

Battling the Paperwork Beast

Diane and Bill Hawks have 42 landlords, 10,000 acres, and a paperwork load that could easily overwhelm their operation in Hernando, Miss.

Yet Diane, the principal recordkeeper, handles it all with aplomb. How? Organization.

Here are Diane's tips.

Files. Ticker files refer to files that "tickle," or jog, your memory.

Diane uses hanging file folders for each month and for each five-day increment of a month. Notes on events or duties are filed in a monthly file. Then, at the first of each month, Diane redistributes the notes from the monthly files to the five-day files.

Electronic memory. Diane keeps a pocket tape recorder in her car and dictates notes as she drives. "I also use the answering machine to leave myself messages."

Notebooks. Diane designates an inexpensive three-

ring notebook in a distinctive color for each farm. Colored paper torn from a notepad serves as section dividers.

Briefcase storage. Diane is involved in many civic, school, and church groups. Each has its own briefcase.

"I just grab the briefcase before a meeting, and then I know everything I need for that group is right there."

Computer. Like a lot of folks, Diane was intimidated by her computer at first. But she buckled down and learned how to use it, backing up her self-teaching with a college course. Now, she even has a laptop.

The computer is one of Diane's most valuable organizational tools. Take the program she designed for production records.

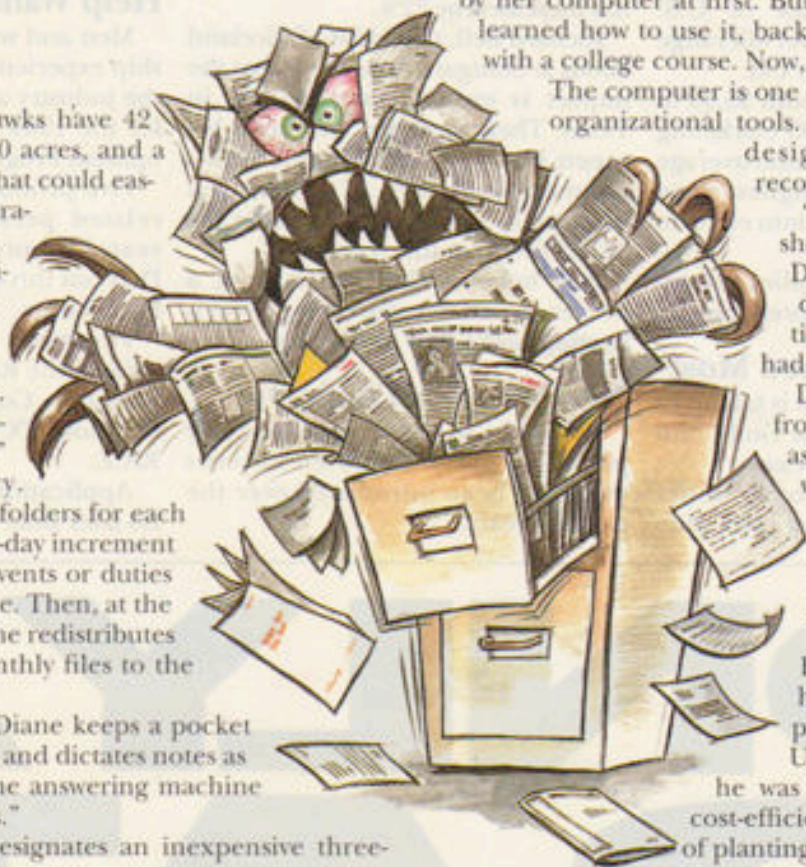
"We check settlement sheets from the elevator," Diane says. "The other day, I pulled all the wheat tickets from last year that had the highest discounts."

Discounts typically come from unwanted plants such as onions finding their way into a load of wheat.

The computer sorted the settlement sheets from the largest to the smallest discount.

"The printout showed Bill which of our farms had the highest onion problems," Diane says. Using that information,

he was able to plan the most cost-efficient method and means of planting for next year.



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Source: *The Safety Zone Catalog*, Hanover, PA 17333-7247; phone 1-800-999-3030.