

# Witmer receives honor

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student nominees from across the country.

The Dairy Shrine Club created the student award in 1969 to encourage young men and women enrolled in dairy science courses to continue working with dairy cattle when they complete their formal education. Selections are made on the basis of leadership, scholastic record, past experiences and plans for the future.

Witmer had been an active leader in both high school and college and continues to be influential in farm organizations, especially the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders Association. In 1973 he won the National Outstanding Guernsey Youth Award.

While at Penn State, the youth served as an officer of the dairy science club, assistant editor of the Dairyman, the club's yearbook and chairman of the college's dairy exposition.

A member of Alpha Zeta, the biology and agriculture honorary fraternity, Witmer also participated on the University's dairy cattle judging team and received the 1974 William R. Davey Award as the outstanding senior in dairy science. In addition, he has served as president of the State Junior Guernsey Breeders Association, and as an official judge at dairy shows.

The young dairyman's farm experiences date back to as far as he can remember, and he adds he has been actively involved

since he was old enough to work. The family owns 135 head of registered Guernseys, of which 13 belong to Peter. Aside from his experiences with the home farm, Witmer has also had opportunities to work with others, including different breeds. This has given him a wide range of experience in showing, fitting, and more recently management. He believes it has given him a more complete and objective viewpoint of the dairy industry as a whole.

While the past is an important consideration in evaluating the applications for the award, the students' future plans are not overlooked.

As one of four children born to the Witmers, Peter said he had to be very careful in evaluating the position he was in. He said he wanted to be absolutely sure about taking over the farm because he wanted to, as opposed to simply taking it to continue family ownership. A younger brother and two sisters have not indicated strong interest in the farm so far.

His four years at college is what really caused him to realize how much he appreciated the farm. Grinning broadly as he explained that statement, he said he was in for a lot of razzing by his fraternity brothers who were dedicated Holstein enthusiasts. In defending himself and his Guernseys, he strengthened his convictions and found his goals, he remarked. "I was glad to get back with the cows, you

don't know how much you really like and miss something, until you leave it," Witmer said.

"I didn't go to college with the intention of learning how to farm," the award winner stated. "Sure, it was a worthwhile education, not just academically; but my main reason for going was because I wasn't sure about what I wanted to do and I wanted to expose myself to other careers. A person has to be sure of himself," he emphasized.

Witmer is convinced that there is a good future in dairy farming for those who are determined to stay with it, but he adds quickly "it won't be easy." As far as young people starting out is concerned, he says it would be very difficult without a 'direct link', but not necessarily impossible. Those herds which have production and can maintain it will make it," he predicted.

The 65-cow Witmer herd, housed in comfort stalls and milked with pipeline milkers, has a rolling herd average of 12,739M with a 4.9 test and 627 pounds of butterfat. The young dairyman expects the size of the herd to grow, especially if it is to support two families and if a jugging operation is added. While not opposed to expansion, he expressed considerable concern about the changes in management which would result with increased herd size.

"I believe the best way to feed cows is individually," Witmer remarked. "As we



Peter Witmer, Student Recognition Contest winner.

get larger this will become less practical and problems will increase, but we will meet them as they come up and I think we'll find a suitable solution as we have done in the past." Definite plans for expansion or a jugging operation have not been made yet, but they are being considered.

The Witmer's 130 acre farm is situated among moderately rolling hills south of Lancaster. Neatly painted buildings, white board fences, a spacious

lawn dotted with trees and shrubs, and beautiful flower beds accent the premise's appearance. Located on a major north-south highway, Witmer believes they will have good access to customers for their retail milk store, if and when it becomes reality. He would like to have quality control over his products all the way to the consumer, pointing out that many people really don't know what a good glass of milk tastes like.

Recalling an experience in

New York City, the young dairyman said he has tasted so-called "milk" which tasted like chalk-water. Such incidents have convinced him that dairymen must have more control over quality control of their product and he also believes strongly in promoting dairy products.

Guernseys are of special interest to Witmer, and he expressed some concern over the future of the breed, although he maintained

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