

Together, Murrens led 4-H 81 years

By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

HANOVER - Francis, Theresa and Thomas Murren have served as 4-H leaders in Adams County for a combined total of over 81 years! That's a lot of years in 4-H, but doesn't even count the number of years they participated as 4-H'ers themselves.

Sound remarkable? Well, it is. The Murren family, led by matriarch Rose Murren, has been involved in 4-H in Adams County since 1925 when Francis joined the Baby Beef Club and went on to win grand champion honors at the Farm Show with his first Hereford.

Since then, there's probably always been a Murren serving as leader or being a 4-H'er. Tom, Rose's grandson, explained that his grandmother was an active, ardent supporter of the agricultural Extension Service because she was widowed with nine children from ages nine months to 14 years and left with a large farm to run. For assistance she called upon the Extension Service and relied heavily upon their advice. Therefore, when a baby beef 4-H club was formed, she made sure her children were involved. Over the years, each one of the children was a member, and eventually, at least six of them took their turn as leaders.

Francis received his 20-year service pin and then served several more years before he had no more children in 4-H. Theresa continues to serve after 32 years and Thomas is an active dairy club leader after 29 years. Another sister, Elizabeth, now deceased, served about 13 years with Theresa; Grace, (Mrs. Paul Dennis) served as a leader in the northern end of the county; and brother Simon, served for one year as a swine club leader.

Francis, now 69, recalls that he was a member for just two years before he was too old, and then he became a leader. Subsequently he and his wife had six sons who were 4-H members. He said, "All six boys completed 10 years of 4-H work. That was 60 steers. And everyone of them showed at Farm Show." Two years ago Francis was invited to present the winning ribbon at the Farm Show along with Agriculture Secretary Raymond Kerstetter in honor of his 50th anniversary of having grand champion.

As a former beef club leader, Francis readily admits that there have been a lot of changes over the years, "especially with breeding. Before, there were no crossbreds. Steers are of better quality today."

He remembers the time when judges started changing what they were looking for in a steer. He is also quick to point out that judging cows - like judging people - is a very individual thing.



Tom and Theresa Murren talk about some of the things they've shared over the years as 4-H leaders. Tom has served the dairy club for 29 years and Theresa is in her 32nd year as leader.



Raising livestock has been a way of life for Francis Murren all his life. This retired 4-H leader is still active on the farm.

He recalled taking 4-H steers to the Lancaster Stock Yards to be shown and sold with the southeast district if they weren't selected to go to Farm Show. As a leader, he also helped to get through the period when York and Adams Counties decided to go their own way and hold a show and sale at the Thomasville Auction.

Francis is still farming his Hanover R4 farm, with 85 acres, chickens, hogs and some steers. He remains enthusiastic about the values instilled in his sons through 4-H work and added, "You should learn all you can because you never know when you may need it."

Theresa has been a leader for 32 years, and has served four different clubs, covering basically the same area. First she coordinated the Brushtown Club, then the Conewago Club, then the Sandhill Club and today she is one of the leaders of the McSherrystown Community Club.

"I mostly help with foods," she said.

She herself was a member of the Brushtown Club for 10

years and showed baby beef for three years. She was on the livestock judging team and was able to attend some state activities.

Theresa has witnessed many changes over the years, some of which she considers to be good, some not so good. Changing to the Danish system of judging is not entirely to her liking. When she was a 4-H'er (two generations ago, she says), Theresa recalled that there were five ribbons awarded per club. "I never got a ribbon for several years." Now everyone gets a ribbon, and she feels that unnecessary emphasis is placed on wanting a blue ribbon.

"In those days," Theresa said, "The ribbons didn't matter because 4-H was the only youth activity going on. It was an opportunity to meet other people. Round-up was a really big event because it meant a day off from farm work."

Tom agrees that 4-H has changed. "There are so many more activities and so many more events for 4-H'ers to meet and take part

in at the local, state, and national level. In the early days 4-H was more of a highlight for the youth to be in. Today 4-H is a supplement to other activities. But there is increased opportunity to meet more people and to become more involved in activities."

Tom was a 4-H'er for 10 years and showed both beef and dairy cows. He has been a dairy club leader for 29 years.

The numbers and variety of projects has changed drastically, but Theresa confirms that sewing is still the main interest in her community club. Interest in foods is way down, she said, but last year ceramics had a lot of interest. She went on to say, "McSherrystown has the most well organized recreational program anywhere in the county. The need for 4-H is not so great here because organized activities are right at hand for young people."

While the dairy project remains basically the same, Tom acknowledges that the big change in dairy clubs is

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