

The dream of 2 Leb Co. farm boys comes true

Cull cows provide their lives



Tom Tice, the 22-year-old co-owner of Host Acres Farms Quality Meats, is the head boner in the butchering operation. Donna Wolfe, in the foreground, is a trimmer of the primal cuts.

By JOANNE SPAHR
LEBANON — For two aspiring country boys from Lebanon County, the stars have been in the right positions during the past two years. Like independent satellites, they traveled in different spheres for most of their lives — one a dairyman, and the other a butcher. Then, one day their paths chose to cross, and both saw the possibility for the fulfillment of a united dream. Today, nearly two years later, that dream has long since materialized and is alive and prosperous.

Krall Hostetter, Lebanon, and Tom Tice, Newmanstown, own and operate Host Acres Farms Quality Meats, a butcher shop in the village of Reistville. Seventy-five per cent of their trade is in boneless beef, which goes for hamburger, bologna, or hot dogs.

Two years ago neither Tice, 22, or Hostetter, 31, could have envisioned the shop as it is today. At that time Tice was employed as a boner by a Berks County butcher and Hostetter was operating his own 117 acre, 75-cow dairy farm near Lebanon as well as working part time in a butcher shop.

Although both had aspirations of running their own slaughtering operation, neither had the capital or the experience to do it alone.

"Then, one Thursday, Tom walked into the butcher shop where I worked and said, 'Why don't we get together and buy this place,' and we got a loan and did just that," states Hostetter. That's when the adventure began.

Originally purchased with freezer orders in mind, the shop was soon heading toward difficulty in that marketing area because of competition by other established, well known shops in the vicinity. To alleviate the slow trade, the new co-owners were faced with changing their operation to market a different type of product.

The question at that time was, "What can we produce that few others in the area do?" The answer for Host Acres was boneless beef.

"We originally didn't know that so much boneless beef was consumed in Lebanon County," say the owners, "But we thought with the livestock markets in this area, why should the packers buy the cows, ship



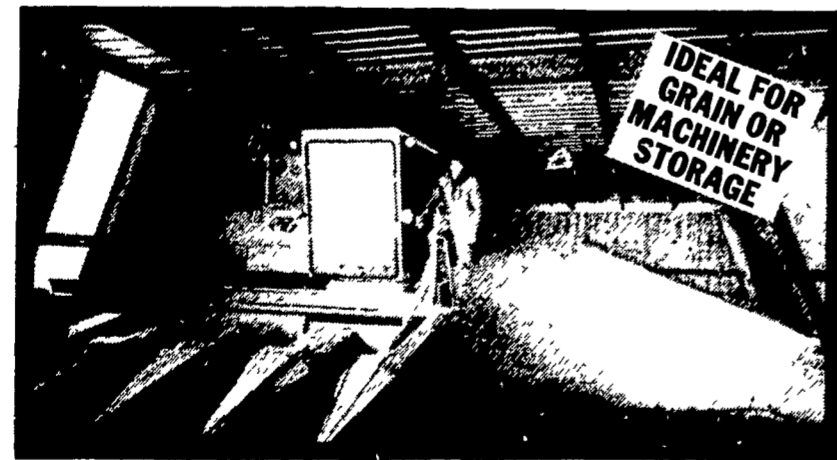
Krall Hostetter, co-owner of Host Acres Farms Quality Meats, Myerstown, works on the kill floor as well as in the capacity of chief livestock buyer for the business.

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