

# Staver drops books to show sheep, a family tradition

BY SHEILA MILLER

**PALMYRA** — Getting an animal ready for the Pennsylvania Farm Show takes a lot of time and patience, as any exhibitor from past shows knows. For many people, competing in Harrisburg during the traditionally coldest and snowiest week of the year is an experience they live through once and never again. But for Julia Staver, R.D. 1 Palmyra, this year marks her fifteenth year in competition at Pennsylvania's largest livestock show.

Julie started showing sheep when she joined the Dauphin County 4-H sheep club when she was ten years old. By the time she was twelve, Julie was exhibiting her project lamb at the Farm Show.

Although not always a winner, Julie is proud that she came home with top honors two years in a row. In 1971, she exhibited the champion pen of market lambs. And in 1972, she showed the grand champion market lamb. That lamb sold for \$32 a pound, which Julie said was a Farm Show record then and still may be the highest price paid for a lamb at the Harrisburg show.

Showing sheep is a

tradition for the Staver family. Julie's parents bought a few grade sheep after they were married and moved to their 130 acre farm near Hershey. When Julie and her older brother Chuck joined the 4-H club, the Stavers invested in purebred Hampshire stock.

After a short time, Julie said, her brother became interested in the Dorset breed. He travelled to see the secretary of the Continental Dorset club and bought four of the culled ewes. One of these original ewes is the predominant maternal ancestor to the Stavers' flock of fifty ewes.

Through the years, the Stavers bred the horns off their flock by using polled rams. Julie says that they still have some sheep with scurs and bits of fine horn. "If it's a good sheep, it doesn't matter if it's scurred. We're going to keep it," she added.

The advantage to having a polled flock, Julie noted, is the sheep are easier to handle. They don't get caught in the hay feeders or fences. "You always have one that doesn't come out of the barn and you just know that she's stuck in the hay-feeder. So, you always have to go in the barn and twist

her head to get her loose," she said.

Over the years, the Stavers' flock has grown and improved. Julie stated that they were careful not to sell the best of their purebred stock in order to maintain their herd quality. "You have to be ruthless about what you keep and sell."

Selecting the best qualities in Dorset sheep is not always an easy job, especially for the judge at Farm Show. This year, the Stavers' will be entering six or seven breeding sheep and one carcass lamb.

"The carcass class is tough for the judge," Julie said, "because the sheep are judged on foot, then butchered and hung out front on display. We like to kid the judge when a lamb that placed last on foot is hung up in the top five carcasses."

Julie recalled that the toughest class she remembers during her years in 4-H was the blocking and showing competition. She explained that each contestant was given an hour to fit up a sheep that looked terrible. Julie won the contest one year, and didn't compete again. She said her philosophy was after winning something once, get out and let someone else win. Sheep aren't the only

animals that Julie has shown. She was a member of the 4-H dairy club, and had a Holstein calf for a project. She raised her heifer, bred her and showed the calf.

"My heifer never did well as a 4-H calf," Julie explained, "because she was always too big and too awkward." She later sold the heifer to Ray Seidel of Berks County and the "too-big" heifer was to become an All-American Aged cow.

Julie's life and experience on the farm is an asset to her in her studies at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine. She is in her second semester of her second year as a veterinary student. After graduation in 1982, Julie hopes to be able to set up a practice in a rural community where she will take care of everyone's animals, large and small.

Julie said she prefers to work with large animals but realized the necessities of not limiting her practice. She stated that a woman vet may not be accepted in many communities, except as a small animal doctor. She quickly pointed out that the idea that a woman cannot handle large animals was ridiculous.

"Let's face it, a man can get hurt if he tries to wrestle



Julie Staver takes time out of her busy schedule to help show her families Dorset sheep at this year's Farm Show. She has been showing sheep since she was ten years old.

with a horse or a cow," she said. "A woman probably wouldn't get into a situation where she can get hurt because she knows the limits

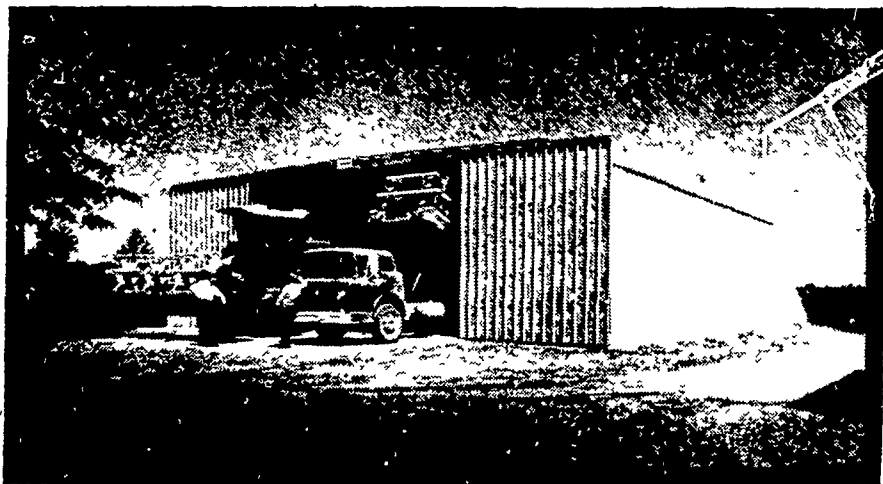
of her strength." She said that with the modern equipment and better facilities today, there are

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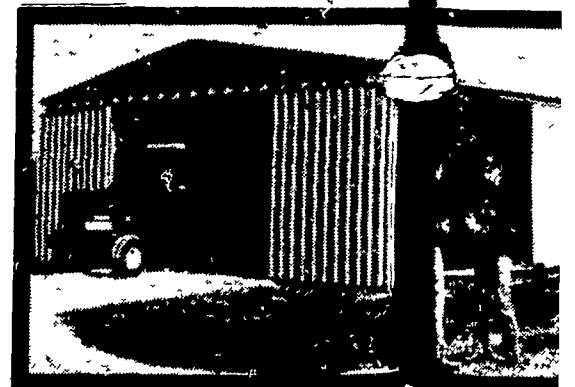
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