

## Several "firsts" featured at Convention

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - The 52nd National Convention of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), held in Kansas City, Missouri, on November 7-9, was a year of several "firsts" for the FFA, as well as the traditional pageantry that has made it the most largely attended youth convention in the nation.

Over 21,000 members, advisors, parents and guests attended the convention, a combination of National Skills Contests, leadership workshops, big-name speakers and recognition programs.

Kevin Holtzinger, 21, of Windsor, Pennsylvania, and Robert Lovelace, 21, of Elsberry, Missouri, were recognized as the 'best of the best' in the "Stars Over America" Pageant Thursday night. Holtzinger, named Star Farmer of America, is a dairy farmer, and Lovelace, named Star Agribusinessman of America, breeds and selects superior seed stock for woody ornamentals. These two were selected from 789 American Farmer Degree recipients.

Six young people will serve on the 1979-80 National FFA Officer Team. Douglas Runker, 20, of Winchester, Virginia, was selected as the national president. The other officers are Philip Benson, 20, of Winters, California, as National Secretary; Dee James, 20, of Clay Center, Kansas, as Central Region Vice President; Donald Trimmer, Jr., 20, of Woodsboro, Maryland, as Eastern Region Vice President; Jeff Kirby, 19, of Gassville, Arkansas, as Southern Region Vice President, and Eln Duckworth, 19, of Mesa, Arizona, was elected Western Region Vice President. These officers were installed at the

Friday night session, and they performed the closing session to end the 52nd National FFA Convention.

The convention falls exactly one decade after the first official action was taken to include women in the FFA, and the young ladies seemed to celebrate that fact by taking several of the top honors. Besides Duckworth's election, several other honors were taken. Lynette Marshall, 18, of Sparland, Illinois, was named the National FFA Public Speaking Contest winner, the first girl so honored. Christe Peterson, 18, of Madison, Wisconsin, won the National FFA Extemporeous Speaking Contest, the first of its kind ever held. Janet McNeese of Silver City, North Carolina, became the 1979 American Royal Queen. Twelve women received regional proficiency awards, and 47 received their American Farmer Degree, the organization's highest award.

The National FFA Foundation celebrated its 35th anniversary by topping the \$1 million mark in contributions. The 1979 Foundation Sponsoring Committee was led by Robert D. Lund, Vice President of General Motors. The 1980 Chairman, Roland M. Hendrickson, President of the Agricultural Division, Pfizer, Inc., told those in attendance, "in 1980, our goal will be to provide whatever resources are necessary to support the great programs of this great organization."

Dr. Robert Schuler was the kick-off speaker Wednesday morning. Dr. Dan Dunham, of the U.S. Office of Education, Dr. Thomas Haggai, author and humorist, Charles Stenholm, U.S. Congressman from

Texas, and comedian Cotton Ivy also spoke to the convention.

Many activities took place during the week involving FFA members representing each of the fifty states and Puerto Rico. Over 2500 awards were presented to members at the convention. One hundred and fifty one chapters were honored for their participation in the Building Our American Communities program with the Big Walnut FFA Chapter of Sunbury, Ohio, taking the top award. National Safety Awards were presented to 119 chapters. Bronze, silver, and gold awards were presented to 451 chapters in the National Chapter Awards Program. Nearly

1,450 FFA members were involved in the nine National Judging Contests. These judging contests range from livestock to mechanics, horticulture to farm business management, and included nursery landscape, new this year.

Special awards were presented to many outstanding adult supporters of the organization. The Honorary American Farmer Degree, the Distinguished Service Award and the VIP Citation were presented to those involved in education, industry, and agriculture. Businesses and industry were recognized in a special slide program for their

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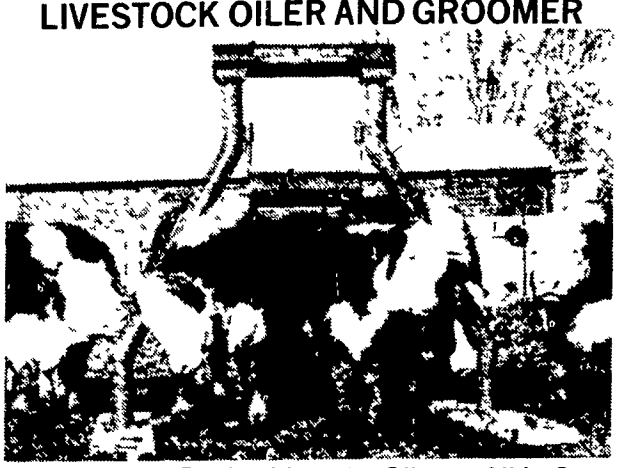
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