



Mrs. Johnson pours coffee in the kitchen of her spacious farmhouse.



Her warmth and friendliness are evident to any visitor to Mrs. Johnson's home.



At the conclusion of her presidency, Mrs. Johnson was given this copper milk bucket filled with dried flowers.

Homestead Notes

Solanco farm woman active in community affairs

By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

"Farm women are the most energetic, hard working, community-minded women I know!" Mrs. Dorothy Johnson speaks these words with great enthusiasm and with characteristic frankness adds, "Of course, I'm prejudiced."

Dorothy Johnson, St. Catherine Drive, Quarryville, retired from her two year stint as county Farm Women president in November. But her great interest in the devotion to Farm Women will always be a part of her life.

She recalled that she became a member of Society 15 in 1955 when someone dropped out and she was invited to join. She said, "At that time I didn't go anyplace much, except to church. I figured my job was at home. I helped out in the fields, husking corn, helping with the tobacco and the tomatoes, and I milked the cows every day, twice a day."

But she did join and says, "I discovered educational programs and sociability with the Farm Women. I really liked the things I learned. It was a process of learning, of becoming acquainted with things. And the Farm Women did really good works in the community. Our Farm Women had always helped with the Quarryville community fair after it got started."

A county president can be quite busy with committee meetings, visiting societies within the county and attending state and county conventions. But through all her years in this active role, Mrs. Johnson says proudly, "I hardly ever missed a milking. Most of the time I could do the morning milking before I left, and we got a man to fill in."

Her late husband, Carl, encouraged her in her efforts. She said, "I didn't think I had time for it. But I really did enjoy it and I learned a lot."

She said she had never taken the time to travel to other counties, so that aspect was one she thoroughly enjoyed.

But the highlight of her two year's president, she said, was making friends. She said, "I met some of the loveliest people. There are so many friendships which you make and keep, and it really means something to me. After all,

friends are really what life is all about. New places come and go, but friends are the most wonderful things."

As county president, Mrs. Johnson had a lot of opportunity to make friends among the 1,000 members in the county's 31 societies. She also saw much of the good works which come from the societies. She cited specifically the work at Harrisburg State Hospital, Hamburg State Hospital and locally at Conestoga View which two groups visit every month to play games and visit with the residents. She said, "If there weren't Farm Women Societies, there would be a lot of dark corners."

The societies have changed a little over the years, she said, "Now there are more than just farm women who are members; the groups are more versatile. And they seem to join younger."

"But the basic quality of their community work remains the same. It may be wider in scope because travel is easier," she added.

On the state level Mrs. Johnson has been chairman of the legislative committee for three years. One change has been that resolutions have been discontinued because of a feeling that they really were not effective.

She said, "I was instrumental in getting names and address of legislators and their districts to each county president. Individual letter writing is the most effective way to communicate with the legislators. But women must write letters themselves, not use form letters. One aim is to get women more active in letter writing."

Mrs. Johnson was honored as Farm Woman of the year in 1970 when she was president of Society 15, one example of the esteem in which she is held.

Mrs. Johnson is a native of North Carolina, but her family moved to Pennsylvania when she was five years old. She said her brother had read in geography books about Pennsylvania - that the land was beautiful and level. She said he was anxious to move here "so the family wouldn't have to work so hard anymore."

Her father knew a realtor in this state so he came and bought a 174 acre farm near Wakefield. She recalled the leaving North Carolina was tearful because her mother had served as midwife to the community, traveling by

horseback, buggy or walking, and as the family traveled to the train station people begged them not to leave.

The family settled onto their new farm and the children attended Plum Hill School, where Mrs. Johnson recalls a heartbreaking first day. She said the four children in her family had always eaten together from one large basket, but the children teased them unmercifully and little Dorothy went home saying she didn't feel well. She told her father she would not return until she had a lunch kettle, but he, or course, made her turn around immediately. However, very quickly, lunch kettles were found for each child.

Her husband had been a native of West Virginia, but his family moved into a home close to her childhood home. When they first married they lived in Parkerville, near Kennett Square and lived in an apartment in a farm house.

After four years they decided to return to Lancaster County and farm. They bought the farm where Mrs. Johnson now lives and moved in on March 17, 39 years ago. "in a snow storm."

They had bought the farm, lock, stock and dairy cattle, so the very first evening they had to set to work milking the 27 dairy cows by hand. Mrs. Johnson said neither she nor her husband had ever milked for as a young girl it had been her job to pump water for her father's 40 head of Guernseys, some steers and hogs.

She recalls the first few days on the farm as being "just awful. The milkman came at 5:00, so we had to get up at three o'clock. Our hands swelled up, because we weren't used to the work."

However, she related happily, "Our hands became accustomed to it. I really like the farm - it was monotonous living in the apartment."

The Johnsons built the herd to 50 milking cows, and three years ago installed a pipeline milker. She said, "We were really a team."

Mrs. Johnson's husband became ill last spring and in the summer her grandson, Douglas Hershey, a senior at

[Continued on Page 44]

Country Corner

Farm Homes preserve 18th century history

By MELISSA PIPER

For the past two weeks, I have been driving across the countryside here in Lancaster County, to take pictures of older farm homes, some of which have survived almost 300 years. It has been quite interesting to note the architecture and handwork which went into building some of these detailed houses.

I was amazed at the beautiful fireplaces which graced many rooms and how well they had been preserved either by careful consideration of by years of hiding behind walls of plaster.

The antiques which also line many of the homes were interesting to view for a number of them had been hand-crafted here in the county or in nearby villages. The detailed workmanship of these toys,

dishes and furniture was very surprising, especially since many of the craftsmen had few tools with which to work.

Many of the older homes which dot our area reflect the builder's heritage and it is evident that pride surfaced during the construction. German-styled doors and hinges are still in use in several county homes with Christian doors, cathedral cupboards and church style window designs all reflecting the spiritual values held in high esteem by the early settlers.

While many of the homes have been passed down through generations of the same family, others have been sold time after time with new tenants each adding a bit of their own creative touches to the interior decor.

Historians in the area have noted that each home

although many times built by the same contractor, had its own peculiar design and was distinct in its novel design certainly not like the mass produced houses we view today.

The families who have taken much care and interest in restoring these homes must be commended, for they have preserved a bit of Americana and history which is unique to this area. For in few other states is such a heritage kept alive, as in the stately farm homes of southeastern Pa.

Tucked against the hillsides and along flowing streams, the homes seem as if time has stood still for if the electrical wires and poles were stripped away and the farm machinery and vehicles hidden, the farms would probably look much like they did centuries ago.