

Master Farmer wife says life 'not boring' on farm

By SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

"Life is not boring." Geraldine Hershey says with a smile as she discusses her family's activities in the kitchen of her home on Hossler Road just outside of Manheim.

Gerry is the wife of Donald L. Hershey, the 1978 Master Farmer from Lancaster County, one of just three in the state named to the honor. The Hersheys have three children, and to Gerry this is her most important job. She enjoys being home where she is needed, and likes putting her skills to work to make a comfortable home.

The Hersheys are farming on the farm where Gerry grew up, now called Her-shvale Farms, and Gerry is quick to give credit for the honor they have received to their three children: Larry, 18; Steven, 16 and Patti, 12. It is truly a family operation and each family member has tasks which make the highly diversified farming operation click.

Gerry herself is very involved in the poultry end of the farm enterprise. It is her responsibility to "gather eggs twice a day." That may not seem like much, but with 31,000 layers that amounts to quite a few eggs. The job takes 2½ to three hours, and son Steven is the regular assistant. In the morning, Gerry says, "Steve and I do it from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. In the evening everyone helps and we usually begin at 3:00. We have the eggs done before we start milking."

So, although Gerry does not hold down a job, she does acknowledge that the responsibility of packing the eggs is really a "part-time job."

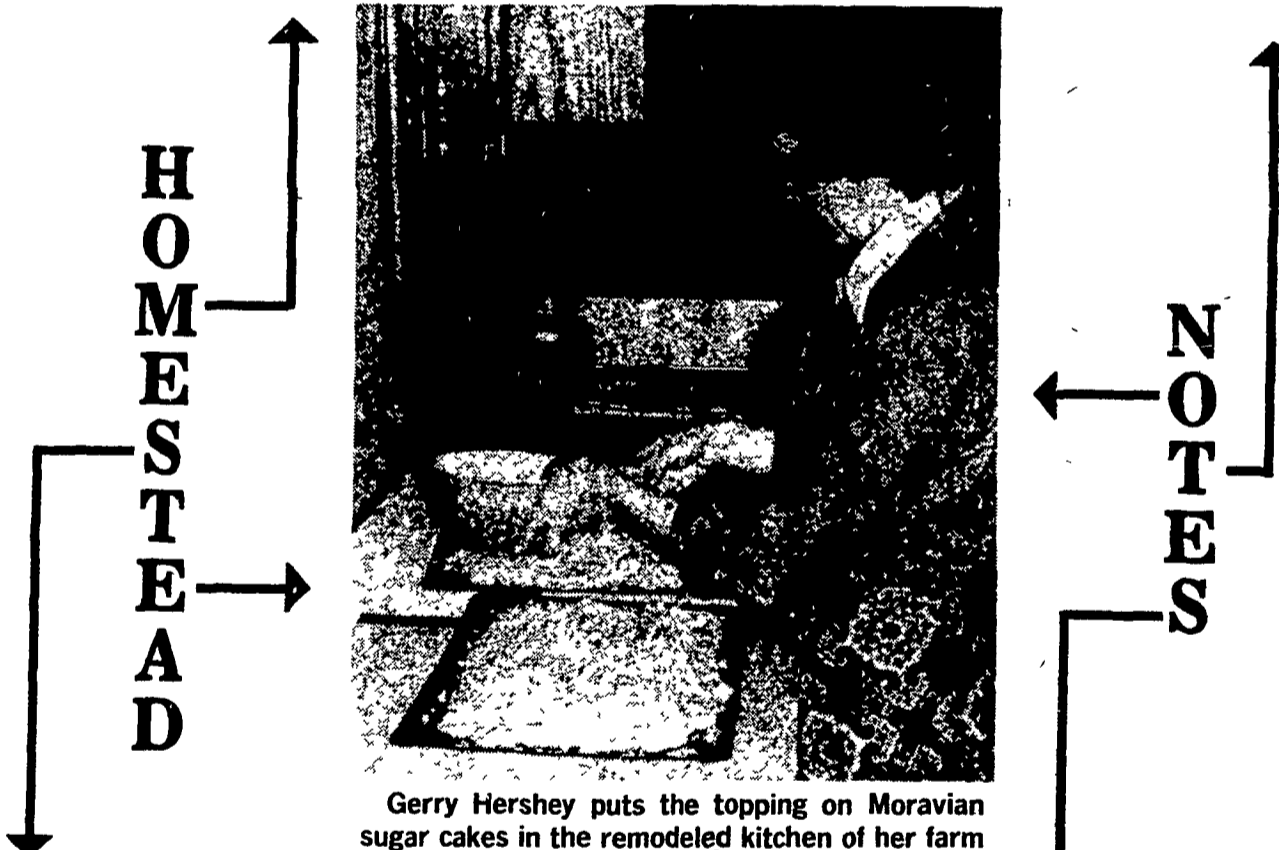
While the eggs are her primary responsibility, Gerry says that when she and Don were first married nearly 20 years ago she began doing "anything and everything" until her children were old enough to take over some of the chores. She helped with field work and carried milk for years. Despite 20 years of being around cows, Gerry says, "To me a cow is still a cow." She said she cannot distinguish one from another, although now the milking chores are handled by Don and Larry, with Steve doing the feeding of the cows and Patti feeding the calves. Patti says, "I like to feed calves."

