

Thomas Kirk likes life on the dairy farm

By **SUSAN KAUFFMAN**
Staff Writer

PEACH BOTTOM—Recent recipient of the Keystone Degree, Thomas Kirk, will soon be leaving his formal education days behind to continue his career in agriculture.

In June, Tom will graduate from Solanco High School and relinquish the office of president of the local Chapter of Future Farmers of America.

His intentions for the immediate future upon graduation are to continue working at home with his parents and eventually go into partnership with them. Tom's parents, Francis and Ethel Kirk, own and operate a 375 acre dairy farming enterprise in Fulton Township, Southern Lancaster County.

The family's dairy herd consists of 135 registered Guernsey cows and 100 young stock. The family farm raises feed for the herd in the form of hay, corn and some small grains. They raise their own replacement animals and generally have three purchased bulls on the farm to use with heifers, cows that have not settled with artificial insemination, and with other than top cows, Tom explained.

While Tom is completing his senior year at Solanco, he is part of the work experience program in which he works at home the first half of the school day, then goes to school in the afternoon for formal classes. His chores during the morning hours include feeding the heifers, scraping manure, bedding and doing "any odds and ends that need to be done," he added.

Tom says he enjoys working with the dairy end of the operation, but likes to have a mixture of fieldwork and dairy work. His younger brother, Robert, a freshman at Solanco, prefers the fieldwork so the two seem to have a good combination forming. Tom's mother does most of the milking and takes care of the calves until they are six weeks old, when Tom and Robert take over.

Although Tom has had the benefit of being reared on a dairy farm all his life he said his experience as an FFA member in school has given him additional insight into agriculture as a career.

"I think FFA is worthwhile for anyone interested in any area of agriculture," he stated. "It gives you a chance to be involved even in school. It is a good opportunity for

anyone interested in agriculture," he emphasized.

This year Tom presided over meetings of the local chapter which includes a membership of from 100 to 120 members. "We have less members than in years past, but we tried to weed out some who were not really interested in ag. It has worked out real good, though," he explained.

Previous to being the chapter president, Tom served as secretary during his junior year. He also worked as a part of the parliamentary procedure team for two years and four years as a member of the Solanco Dairy Club.

In addition to the local involvement, Tom also holds membership in the American Guernsey Cattle Club and the State Junior Guernsey Breeders Club.

During his FFA involvement the last several years, Tom has had projects in dairy herd and corn. As a greenhand, he worked with the dairy herd project which consisted of six animals both young and milking stock. In his sophomore year he added three or four young animals to the previous project and expanded into a second project of two acres of corn.

With five more animals added to the dairy herd project the next year, Tom once again raised corn as a second project. Yields for the two years showed a decrease in the second year which Tom attributes to a change in soil preparation.

"We used a heavy disc the second year rather than conventional plowing. The disc left ridges and the corn was not covered up as well. My yields dropped from 175 bushels to the acre to 146 bushels per acre," he recalled.

With a slight change in individual animals, Tom has a senior year project in dairy herd with eight cows and

seven open and bred heifers. He bred one-third of them and the other two-thirds were bred in the family herd. Having shown in a number

of local shows and fairs, Tom has had the grand champion and junior champion at the FFA round-up at Kutztown. Looking to a future in the

family dairy farm, Tom Kirk looks back at his FFA experience and finds it "a worthwhile opportunity" he chose to take.

Public presentation training night set

FLEMINGTON, N.J.—How to make a public presentation will be the subject of a workshop sponsored by the 4-H Program on February 23 at the Cooperative Extension Service Center, Flemington, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Ray Nichols, County 4-H Agent will demonstrate various ways to speak before a group, including illustrated talks and demonstrations.

This program is designed

to teach young people the basics of public speaking. This workshop is open to the public, free of charge.



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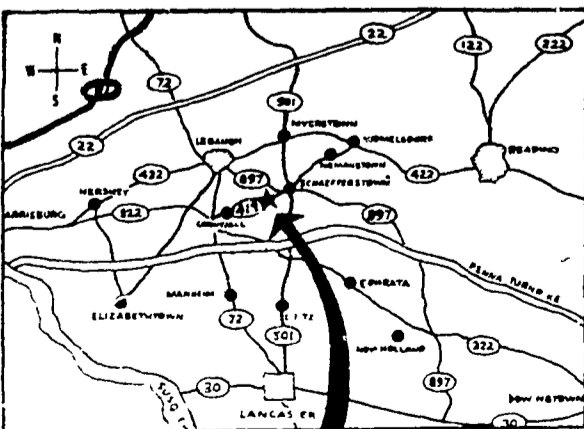
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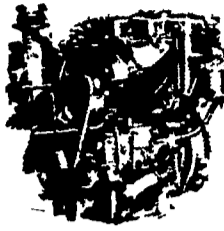
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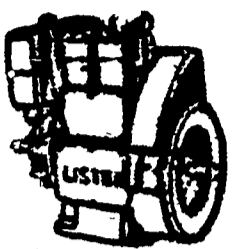


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