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Working Together: Managing Change in Farm and Family
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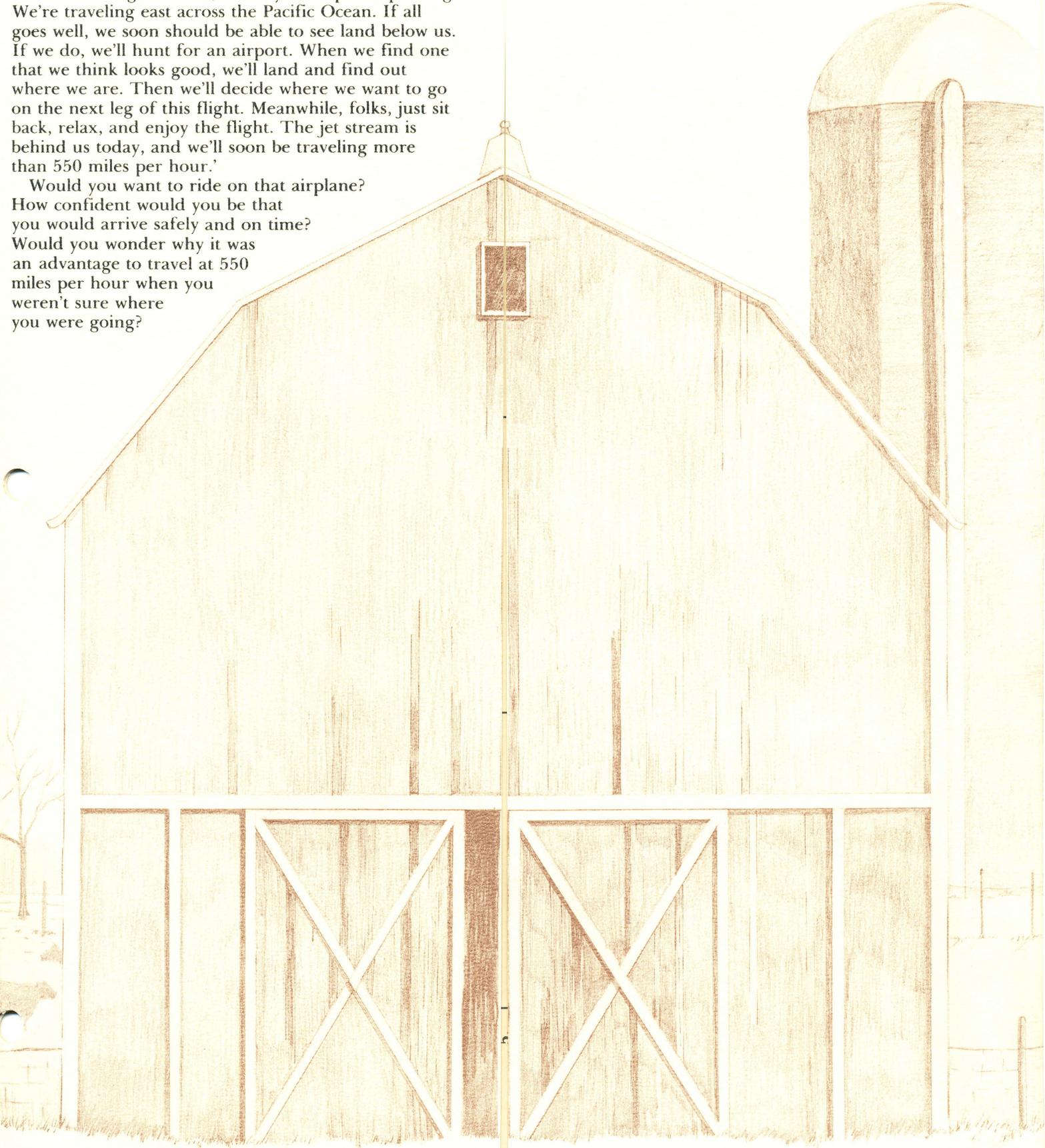
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WORKING TOGETHER: Managing Change in Farm and Family

“Imagine that you are on an airplane that has just taken off from Honolulu for a flight to the mainland. What would you think if this announcement came over the intercom?

‘Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. We’re traveling east across the Pacific Ocean. If all goes well, we soon should be able to see land below us. If we do, we’ll hunt for an airport. When we find one that we think looks good, we’ll land and find out where we are. Then we’ll decide where we want to go on the next leg of this flight. Meanwhile, folks, just sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight. The jet stream is behind us today, and we’ll soon be traveling more than 550 miles per hour.’

Would you want to ride on that airplane?
How confident would you be that you would arrive safely and on time?
Would you wonder why it was an advantage to travel at 550 miles per hour when you weren’t sure where you were going?