Gerry says she feels her family is fortunate because, "The children have always been willing to help out with the work." In fact, she feels Larry really liked the idea of taking on responsibility when he was first asked to take over some of the chores as Donald became active in many community activities. She says frankly, that without the help of the children Donald could never have attended the many meetings he has over the years.

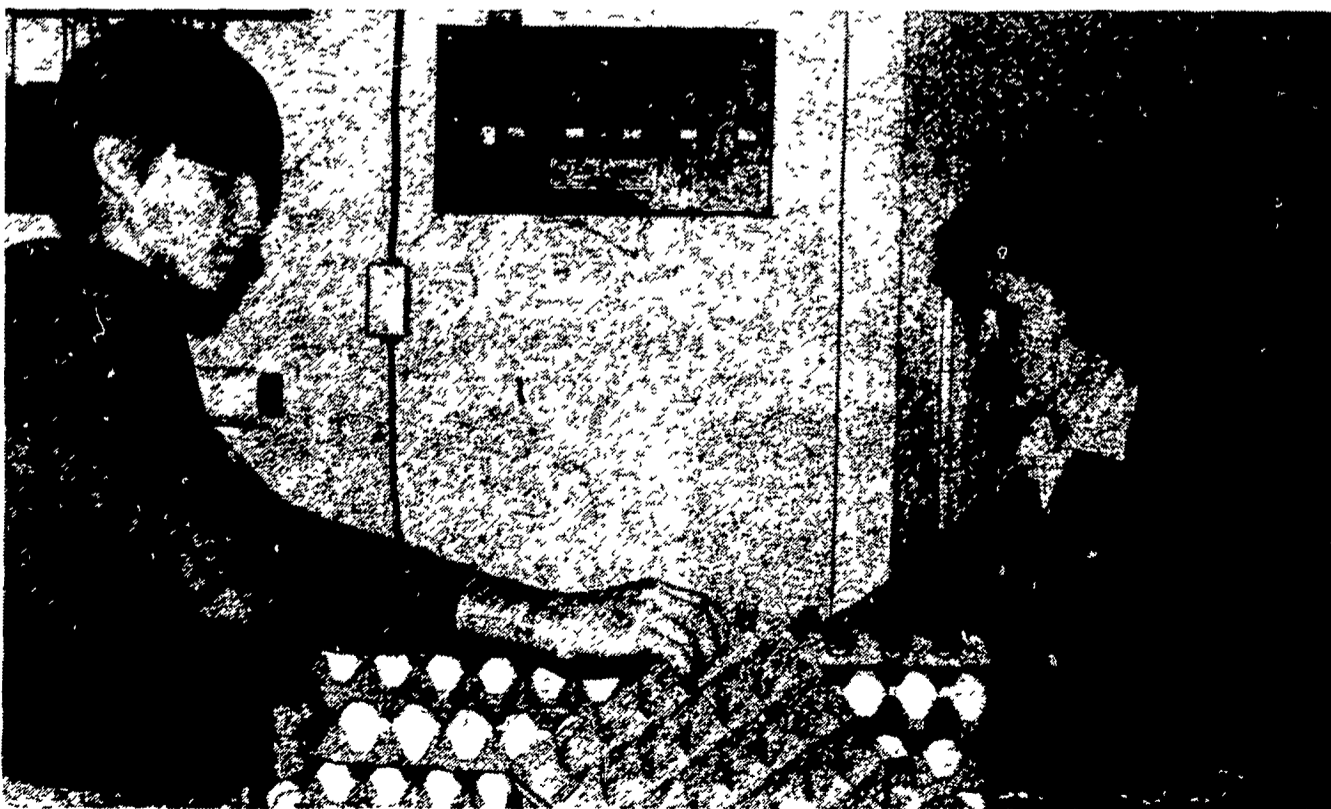
The entire Hershey family is busy - Donald in the community; the children in FFA and 4-H. However, Gerry says she has no desire



