

American Farmer Degree recipient

Murray met his match on the farm

By DIETER KRIEG

HONEY BROOK - Terry Lee Murray, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Samuels, Honey Brook R2, wasn't born and raised on a farm. But when he was introduced to agriculture during his freshman year at Twin Valley High School, he met his match.

Murray, an honor student and outgoing young man, fell in love with farming.

Since that fateful Autumn in 1970, Murray has been climbing the ladder of success at a pace which is often only dreamed of by others. Next week, in Kansas City, Mo., he'll be receiving the coveted American Farmer Degree, the highest award bestowed on an FFA member. Only one per cent of the national FFA membership is allowed to receive this distinguished honor.

Now employed by Weaver's Quality Eggs, Lancaster, as an assistant foreman, the 21-year old youth's love for farming first appeared in 1970 when he took a job on the Charles Gable farm near Elverson. "It was just a job - something to do," recollected the Chester Countian.

The young man was in for a surprise, however.

Murray liked the work and opportunities and life style so well that he decided to join the vo-ag program at Twin Valley High School, where Ron Fredericks is instructor.

"FFA has really helped me out. It has taught me how to get in front of a group, and made a better human being out of me than I was.

"You're really on Earth here for a different purpose than to just take up space, and while you are here, you should be doing something worthwhile," said Murray.

Doing something worthwhile, as far as he's concerned, means working with agriculture. Although he's presently involved with egg processing, shipping and handling, his real fondness for agriculture lies in dairy farming.

"Some day I still want to own a dairy farm," the young man revealed. "That's the type of work I'd like to be with and would really like to be doing. I'd really be doing something then - serving a purpose and helping to feed the world," he continued to explain as he unfolded his dream to this reporter.

"You'd have to go into it big, I'd say milk 75 cows and farm 300 to 400 acres," he said while sitting in Weaver's spacious conference room.

Is there a good future in the dairy business?

Weaver nodded, adding that "milk will be one of the biggest items in food due to it having a lot of nutrients, and its versatility for shipping and marketing once its dehydrated."

Murray's fondness for the dairy industry might lead one to believe he's in the wrong profession. But the young man is quick to acknowledge that he's happy with his position. He came on as a "resource worker" two years ago and was promoted to assistant foreman six months later. He realizes that his goals will be hard to achieve and therefore makes the most of his experiences at the renowned poultry plant. An estimated 691,000 eggs go through the Weaver plant daily.

In his capacity as assistant foreman, Murray has to know details about eggs and their marketing route including quality, inventories and carton supply. His former job as a resource worker in the shell egg department helped him to prepare for that position. As a resource worker, Murray was trained to fill in at whatever post might have been vacant in the shell egg division due to absenteeism. "It was something to get used to, but I'm satisfied with the job I have now," he affirmed.

A story about Murray's accomplishments and ambitions would be far from complete without going into greater detail with his love for the dairy farm.

"I give Mr. Gable a lot of credit," the award recipient began. "He and his wife were like second parents to me. 'Charlie made me feel like the operation was partly mine; they made me a part of the family and I was included in discussions on how to go about certain tasks,' Murray remembered. "I still help him once in a while."

Everything went well at the Gable farm - the home of some of the finest Ayrshire cattle in this part of the country - until Murray one day realized his predicament. It was his only disappointment, the way he tells it. "I couldn't stay there," he explained. "I'd like to have my own place and it was a matter of looking out for myself."

"I learned a lot here, including how important American agriculture is and how many misconceptions



Terry Murray, occupied with a bit of desk work at Weaver's egg plant, Lancaster, believes people were put on Earth for higher purposes than just taking up space.

people have in town. "Agriculture is more important than people think," the young man and former resident of Coatesville emphasized.

The 1974 graduate of Twin Valley came a long way during his four years at the Gable farm. He acquired a couple of cows and got so enthused about it all that he cleared two of his parents' six acres of woodland near Honey Brook. He then spent his savings on a pole barn and began raising some beef cattle. He has had as many as 15 head but will abandon that part of his program due to circumstances which require him to buy all his feed.

His several dairy cows were sold when he left Gable's. One of them went to the State of Washington where she became a grand champion in the state.

Having earned his own money for school necessities, including clothes, since he entered his teens, Murray has long been used to working. He had no experience with cows, however, when he walked onto the Gable farm. That reportedly prompted Gable to assess the matter something like this:

The first year Murray would have to pay him for educating him, the second year he'd be in training and work for nothing, and by the third year he'd know enough to be paid. Grinning broadly as he recollected the words, Murray knew his employer was teasing. Nevertheless, it took a year before he milked the 42 cows all by himself.

All in all, Murray values his experiences. He admits he doesn't know how or why he got into agriculture. Originally it was just to have "a job." It's turning out to be the unraveling of a secret desire.

While not overly optimistic, the young Chester Countian does not see his dairy farming dream as too far fetched to become reality some day. "When I was a freshman in FFA, I used to think it would be neat to become a state officer some day," Murray reminisced. He eventually went on to become Pennsylvania's FFA secretary for 1974.

The American Farmer Degree represents another dream come true. Three and a half years ago, when he received the Keystone Degree, Murray set his sights for the national honor. "It seemed pretty far away. I thought it would be next to impossible but it got to be," he said.

With that in mind, Murray has confidence in his future and the future of agriculture in general.

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