In the same way that the airplane pilot needs to know **where** the flight is going, **how** it is going to get there (what route), and **when** it is to arrive, effective management of family and farming operations depends on your knowing **where** you are going, **how** you are to get there, and **when** you are to arrive. However, if you feel that you lack a clear view of your "destination," and are uncertain of how you will reach it, you are not alone. Most people have a continuing concern for the future, but few actually identify their goals and then practice goal-directed management." (Gessaman and Prochaska-Cue, 1985)

FARMING IS UNIQUE

Farming is one family business where work and family life are very closely meshed, often with several generations working together. While operational goals are often set for the farm, family goals which are every bit as important are sometimes ignored. Farming impacts heavily on family relationships and the lifestyle of the family. In addition, the farm operation is affected by the family.

The farm provides income for the family to meet goals while the family provides capital, money, and human time and energy, to meet the farm goals. While working together in a business can provide much satisfaction, it can also be a potential source of trouble. Unfortunately, in many farm businesses, the needs of the business consistently outrank the needs of the family. Since the farm and household are resources for one another, how does a farm family work toward setting goals that balance both farm and family?

THE VALUES OF GOAL SETTING

Goals are a very personal aspect of life. While your family and farm goals may be similar to those identified by others, they will be unique to your family and its farming operation. Goals can help you:

- Maintain or change direction
- Remain consistent
- Utilize resources (time, money, skills) more effectively
- Be more productive
- Bring family members closer together by working toward the same end
- Build a family mutual support system

MESHING FARM AND FAMILY GOALS

Farm and family goals must be planned together. Unless all members of the family see that the goals are mutually satisfying, they may be working at cross purposes. It's also important to realize that goals change. New interests emerge, priorities change, and some goals prove to be unattainable. When this happens, goals need to be modified.

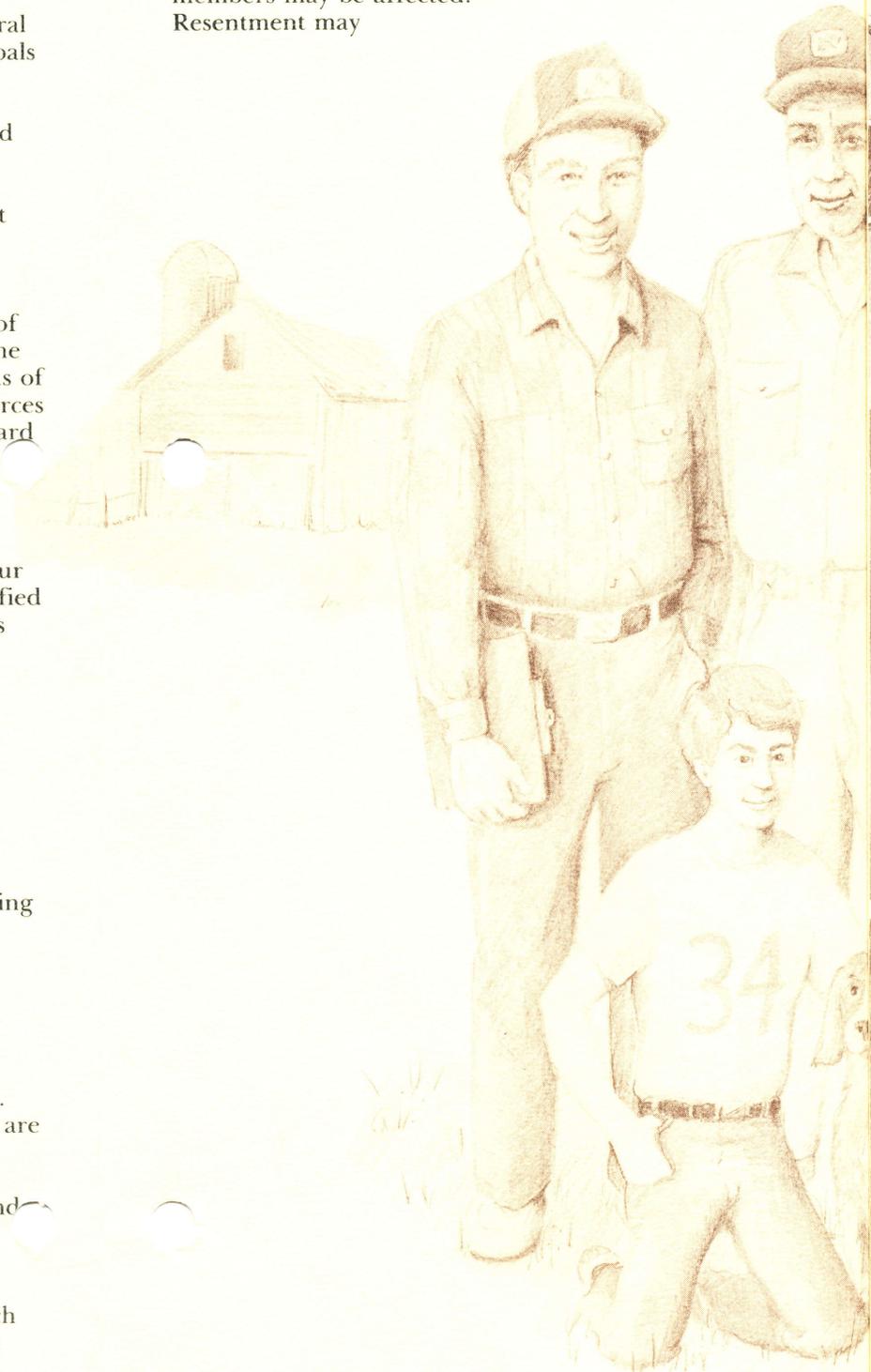
The farm may have congruent goals of survival, profit, and the best use of productive resources such as increasing capacity by buying more livestock and

