

Uncle Ab From Abington — January 21, 1976

By Jim Jones

Wal, we're in the feed mill business now. Not cow feed but people feed. We got our grist mill a few days ago and have made a milling center down in the cellar next to the cold storage room. This involved building a heavy bench with a hole cut into the top to let ground grain drop into a funnel made out of a piece of scrap downspout pipe, into a box or jar below. Sounds like a lot of work to make corn bread but hear me out.

A trip to the elevator resulted in a bag of shelled corn and 50 pounds of wheat, untreated so as to be fit for food, for a cost of around \$6.25. We ground a jar of corn into a facsimile of the corn meal bought down at Spring Mill State Park, or from the miller at the old gas engine show and the good wife baked up a batch of corn bread. Rather disappointing. Hard, didn't rise, and the corn particles were hard to chew. We decided we didn't mill the corn fine enough so the next batch was run thru the mill twice. Here was real corn meal--fine as flour and smelling like the harvest. The next batch of corn bread was out of this world. Total cost for a gallon jar of corn meal, somewhere around 15 - 20 cents.

Next we looked at the wheat. We figured on two uses of wheat--cereal and whole wheat flour. So we set the burrs for a coarse grind and ran wheat thru resulting in a coarse grainy product which when cooked up like cream of wheat is nourishing, filling (one or 2 bowls is PLENTY!) and cheap--cost per serving--about 1.7 cents.

Next we tried whole wheat flour and determined that to make it fine we would grind it twice. This worked out well also. Here's a good budget-saver--use it for flouring chicken, making whole wheat bread or biscuits, should be more nourishing than milled white flour, and no chemical additives either.

What about total cost? less than \$25.00 for the mill and what ever the market price is for grain. We have a slight edge--by picking up lost ear corn from the field after the combine goes by, we can run it thru the corn sheller and save on corn costs. There is some work involved--but the exercise in turning the crank is good for you and you have the satisfaction of knowing you are making your own food. The mill has an expected life of 15 years so the cost per year for the unit is very low.

Our mill uses steel burrs instead of stone, thus the need to mill twice for extreme fine texture. This inconvenience is far outweighed by the cost factor--a stone burr mill is over twice as costly.

So this Ol' Hoosier farmer can now spend a few hours down in the cellar on a cold snowy day, grind up a batch of grain and enjoy fresh corn bread for dinner and wheat cereal for breakfast. It may be a little crude, but its cheap and nourishing, and that's what it's all about.