



Fay looks over her planter of flowers.

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KIRKWOOD — Many companies and industries have undisclosed business connections which are known as silent partners. Their input is substantial, but their involvement is not dramatically projected for public attention.

Probably the most frequent use of a silent partner is the family farm. For generations, farmers have had a strong help-mate, hired-hand, advisor, bookkeeper, and companion in the forms of their wives. Fulfilling a number of roles simultaneously, effectively and without fanfare is the task and life's work of many farmers' wives. One example of the farmer's wife who does whatever needs to be done is Mrs. A. Dale Herr.

First in the job description Fay Herr fulfills is mother to Tammy and Dale, Jr. Tammy is 12 years old and will be entering seventh grade at Swift Middle School in the Solanco School District next Fall. Dale, Jr. is eight years old and will be a third grader at Bart-Colerain Elementary School. Being a mother means trips to pee-wee baseball games, overseeing swimming pool guests this Summer and learning crafts along with her daughter Tammy.

Last November Tammy was selected Citizen of the Month for the Swift Middle School and was given the opportunity to enter a special crafts class in macrame. She, in turn, taught her mother how to tie the twine and yarn to create decorative as well as useful plant hangers. The newly learned craft was a natural skill for Fay who is well acquainted with crocheting afghans and a very useful craft which she uses to accent the many plants she enjoys growing. One particularly striking hanging plant among the many Fay has hung on her long front porch for the Summer months is a flourishing prayer plant. It is housed in a shining black ceramic pot hung by a white twine macrame hanger with wooden beads worked into the tying pattern.

Although she says prayer plants are very easy to start as are several other varieties of houseplants she cares for, Fay's favorite is the more difficult fern. In the two west windows in her kitchen, Fay says she starts her plants best with a mixture of peat moss and garden soil and plenty of attention to watering.

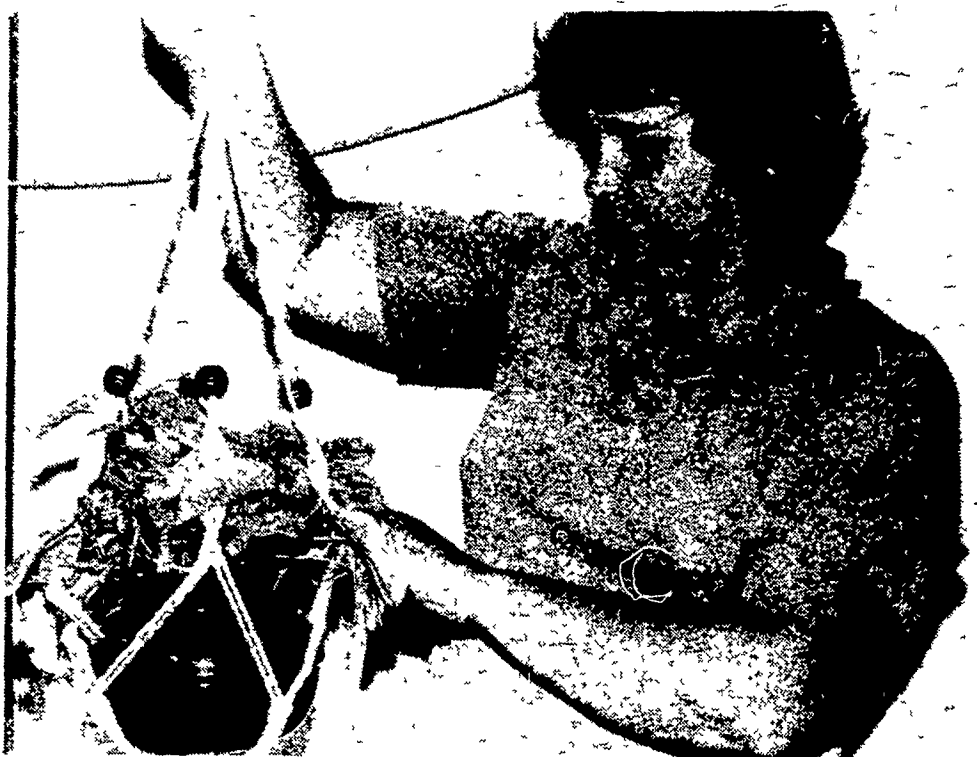
In the Summer, when things are too busy for much pampering of houseplants, Fay hangs a lot of them on the front porch and also plants several dozen petunias and begonias in assorted containers which rest in front of the large stone home. One special time-saving technique Fay uses with the outdoor flowers is to place a layer of peat moss on top of the planter soil to retain the moisture and subdue weed growth.