land or investing in new equipment for greater efficiency.

On the other hand, family goals may have divergent components. One may deal with living standards for the family. For example, parents may see a need for remodeling the kitchen. Another may deal with the development of a sense of self-worth or professional competence of its members, particularly for younger members of the family. One of the children may want to participate in the school band which necessitates the purchase of a musical instrument and after school practice, which means less help with farm chores.

There may be a conflict between the farm and family goals when only so much time, money, energy and skill are available. Relationships among family members may be affected.

Resentment may



build in members who perceive that their wishes are continually superseded by everyone else's.

WHO SETS THE GOALS?

The question of who is part of the goal setting process may interfere with effective goal setting. Sometimes a family may not realize that all members of the family are affected and should have a voice in the decision making.

All too often, the relationships established in the business — identifying one particular person as the “boss” — carry over when making family decisions. Thus the family's perception of “who should be involved” when farm and family goals are determined is critical. Lack of agreement about who does what, and who decides what, needs to be overcome.



HOW ARE GOALS IDENTIFIED?

Goals have three components:

1. Direction — Where do we want to go?
2. Resources — How can we get there?
3. Time orientation — When do we expect to get there?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOALS CONFLICT?

It's only human to experience conflict but how does it start? Sometimes we agree on the goals but differ on how to get there. Other times, conflict results when one family member perceives that not including his goal is a threat to his knowledge, values, sense of “right” or “territory”. Problems family members commonly have in working together include:

1. Domination by one family member.
2. Disagreement on defining the problem.
3. Disagreement on how to solve the problem.
4. Bad experience with past conflict management efforts.
5. Too much expected from one or more members.
6. Fears: loss of independence, fear of rejection, fear of disrespect.
7. Personality conflict.
8. Difference in values and lifestyle.

Conflict management calls for confrontation. Confrontation is never pleasant, but you can minimize hostility and reach a workable solution. Gaining cooperation from everyone will mean:

1. Treating the other person with respect. This is both verbal and nonverbal respect. How you look at each other, your tone of voice and selection of words will convey respect or disrespect.
2. Each person must listen until they experience the other side. This means *really* listening to the other person. Active listening means understanding the content of the other person's ideas, the meaning it has for that person and the feeling that person has about the idea.
3. Each person is allowed to state his/her views, needs and feelings.

Chances for miscommunication within families are great when you consider that each person is interpreting what is being said based on his/her values, beliefs and experiences. When unsure about the other person's meaning or intention, check out your interpretation before responding or acting. It only takes a few minutes to ask “Do you mean...?” or “Do I understand that you think...?” Often, as positive communication increases, goal priorities become *more mutual* and better balanced between farm and family.

FARM AND FAMILY GOALS

Each person writes down 5 farm and 5 family goals.

	GOAL	WHEN (Year and Months)	LABOR REQUIRED (Who?)	MONEY NEEDED
FARM (EXAMPLE)	250 acres corn on Beaumont land	April - October 1987	Dad and Frank	Land rent \$12,500
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
FAMILY (EXAMPLE)	Remodel kitchen	January - February 1987	Dad - plumbing Mom - painting and wallpaper kitchen shop	\$2,000 for cabinets \$500 for supplies
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

PRIORITY SETTING WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet after each person has listed his/her goals and you have listened and discussed everyone's goals. Then you need to start setting priorities. Each person gets to vote.

