



Linda Welk Lawrence . . .

## Former Dairy Princess Recalls Pageant Excitement

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Pretty, vivacious Linda Welk Lawrence was Lancaster County's Dairy Princess in 1965. Now she is a successful businesswoman, housewife and mother, and she graciously took time to reflect on her year as Dairy Princess.

Her advice to young eligible dairy farm girls is to enter the contest, "because they have everything to gain and nothing to lose." She said, "Even if nothing else, they all receive lovely gifts which makes the effort worthwhile."

She said she thinks it is a valuable program because it is a competition which is "strictly between farm girls, and that doesn't happen too often. Also you're judged strictly on what you know and what you do."

For the winner, there is the excitement of participating in the state contest, as well as making appearances throughout the year. The state contest at that time was held at various cities around the state and in 1965 Linda got to travel to Towanda. She remembers having a "very full schedule with dinners, banquets and personal interviews."

But one thing she says she'll never forget is her sailing experience with three other Dairy Princesses. For relaxation one day four of them were placed on a sailboat and became stranded in the middle of the lake when the wind died. Two young Sir Galahad types rescued the damsels in distress and they were able to continue with their duties at the contest.

And just to keep things from getting dull at the state contest, there were three Lindas that year - a little confusing to all concerned. All in all, Linda says, "It was a terrific experience."

When Linda was in the county contest it was still being held at the Host Town, which Linda described as "very elegant - it was atmosphere plus! I really felt like a princess that night!"

She also remembers that a Guernsey cow was tied outside the motel to publicize the event. "With all the tourists around, we really got a lot of questioning looks, but it was great publicity for the contest."

She said it was a surprise for her to find that most of the



Linda Welk Lawrence pours nature's most perfect food for her daughter Christina.



A rose is a rose . . . here Linda cuts one from her many lovely bushes.

contestants on the state level had not gone through a pageant on the scale of Lancaster County's. Having been through one really helped her not to be overwhelmed by the state contest, she said.

Linda is now a manager for Princess House products, having started parttime for them eight years ago. She attributes a great deal of her success to the poise she gained while serving as Dairy Princess. She said, "Being Dairy Princess helped me learn to carry on a conversation and learn to make other people feel at ease."

She had nothing but praise for Mrs. Rhelda Royer who was coordinator for the contest at the time. She said, "Mrs. Royer was like a mother to me while I was a Dairy Princess, and we still go to visit her. If I had any questions she would help me with them, and we developed a very close relationship."

Linda said, "We went quite a bit. Mrs. Royer always saw that I went whenever there was an opportunity to speak. At first I was scared to speak to groups. I prepared my own talks, and often as we were driving I would give her the talk in the car and she would make suggestions. Since I had been given a wardrobe, Mrs. Royer would often suggest what I should wear on various occasions."

Linda appeared at most of the county fairs, "mostly on dairy judging day" and attended Field Days and Grange meetings. She spoke to the Elks and to several 4-H clubs. To help her remember all the fun things she did as Dairy Princess, she faithfully kept a scrap book which contains souvenirs of each of the places she spoke. She was even able to go out of the county on several occasions to make appearances.

What kind of girls makes a good Dairy Princess? According to Linda, "I see her as a girl who should definitely have some knowledge of the dairy business. She should want to publicize milk and be willing to be active, or she has no business entering the contest."

Getting the dairy industry's story across to consumers is a tough job, Linda said, but she feels that getting into schools and talking with school children would be a good way of getting to the parents. "I would love to see the Dairy Princess involved with school children up to junior high. So many children want soda today instead of milk, that encouragement is needed from an early age."

She has managed to attend several pageants in recent years, and Linda says, "They haven't really changed." She recalled having an informal luncheon with the judges the day of the contest, "so they could get to know us a little better. It helped put us at ease for the evening program. We were interviewed by Harry Kauffman who made us feel so much at ease. We had to pick a word from a card and explain it - something like honesty or integrity, and he also asked us a question on dairying."

"I had had no experience. I was very flabbergasted when they announced my name as winner," she recalls.

Linda is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Welk, Strasburg RD1, who owned a herd of Registered Holsteins at the time, so she could answer the dairy questions handily. She also was a member of the 4-H Holstein Club for nine years and owned 13 dairy animals, "some of which were good show animals." She said she showed the Junior Champion at

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