

# IFYE visits Lancaster Co. poultry farm

MT. JOY — Some might call it fate, while others might say that their meeting was just a lucky stroke of friendship. But, for Christine Erb and Noriko Mizuno, the few minutes they spent talking in an airport in Japan made an impression on the two young women that would span the ocean.

Both Chris and Noriko were participating in the International 4-H Youth Exchange, or IFYE program. Chris had travelled to Japan and Noriko was on her way to the United States when they met. They both had a lot in common because they were from poultry farms.

After that brief encounter, Noriko flew to the U.S. and spent her time from June to August visiting poultry farms in Louisiana. During her two month stay there, she adopted the nickname "Niko".

When she left Louisiana, Niko travelled to Michigan to see the poultry operations there. But, she pointed out that these are generally big corporation farms. Even though she asked a lot of questions, she felt she needed to learn more about the poultry business in the States.

That's when Niko wrote to the National Headquarters of the 4-H Council and asked to visit the Erb farm. "I wanted to work and learn on the farm," she said, "and I told them that the Erbs had both poultry and cows on their farm so I could learn by doing."

The 4-H headquarters agreed, and Niko arrived at the Erbs two weeks ago, arriving a few days ahead of Christine. But, since Chris' arrival, the two young women have been sharing life on the Erb farm and sharing experiences in both Japanese and English.

Niko said that she was surprised at how open the American people are. She said that in Japan the people are more shy and reserved. "You don't smile or talk to strangers."

She also observed that "The American people have automation and food all-ready." She said that she noticed farm families having microwave ovens and easy-to-prepare food.

In contrast, the Japanese "work and don't know how to enjoy life", according to Niko. She said that the mid-west farmer she visited worked hard during the harvest, but took time to play tennis in the evenings to relax.

She also noted that the Japanese eat a lot of fresh vegetables and raw fish. This means that the wife must go to market every day. Canned food is seldom used for preparing meals, and they do very little freezing. And Japanese cooks don't have

microwaves because they are too expensive, she said.

Niko's father owns a poultry farm in Japan. They raise 30,000 layer chickens and 6,000 chicks with the help of three full-time people and three part-time people. Wilbur Erb pointed out that this is a sharp contrast to their farm where one family takes care of 50,000 chickens.

In the Mizuno operation, the chicken houses have only one tier of cages as opposed to the three tiers found in the Erb houses. The Mizuno's gather their eggs by hand instead of by conveyor belt, and they don't have automatic feeders.

Niko said that she felt their houses back home needed some changes. "Chickens need real sunshine and fresh air," she said, "like the houses I saw in Louisiana."

Wilbur Erb quickly explained how the open-house concept used in the southern states would not work here in Pennsylvania because of the cold winters. It would adapt more easily to where Niko lives in central Japan because their climate compares to Virginia and North Carolina.

Northern Japan, around Tokyo, has weather similar to Pennsylvania; and the

southern tip of the island is most areas of the U.S., like Florida. One difference though is that the entire country is more humid than

most areas of the U.S., probably because of the ocean surrounding Japan.

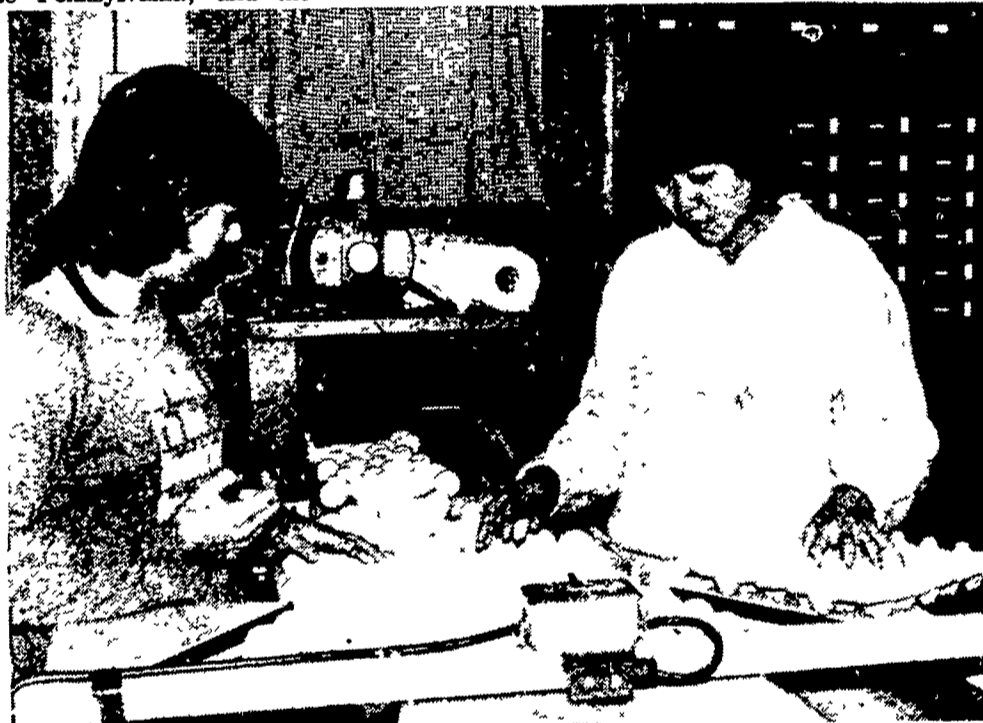
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Noriko Mizuno has spent six months in the U.S. under the I.F.Y.E. program. Japan's national government's 4-H program is known as the Rural Youth Development Association.



Niko requested to visit the Erb farm so that she could learn more about U.S. poultry farms by actually working on one.



Niko and Chris busily sort the eggs as they come off the conveyor belt. The automation in the layer houses is something that Niko said she feels is needed on Japanese poultry farms.

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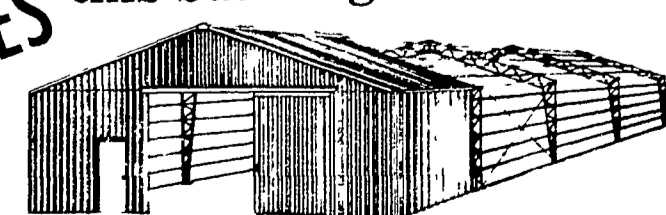


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