Long-term Goals for Farm Operation

Goal 1: My first priority goal for farming is:

Goal 2: My second priority goal for farming is:

Goal 3: My third priority goal for farming is:

Long-term Goals for Family Life

Goal 1: My first priority goal for family life is:

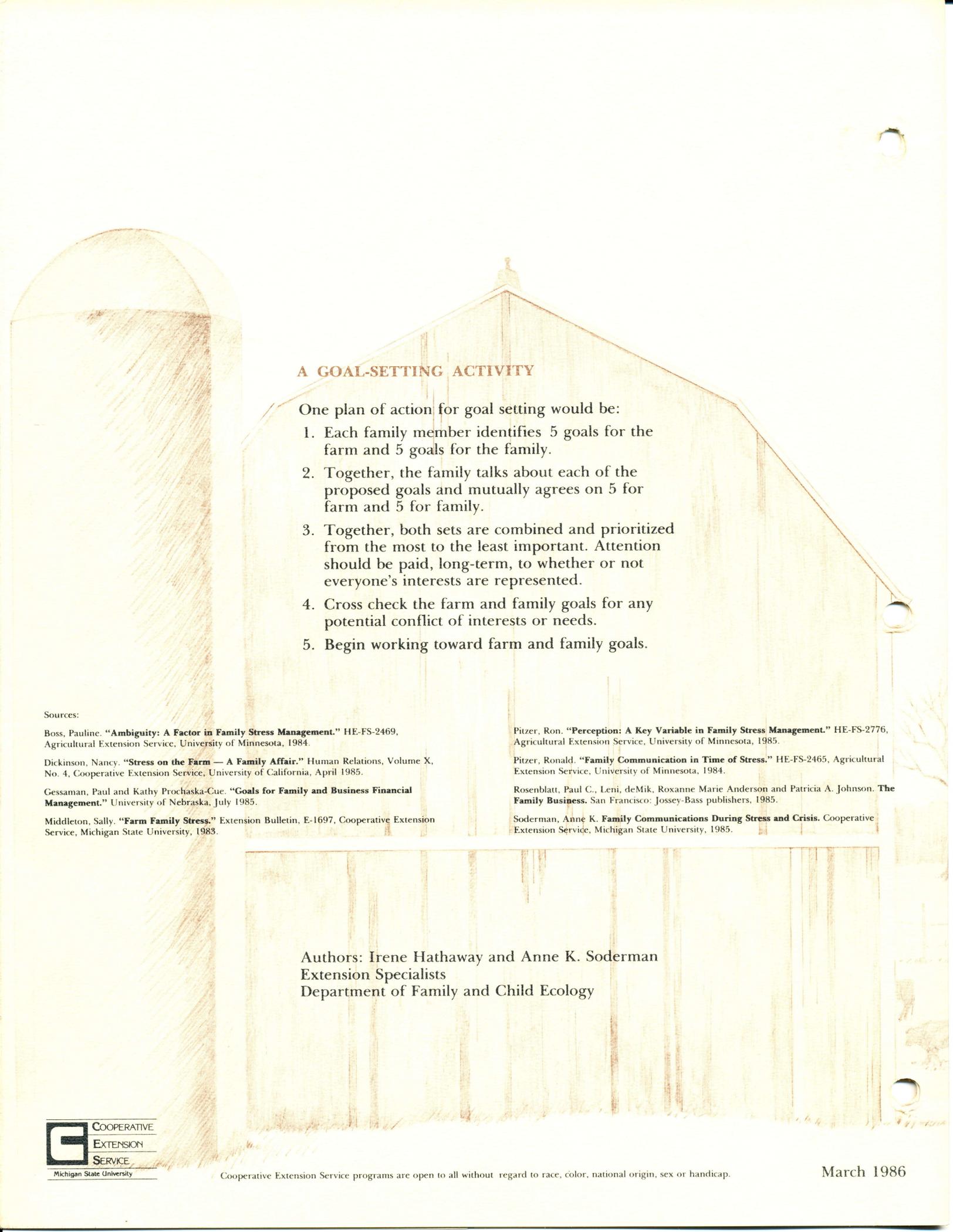
Goal 2: My second priority goal for family life is:

Goal 3: My third priority goal for family life is:

FAMILY PLAN

Use this worksheet when the top five priorities for farm and family have been decided. Write them on this sheet so that you can see how they mesh and whether everything can be accomplished.

	FARM	WHEN	FAMILY	WHEN
Goal 1				
Goal 2				
Goal 3				
Goal 4				
Goal 5				



A GOAL-SETTING ACTIVITY

One plan of action for goal setting would be:

1. Each family member identifies 5 goals for the farm and 5 goals for the family.
2. Together, the family talks about each of the proposed goals and mutually agrees on 5 for farm and 5 for family.
3. Together, both sets are combined and prioritized from the most to the least important. Attention should be paid, long-term, to whether or not everyone's interests are represented.
4. Cross check the farm and family goals for any potential conflict of interests or needs.
5. Begin working toward farm and family goals.

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