



THREE-INCH PLASTIC TUBES connect the overhead, out-of-sight, feed conveyor with the feed troughs in the milking parlor at the farm of Melvin Stoltzfus, Ronks R2. Frank Barker (left) and Donald Bucks (right), salesmen for Big Dutchman, examine the automatic stop switch. L. F. Photo

● Melvin Stoltzfus

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 placed between the 40x95 ft free-stall barn, and the spacious, well-lighted milk house. An eight-ton, Big Dutchman bulk feed bin was erected to supply the chain conveyed feeders placed overhead, out-of-sight, in the milking parlor. Three-inch plastic tubes connected to the feed conveyor drop the chop into the feeders. Big Dutchman's feed system works automatically when the last feeder is filled.

Also, a liquid manure pit was installed to handle all of the wastes from the free-stall operation.

"The first-costs are about equal between the free-stall and the conventional systems," Stoltzfus said, "and I like to see cows in a regular stall barn. My reason for going into free-stalls was to save labor."

And save labor he does in the former set-up, Melvin could run three milking units with the aid of an assistant. Now he can operate four units and still "do a better job." He thinks he saves at least one and one-half hours' chore time each day during the summer season. "In winter we

must save an additional two hours," he said.

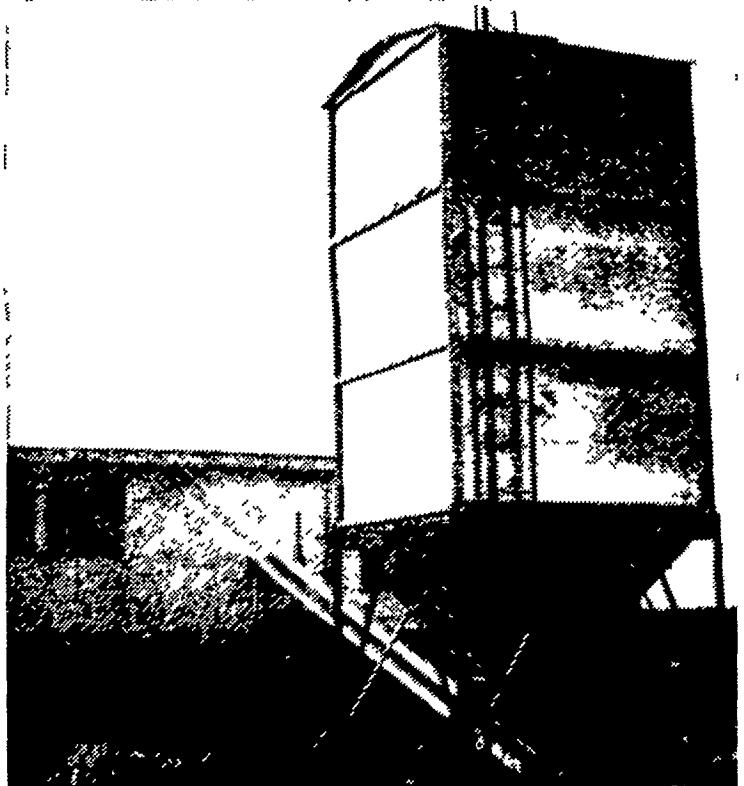
Stoltzfus uses sawdust in the free-stalls, and needs to add bedding only about every two weeks. Cleaning and sweeping the regular stable are eliminated.

One of the unique features here is the sloped floor under the free-stalls. When a cow rests on a hillside in the meadow she always lays with her back up the hill. This bovine characteristic is used to make the cows all lay in the same direction when they are in their stalls. It also funnels the liquids into the manure pit.

Silage stays in nice condition when it comes directly from the silo into the feed bunk. Stoltzfus thinks he gets more feed into his cows because they have to compete for the silage. "Cows have a better appetite in this system," he said.

However, the real proof of the new method is in the individual production records. For example Cherrycrest Nero Beauty, last year in the conventional barn, had a production record of 313d, 15,676 m, 620f. Now, under the new system, she has just completed

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THIS EIGHT-TON bulk feed bin on the Cherrycrest Farm of Melvin Stoltzfus at Ronks R2, supplies the chain-conveyed feeders which carry feed into the milking parlor.

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