

Former FFA'er selects horticultural career

By MELISSA PIPER
MILLERSVILLE — As the time grows near for spring planting, many people will be flocking to area greenhouses for beginner plants and the ever popular Easter flowers. And if you should happen to visit one of the



Keith Herr looks over some lettuce plants in his greenhouse. The Millersville area youth is looking forward to a future in horticultural work.

smaller operations near here on Walnut Hill Road you may be waited on by a tall slender young man who is making greenhouse work his career.

Keith Herr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Abram B. Herr, began working at his grandfather's greenhouse when the family moved to this area five years ago. All during his high school years, Keith worked around the operation after school and on Saturdays doing odd jobs, potting geraniums and delivering orders to area stores. The youth now works full time at the greenhouse business and is preparing for a busy spring season.

Keith spent the first two years of high school at Penn Manor and was a member of the FFA chapter there. Interested in ag mechanics, the youth attended several competitions in that area. He also retained his interest in horticulture and took numerous projects in that field.

Keith spent two years working parttime for Funk's Market and with his experience gained on the job, the youth was awarded the state proficiency award for horticulture in 1975 by the FFA.

Keith has learned the greenhouse business from the bottom up and explains his duties as "working on every level from planting lettuce to maintenance and delivering flowers to area retail stores."

The Herr's operation is mostly based on the wholesale selling of lettuce, tomatoes and flowers although some retail service is available.

Keith would eventually like to expand the retail end of the Herr operation but explains that the actual work may take some time.

"The wholesale business has been good for us but in the future I think the expanded retail outlet may prove worthy."

"Because of the other greenhouses in the area, I would like to establish in some other part of the county but for right now we'll mostly like stay here."

The horticulture business has changed rapidly in the past few years and Keith noted some of the technological advances. "Many new methods of greenhouse work have come into practice and it is a job to incorporate them in the operation." "We have become more aware of heating for example since the fuel bills have gone sky-high and anything we can do to help is important."

Although the Herrs refer to their operation as small, they raised 6000 geraniums for sale last spring.

Sports have also been an important aspect of Keith's life. At Penn Manor, the youth wrestled for two years and won letters for participating in the track and cross

Commentary

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power, lots of "red tape," and more and more controls.

Some segments of agriculture are already controlled by either government, labor, or big business. As one of the smallest minorities in the country, and yet as representatives of the most important segment of any nation's economy, farmers have a lot to protect: their livelihood, their independence, and the free enterprise system — not to mention food and fibre which everybody needs and wants. I'm not convinced a national food policy will help the situation. It may sound good — but a few other phrases have sounded good in the past too, and they turned out to be partially unsatisfactory. Try "social security," "revenue sharing," "environmental protection," "detente," "Great Society," "occupational safety and health," and "gun registration."

country programs. He has also been a member of the Boy Scouts.

Along with first hand experience, much of Keith's instruction on the horticulture industry came from attending two county vo-tech schools, Keith majored in floriculture at Brownstown Vo-tech during his junior year and moved to the program at Willow Street Vo-tech as a senior. As a perfect ending to his graduation year, Keith received the Keystone FFA degree in January. "It was a goal I had worked for and I am certainly proud to have been chosen for the honor," he explained.

"Horticulture has become a real interest to me and doing the work has been very educational."

To the gardeners and the retail stores across the county, Keith's interest in growing plants and flowers will be an important asset to their homes and businesses in the future.

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