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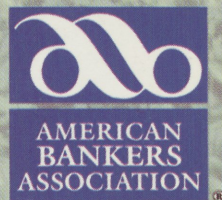
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Journal of Agricultural Lending

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Dear Reader:

"A New Order of Banker"... is what one of the speakers at the 1952 ABA National Agricultural Bankers Conference said in his opening remarks 50 years ago. There were 13,439 insured commercial banks in the country at the time, and banks had \$4 billion in outstanding farm loans.

I would like to think that the planners of the first conference had a clear and deliberate plan about what they were starting, and about what the outcomes would be. But most things don't happen like that, do they?

From what I can figure out the bankers that planned the first National Agricultural Bankers Conference had, at best, a dim vision of what the agricultural banking industry could become. They did know that the interest among ABA member banks was great enough that they felt they could put together an event and possibly attract enough bankers to make it worthwhile for everybody.

So on November 13-14, 1952 they rented a bunch of rooms in Louisville, Kentucky and waited to see if anybody would show up. Over 600 bankers did, I think much to the surprise of the planners! What did they talk about? Surprisingly, they talked about many of the things that we still talk about today. Topics included; "Cooperating with Federal Agencies", "Establishing a Policy for a Farm Department", "Servicing Agricultural Loans," "Soliciting New Business," and "Profit and Loss For a Farm Department." Earl Butz, then the head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University, gave the keynote speech, "Agriculture and Big Government."

Maybe I should not be surprised about what they talked about. Our craft has always been one that has been handed down from one generation to the next. We have always depended upon our predecessors to share their experiences, good and bad, to help us figure out what to do next.

On November 10-13, 2002 we are holding the 50th Anniversary National Agricultural Bankers Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. We're calling it, *Celebrating the 21st Century Country Banker*. For more information about the conference, visit www.aba.com/Conferences+and+Education/ce_agbankers.htm

I hope I'll see you there.

John



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