

Homestead Notes



Lancaster Residents Host Fresh Air Visitors

by
Sally Bair
Farm Feature Writer

Lancaster County has better air, better people and is a lot quieter than New York City. This will come as no surprise to residents of the County, but the observations were made by youngsters visiting local farms through the Fresh Air program.

They all seemed to be having a great time with their host families, and in the words of one boy, the big advantage of the program is "just to give the kids a break in the summer".

Mr. and Mrs. Christ Hess, Pequea RD1, are hosting 15-year-old Neal Council for his eighth summer. Neal's home is in the Bronx, and he says he likes "everything" about visiting at the Hess's. His family lives in a single family home in New York and they have a yard and garden, so he has had the experience of watching green things grow, but he said in the summer at home he mostly "sits around, plays or goes to the pool". He sometimes rides his bicycle at the park close by his home.

At Creek Knoll Farm, however, he helps milk the cows and even loads straw and hay. One of his proudest accomplishments is learning to drive a tractor. Raymond Hess, 23, says that each year Neal becomes more and more of a help on the farm.

His opinion of Lancaster County in contrast to New York City is that there is "better air and better people" here. "The people," he said, "are kinder and nicer."

Part of Neal's experiences at the Hess farm include playing with their pet lambs, relaxing on a swing attached to a high tree and fishing in the Pequea Creek. He also enjoys sleeping under the stars with the Hess's youngest son, Park, 13, but added that after he read about the bear dragging off a local boy's sleeping bag while camping in the west he's not so sure he wants to sleep outside anymore.

Neal has ten brothers and sisters in New York, so he fits in quite well with the Hess family in which there are 11 children. Mrs. Hess says they have had fresh air children for nine years, and in one year had three children. She said, "We really enjoy having Neal here." In fact, Neal is such a part of the family, that each year at Christmas the Hess's send him a train ticket to come and spend the holidays with them. Neal's father is a truck driver.

Mrs. Hess's son and daughter-in-law are hosting two fresh air children. Mr. and Mrs. Abram Hess, Conestoga RD1 have opened their home to Frances and Elizabeth Santana, Spanish sisters from Brooklyn. Elizabeth, who is 11, has been coming to the Hess home for six years and Frances, 9, is here for her fifth year. Mrs. Hess recalls that the first year Elizabeth came, they hosted another girl, too, and the two girls had not been to school so could not speak English very well. Elizabeth spoke the better of the two, so she acted as interpreter. Communicating proved to be quite interesting.

The Abram Hess family has been hosting Fresh Air children for 12 years and Mrs. Hess said they became interested through friends who hosted children. There are four



Packing eggs is a real family affair and the visitors pitch in and help.

Hess children: Wayne, 11; Gerald, 10; Brian, 6; and Vicky, 2½. Although the two visitors were shy at first, it became evident very soon that there is a lot of activity in the Hess household, and quite a lot of happy chattering is contributed by Frances and Elizabeth.

Both girls agreed that the best thing about living on the farm is the "fresh air - in New York it is all polluted". They



Neal shows how he's learning to drive tractor on the Hess Farm.



Frances and Elizabeth Santana enjoy playing with the pet lamb, Midnight, along with the youngest Hess, Vicky.

live in a single family dwelling, and have a small garden and "roses and apple trees". Elizabeth added that they do "have trees and grass in New York". They have one brother and five sisters, and their father is a carpenter.

Abram Hess, who is in partnership with his father and a brother, Christ, Jr., has 25,000 laying hens, 75 sows and 400 market hogs. Frances said, "I never saw so many chickens." The girls demonstrated how they help to pack the eggs as they come off the belt, and as the tour of the farm continued, Frances said with some wonder, "They have more pigs here than at home."

Apparently there is some difference in the food here, and



Neal and Raymond show off a newborn calf which they had just brought in from the meadow.

both girls agreed that they don't like red beets. Barbecued steak is a favorite. They helped to pick beans and dig potatoes.

The girls said they don't have time to write to the Hess family when they're at home, saying that they help "clean house" and make "mud cakes". Two of the Hess sons are learning to play the organ, and the girls' eyes lit up when they said they, too, are learning to play this summer. Elizabeth said they can play "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and the "Wedding Song".

Mrs. Hess said her family "looks forward to having the children visit in the summer, and they get along real well". She said, "We include them as one of the family, and they do just what we do. The most important thing in life is to give time and love to children as the Bible verse Matthew 18 suggests."

This year the girls won a goldfish at the Conestoga Fire Company Festival and are looking forward to taking it home. Last year it was three toads that went home with them.

The Jay E. Landis family, Lancaster RD6, is hosting Joel and Loy Chu, whose home is in the Bronx. The Landis' have a

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