While being a mother and a tender of delicate plants, Fay is also a caretaker of the extensive lawn which spreads itself around the buildings, silos, lanes, flower beds and up and down sloping banks at Herr-Hope Farm. Fay explains that it takes a full day to get all the lawn mowed even with the use of a riding mower.

With the addition of a totally new milking and housing set-up last Fall, the lawn has also expanded. Mrs. Herr explained that the farm they live on has been owned by the Herr family for around 50 years. Abram R. and Anna F. Herr, Dale's parents, owned it for 43 years. In addition to the home farm situated at the intersection of old route 472 (now Bartville Road) and pumping Station Road in southern Lancaster County near Quarryville, the Herrs own two other farms nearby. The total acreage is 496 acres and the crops grown on this land include 200 acres of corn, 120 acres of hay for haylage, 24 acres of wheat, 15 acres of barley and 26 acres of tobacco — 15 acres of which are raised on the halves with Amish neighbors.

Although Fay does not feel very confident with the

HOMESTEAD NOTES



Fay Herr checks a prayer plant in a hanger before placing it in the hook on the front porch for the Summer. She and her daughter make macrame hangers, and she enjoys houseplants.

Fay Herr fills many roles at Herr-Hope farm



One of the jobs Mrs. Herr fills is that of writing down cow identifications and times she notices

planting and raising gets into full swing. She explained that the plants are pulled in the morning then placed into the soil by hand with a tobacco planter. The planter is tractor-pulled. Two people sit behind it and when they hear a "click" it means they must drop the plant into the hole made by the planter before the water is added to the hole. A shoe pulls the dirt around the newly positioned plant. The Herrs use a two-row planter and Fay is often one of the two people handling the plants.

With rows 40 inches apart and plants spaced three feet apart, it takes several days to plant all the 26 acres even with the Amish planting their own.

After the plants have started to grow, the fields must be cultivated and hoed between plants. Once again Fay mans the hand cultivators which she pulls together then pushes apart in and out down the rows of tobacco plants.

In addition to the hand work of planting and cultivating, there is the chore of topping the tobacco plants or breaking off the flower stalk by hand. Fay says this step makes black hands. Usually by the middle of August, the strenuous task of cutting, spearing and hanging the tobacco plants in the tobacco curing sheds begins. Although Fay generally does not help with this more muscular work she pitches in when stripping the tobacco in the Winter before it is baled and finally sold in Lancaster.

At one time the Herrs used to raise their own tobacco plants but now they buy them and Mrs. Herr salvaged the old tobacco bed soil, rich with peat moss, to mulch her flowers.

The tobacco and yard work keep Fay busy during the Summer, but two jobs she also does all year long are helping with the milking and keeping all the records of the diversified farm operation which includes payrolls for several fulltime employees.

Dale expanded the Holstein herd last Fall from 91 to 180

dairy animal in heat. With these records herdsmen follow up with insemination.

milking cows. With the addition of a 150-stall free-stall barn and a herringbone double-six parlor, the operation now handles 173 cows with 150 milking this week. The herd is on DHIA and Fay helps during the two milkings which testing is being done each month and also milks every other weekend and when their herdsmen, Galen Martin and Robert Smith, have days off or vacations.

The Herrs raise their replacements and have also purchased bred heifers and milking cows recently to complete their herd expansion. Galen Martin inseminates the cows, and it is everybody's job to spot and write down cows in heat.

Fay helps with the milking and tobacco, but the record keeping is all her territory. She spends considerable time sending out the checks, recording expenses and incomes, making out the payrolls for four fulltime men and keeping records for Farm Management Business Analysis Service. She has to have the books in order and complete them quarterly for that service. And she is quick to give credit to that service for the computation of income taxes each year.

"They do it better than I ever could. In this day it is hard to imagine someone would try to figure his own income tax by himself," she added.

Dale Herr is presently involved in a number of activities such as serving as vice-president for Colerain Township Planning Commission, director for Octorara Watershed Association and Lancaster County Pennsylvania Farmer's Association, vice-president and delegate for District 10 Quarryville Local for Inter-state Milk Producers and president of a Sunday evening bowling league.

Fay Herr, like many other farmer's wives, is the quiet partner who prefers the challenges of the family and the farm to speaking out in public. She, like other silent partners, finds plenty to do on the farm and goes about many jobs as they come from week to week, season