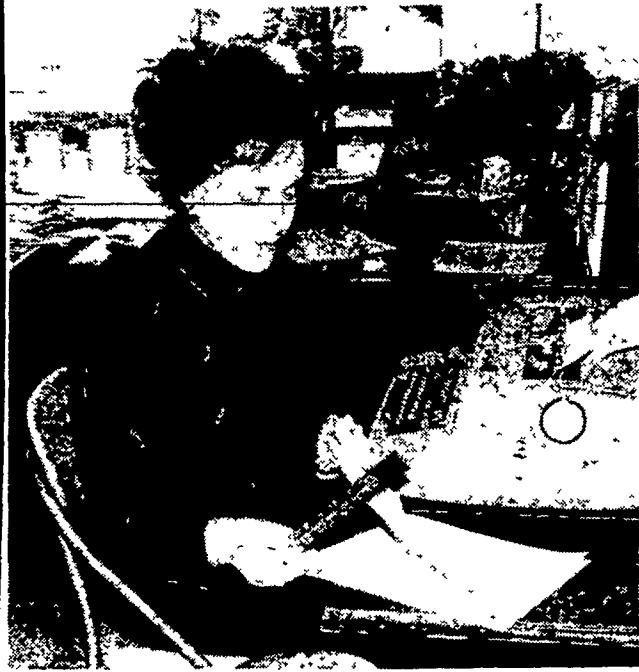


Here Sandy cares for some of the many plants throughout her farm home.

Sandy Yocum looks over some of the weather records she keeps for the United States Weather Bureau.



Sandy and John Yocum go over some of the records which must be kept to make the research information useful to farmers. Although born a city girl, Sandy has learned to appreciate agriculture and is on the staff of Penn State University as a part-time employee.

Homestead Notes

Sandy Yocum quickly learned to appreciate agriculture

By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

"There are definite advantages to living where we do. People are terrific around here." These enthusiastic words come from Sandy Yocu, Manheim R7, who lives in a 200-year-old farm house on 88 acres of land, and is a Lancaster County farm wife-of-sorts.

Sandy is married to John Yocum, assistant professor of agronomy, who is in charge of the Southeastern Field Research Laboratory of the Pennsylvania State University. She works closely with her husband and enjoys being involved with his work, just like a great many farm women in this area.

A city girl from Bloomsburg in Columbia County, Sandy confesses that she has learned a lot about farming since marrying John and moving to the research farm at Landisville 15 years ago. Now, she says, "I wouldn't want to move back to town. It is really pretty out here."

She also admits to being very vocal about the farmers' situation sometimes. She said, "Town people just don't realize the problems farmers have. They think when they go in a store the products will be there." She begins to say more, but checks herself and says, "I don't want to get on my handbox."

Sandy is on Penn State's payroll, and works about four hours daily on research farm business. She said her own involvement helps her have an understanding of her husband's work.

Sandy is deep into a long term project of organizing a "working library" at the office, which means collecting and organizing all the booklets and pamphlets from Penn State and from the United States Department of Agriculture.

A big part of Sandy's job is taking care of the weather records which go monthly to the United States Weather Bureau. The research farm is headquarters for an official weather station, which is used heavily by local industry. The station records rainfall, relative humidity, high and low temperatures, and other important aspects of the daily weather scene.

Sandy also does calculations on yields and other information which is recorded faithfully from field experiments.

Payroll is a part of Sandy's work, and involves records of two full time biological technicians, and two part time Summer workers. Sandy praised the full time workers as being "very conscientious and very careful" in their work in the field. She explained, "Everything must be recorded - it is very tedious."

Sandy laughs when she talks about some of the comments they receive from friends and neighbors when they see some of the research that goes on at the farm. The research plots are given lots of close attention, sometimes using strange apparatus.

Sandy explained that all of the work which goes on at the Landisville farm is designed to find varieties which grow and yield well in southeastern Pennsylvania. Finding disease resistant varieties poses a constant challenge, since, Sandy says, "Plants keep getting new disease just as humans do."