Finding Gerry at the sewing machine is very common. She said she sews whenever she finds the time, and makes garments for the whole family.



Gerry Hershey puts the topping on Moravian sugar cakes in the remodeled kitchen of her farm home.



Steve, 16, and Gerry pack the eggs every morning from 6:00 - 7:00, and then again in the afternoon. Gerry says she enjoys the help and the company.

to join organizations "Donald enjoys it - I don't. It's great that we're opposite." Another reason she doesn't feel a need to belong to clubs: "I have more to do than I get done as it is."

As she talks about her family, however, a few involvements do begin to come forth. The family belongs to the Congregational Bible Church of Marietta. Gerry enjoys playing the piano for her own enjoyment, but adds that she plays for the Good News Club, which is an interdenominational Bible study group at Patti's school.

Her one constant joy and interest is sewing, and this summer she shared her knowledge of sewing by being a leader in the Mount Joy Community 4-H club. She said she decided to offer to help instead of just taking Patti to and from the meetings. She enjoyed working with the 4-H'ers and found that she often had more patience in explaining techniques to them than she finds at home.

Gerry has been sewing for a long time, but said she probably accomplishes more in sewing than she once did, since the children are older and her work on the farm is less demanding. She said, "I sew anything - anything, that is, that I can use a pattern for. My sewing machine is always open."

Although she has taken a course in tailoring, she said that her knowledge of sewing came mostly on her own with some encouragement from an aunt. "It comes easily to me." Gerry sews for the whole family, including her trio of men. She said she has made three leisure suits for her husband, and several for her sons. She added that she will be sorry to see leisure suits become less fashionable because she has enjoyed making them. She, of course, sews for daughter Patti, and added, "I sew most of the shirts for the family, but now I get everything approved before I make it."

Aside from her sense of accomplishment in sewing, Gerry said, "There is no doubt that it is a savings. I just won't pay the price for ready-made clothing in the store." She added that she also doesn't pay full price for the fabric she uses. She shops fabric outlets and sales, and when she sees something she likes she gets it and then figures out a use for it. Her ingenuity always comes up with something suitable for the fabric.

Donald once served as president of the Manheim Farm Show, and Gerry likes to enter her sewing in the Show. She laughingly says, "I've taken jellies," but indicates that sewing is really a more successful area for her.

She has a large garden in the summer and does the usual canning and freezing for a large family. She recalls a new experience she had this past summer when

(Turn to Page 43)