

Mr. Landis has a farm...

By SALLY BAIR
Staff writer

"It was squishy," Kelly Herr, Columbia R2, said as she discussed her first experience in milking a cow. Craig Jacobs, Columbia R2, disagreed, saying, "It felt like rubber."

Kelly and Craig are classmates of five-year-old Marvin Landis, to whom such things as "squishy" and "rubber" don't mean a thing because he has had lots of experience with cows' udders.

Marvin, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl N. Landis, Manheim R7, invited his 13 classmates from the Landisville Mennonite Nursery School to visit his farm last week and with this father's help, he shared some of his knowledge about the dairy industry.

The Landis family is accustomed to visitors because in the last few years they have welcomed tourists to their guest house, a small stone home next to their large brick farm house. They always invite visitors to take an interest in their farming operation, and are used to explaining about the ways of a dairy farm.

Although several of the children said they had been close to animals before, just one other child was from a farm, and some

how to milk a cow because I've been to another farm, and they let me milk a cow. I can milk cows all by myself."

Lisa Nolt, Manheim R2, said, "I milked before so I knew how to milk. Marvin's daddy helped me."

Every child who made the effort was rewarded by a steady stream of milk, and most agreed with Kelly, who added, "It was fun."

Kelly also wondered loudly if the milk was dirty or clean, and Earl explained that it was very clean. He showed them the milker and told how the milk moves through the pipeline to the bulk tank.

The next part of the education of the preschoolers was the fact that "each cow has a calf once a year." Here Marvin took the lead and proudly led the parade of children to the calf area. This was a big hit, because the calves liked being petted, and the children didn't seem to mind being licked, with just an occasional "I don't want to get licked." There was much giggling with the comment "He licked me!"

Landis explained to the children that the calves are fed milk "for the first 30 days and free choice grain." He also broke apart a nearby bale of hay and explained



Marvin Landis, an old hand at helping around the barn, is able to milk a cow handily.

A visit to the Landis patio brought what was the highlight for many of the children — a snack of nutritious milk and cookies. Conversation continued throughout the snack, with Travis saying, "I like the milk best." Julie was not particular. She said, "I like the snack best."

In a discussion of the merits of milk, Lori Koser, Mount Joy R3, said, "It helps you grow up to be strong." Kelly added, "It makes you healthy." Kelly admitted that for her the calves were the biggest attraction and said she thinks it would be fun to live on a farm.

The visit to the farm was not the only exposure to the dairy industry for this class of preschoolers. In their next regular class time at the church, they discussed

answered almost every one. The riddles included, "I am black and white and very big" (a cow), and "I am a machine that the man attaches to the cow's udder." This riddle could only be answered by host Marvin, as the milking machine.

Marvin also answered the riddle "I am tall and hold food for the cows" which was a silo.

In the ensuing discussion about milking, it was asked why farmers don't milk cows by hand, and Matthew Grueber, Mt. Joy R3, answered succinctly, "You can get it better with the machine." Shane Warren, Lancaster, added, "It would probably take an hour to milk by hand."

To top off their learning experience, Mrs. Adey read "The Dairy Cow and Her Marvelous Milk," a story coloring book



Lifting a hay bale isn't too difficult if there is some teamwork involved.

had never visited one — not even living here in the Garden Spot.

As soon as they arrived at the farm, Marvin's father took them to the barn where the 50 head of milking Holstein cows had been kept in their stalls so the children could get a close look.

Landis explained that within a week the cows would be going out to pasture, and that they are fed and milked twice daily. He also told the preschoolers that the cows averaged about 50 pounds of milk daily, and showed them a milker pail as an example of how much milk that was.

"Each cow has a name," Earl told the children, "and Marvin knows all the cows by name. Each cow also has its own stall."

The explanations were going along nicely until he mentioned that each cow was "washed off" before being milked, a chore which Marvin often helps with. Several children expressed surprise that the cows would get a bath before being milked. Landis quickly explained that it is just the udder which is washed.

Now came the excitement. A specially selected cow, huge but gentle, was offered for the children to try to milk. There were several eager children, but the majority decided that milking that big Holstein cow just wasn't for them. Perhaps they agreed with Travis Stiffler, Columbia Route 1, who said later, "I didn't milk a cow because I thought he would move and kick my leg."

Several children were not intimidated by the largeness of the cow. Julie Bateman, 3207 Old Harrisburg Pike, Landisville, said, "They were smaller than I thought they would be." And Shane Warren, who was not awed by any of this said, "I knew

that each cow eats "two cakes" of the hay daily.

From the baby calves, the children got glimpses of the heifers in various stages of growing up. One addition to the heifer pen which drew much interest was a very agreeable goat called "Chocolate." Chocolate also liked some petting and the children were delighted to oblige.

Landis carefully explained how the heifers are fed by a conveyor belt, which he demonstrated.

When they visited the second floor of the barn, the children were amazed at the hay and straw bales piled high, and looked on in fascination as Landis showed them how the bales ride the elevator to the top of the mow. The resident cat and dog, Pepsi, played a great game of climbing on the bales, and the children enjoyed watching. There was also a matching of strength to see who could lift a straw bale the highest.

The next attraction on the Landis farm was a single beehive which the family keeps, and which produced over 200 pounds of honey last year. Landis demonstrated the protective coverings he uses when he works with the hive, and showed a frame which he was about to add to the hive. The children also learned how the honey is gotten from the frame with the use of an extractor. One child commented on how the bees must feel when you take their honey away, "They must ask what do you think you're doing with my stuff?"

While everyone kept a respectful distance from the hive, Craig explained, why he didn't want to get any closer, "I got stunged two times!"

with their teacher, Mrs. Carol Adey, what they had learned. It became clear quickly that the biggest impression was made by the size of the Holsteins, followed closely by the snack, the goat and the bale of hay falling from the hay elevator.

Mrs. Adey had prepared a series of riddles about the farm and the children

designed to help young children understand the dairy industry.

All in all, it was an interesting time for those preschoolers and for the mothers and teachers who accompanied them to the farm. Learning about milk first hand made a big impression, and is sure to be a boon to the dairy industry — and helpful in forming good habits among preschoolers.



So that's how the hay gets to the top of the mow! The children watch in fascination as the elevator is demonstrated.

Homestead

Notes