is still my goal in looking for a new race to run.

Some of you know me as the person with 1,001 mostly C-minus ideas. A few of you have picked out two or three and made "A" practices out of them. What fun.

Here's stuff I've worked on this week. Maybe **pick out one or two and help make them into an "A" practice.**

Last night, I offered to help an 18-year old create and carry out a program of vignettes at our nearby Pioneer Village, describing why/when/how early Quakers, and also slaves, came here. We'll call it, "Around the Park", referring to events in/around 10,000-acre Caesar Creek State Park, which surrounds, now, our home, on three sides.

Yesterday, I rented our nearby farm, based on a lease I first negotiated in 1997, and wrote about in a 1998 Purdue Publication, "What's The Right Rent?". I then started a perhaps for June farm magazine article encouraging tenants to use my formula and bid their "Tenant Margin", instead of a cash rent, this June for 2014 rent, which they can then finalize next March 5. See more @ www.dhdoster.com

Now, if only I can motivate my former colleagues to create and post an appropriate spreadsheet for owners and prospective tenants to use to negotiate their rent. **Maybe some of you will want to help me get this done.** If you're a tenant, I'll teach you how to use it to quickly rank the profitability of your present and prospective leases. Hint-calculate your expected contribution margin and tenant margin for each lease as if you plant/harvest it on your last plant/harvest date. Why? Then, you'll plant/harvest your next rental on the next day.

Oh, I just got a new PC, loaded with the Purdue Linear Program Crop Budget (PCLP) I co-authored. I can now help the kids and grandkids of the 7,000 mostly corn-belt farmers I previously helped test the timeliness of their alternative crop rotations, machinery sizes, tillage systems, and/or farm sizes.

As noted elsewhere on our website, B and I are now gifting any consulting earnings to a church, or to **Farm Peer Advisors, Inc., an Ohio 501-C3** non-profit we started to funnel money to Land Grant Professors to do good stuff.

Also yesterday, I received a farm management game, created by a new acquaintance, a Purdue Ag Ed professor. He thinks his teaching method in the game might be a fun way to teach my “Life Cycle Budget”, described elsewhere on this website. **Do look at that budget story. Maybe help me motivate the programmer to finish the software.**

Once the software is ready, you can **use it whenever you observe a surprise**. That is, you can update your physical and financial balance sheet, identify the problem/opportunity that caused the surprise, quickly test as many alternative solutions as you think are worth testing, before picking the best as your new benchmark budget, which you’ll monitor, looking for the next surprise.

I call it “Life Cycle” because, when you buy an asset, you expect the difference between the lifetime benefits and costs to be greater for this alternative than for any other. However, you are committed to retain an asset for only a moment, and a surprise may occur in any moment, causing you to want to test new alternative solutions for maximizing your rewards. **If this makes sense to you, help me make LCB a useful reality.**

I first met that Ag Ed professor last week, when he presented a mentor/mentee seminar to Purdue Ag College professors and their grad students. **Now, I’m asking him to adapt his presentation to other mentoring opportunities, including employer/employee, father/son, partner/partner, and peer/peer.**

Remember these mentoring opportunities when you **read about our proposed serious 4-H farm management program for HS kids and their parents who crop farm. Then, volunteer to help us eliminate the flaws & create an “A” program.**

Oh, last week, as soon as I got back to my former Purdue Department, I visited the farm management club advisor and offered to fund an annual Best Mentor Award to the student or students who excelled in mentoring younger students, perhaps including those still in HS, who might come to Purdue.

Also yesterday, I was surprised to get a “Happy Birthday” email from a third cousin who is traveling in Marseille, France. I wondered why he wrote me, but I quickly answered him. I told him I was writing a history of how our ancestors started Jonah’s Run Baptist Church 175 years ago, and I asked him where our g-g-g grandmother was buried.

I also told my distant cousin three things that happened in the tenant house on the farm adjacent to that church on March 20, 1933. That’s 80 years ago next week.

Anyway, at 4:45 am, the following occurred:

1. The alarm went off, causing my dad to get up and milk his father-in-law’s cows, before driving three miles to milk his own cows on the farm he rented with his brother.
2. The bank safe blew up, in nearby Harveysburg, in one of the banks the new president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had closed the week before.
3. The sound of the explosion startled my mom, and I fell out-into the hands of two mid-wives; mom’s grade school classmate, black Lizzie Parker; and white Wilhelmina Underwood, my grandmother.

In a pick-up basketball game in Dayton this morning, I got two baskets and five assists. Tomorrow, I get the first of three sets of shots in my knees. Friday, there’s a softball call-out for one of my eight teams-in Kettering, Dayton, Miamisburg, Cincinnati, Columbus, and a traveling team. Of course, I’ll be injured again, but, I’m scheduled to play 120 games this year. What fun.