The research lab grows a wide range of crops, from a corn nursery where new varieties are developed, to soybeans, small grains and potatoes. Tobacco is a speciality at the Landisville laboratory and the information they have on tobacco is the most up-to-date anywhere. There is a vineyard and there is some research presently being done on flowers. The number of crops grown has tripled since the Yocums first arrived there.

Sandy notes that all the research is a "cooperative thing," with professors from Penn State working on planting and harvesting the test plots. Plant pathologists and weed specialists are frequent visitors to the lab. She said John spends a lot of "planning time," but also likes to "work right along with the plots. He is really devoted."

Sandy takes great pride in the accomplishments of her husband, and notes that he received six awards in the last four years from young farmer groups and others. She said he frequently speaks to groups about the research being conducted at the research lab, adding that all of the results get passed right along to farmers through the Penn State Extension Service.

One of Sandy's jobs is answering the phone, and she's had some interesting calls. She said they get a high percentage of calls from people who really are trying to contact the Extension Service at the Farm and Home Center. For these calls, she just gives the proper phone number.

Some calls are not so easily handled, however. Many people do not know the work of the research lab, and so calls come which belong to other agencies. Without qualification, Sandy says the most unusual call she ever received was from a woman who asked, "Do you buy bodies?" Sandy just laughed and said she assumed the woman was trying to locate the Hershey Medical Center, also a branch of Penn State.

The research station is open for pre-arranged tours, Sandy said. "We have had people from Japan, Rhodesia, France, and Germany. They are all nice people. John is the host, but I usually go and talk with the women and answer as much as I can," she remarked.

She said they get a lot of school groups. "Young students are very inquisitive. There is a lot more interest than there once was," noted Mrs. Yocum.

The Yocum's two daughters, Jennifer, 15, and Jeanne, 12, are both students at Manheim Central, and both enjoy meeting visitors who come to the farm.

Sandy is currently president of Farm Women Society 5 even though she has been a member only five years. Modestly, she says, "People just assume you can do things like being president." She said she feels her Society is "happy mixture" of older and younger women. "The young ones feel they can learn from the older members and the older ones feel they can learn from us."

Singing is a true talent of Sandy's which she used a lot as a teenager, but which was dormant until a few years ago. As a senior high school student in Bloomsburg she had sung soprano with a dance band. She also sang at many weddings which produced, "oodles and oodles of jewelry from brides."

Reluctantly, Sandy confessed to another singing venture as a teenager. She sang hymns as part of an early morning farm program and was followed by the County Extension agent's report.

And so, with a background as rich as that, Sandy volunteered to organize a singing group when her program committee at the Parent Teacher Society needed some entertainment. The result of that is a gospel group called the "Glory Heirs," which entertains at meetings and church functions. Mrs. Albert Fry and Mrs. Gerald Emrich are the other members of the trio.

Sandy is a regular volunteer with the Manheim Farm Show, taking entries for vegetables. The family belongs to Salem United Methodist Church, Manheim. She formerly was very involved with the Shared Holiday program at the Lancaster YWCA, was a Girl Scout leader and taught Sunday School. She gave up those things because, "I gave my all. I needed a change."

In her spare time, Sandy enjoys playing the organ and the piano and likes to sew. A craft which she developed is decoupage old slate shingles, which results in an attractive wall decoration.

The Yocum's have a large vegetable garden, but Sandy gets asthma so this limits her involvement to freezing and canning the produce.

Sandy joked about being from the same county as Pennsylvania's new Secretary of Agriculture Kent Shelhamer. She said she knew Shelhamer when she worked in the Boy Scout office in Bloomsburg, and he was a scout master. When she left he said he hoped they would meet again, so she is hoping he will attend one of the many functions sponsored by the research farm so she can renew his acquaintance.

For Sandy Yocum the research farm is home - and a happy home. Sandy is justifiably proud of the work which is carried out there, and in the ultimate way in which it helps farmers, and contributes to the whole southeastern Pennsylvania community.