

Verna Noll is flying high with her new duties

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

For Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Noll, 201 Rohrerstown Road, Lancaster, flying their Piper two-seater airplane is as natural as getting into the family car and driving to the store. So it is no surprise that Verna should be honored as Pennsylvania's Flying Farmer Queen for 1980.

The nomination to be queen came unexpectedly for this grandmother, but she says, "I'm really excited about it and so are the children." She was crowned at the 14th annual convention at Beaver Falls in March.

To be chosen as the flying farmer queen, a woman must live on a farm and the couple must own their own plane. The Nolls are qualified on both counts. They have their own private landing strip nestled in their fields between Two Guys Department Store and Stauffer's of Kissel Hill near Rohrerstown. The wind sock on their silo is a familiar sight to people who travel the busy Rohrerstown Road.

The Nolls are long-time members of the Pennsylvania Flying Farmers, an organization which numbers about 200. To become a full-fledged member, a flying farmer must get over 51 percent of his income from farming. Nationally, there are over 2,000 members of the International Flying Farmers organization, which includes Canada and Mexico.

June 21 has been designated "Queen's Day" for the Flying Farmers, and members will be traveling to the Noll farm that day to meet with the queen and her family. It will also be a pilot up-grading day, the Nolls explained, and pilots will be taking their annual proficiency tests (APT) which are required of flying farmer members.

One of the things Verna is now learning to do is to become proficient at "Landits" which means she will be qualified to land an airplane. She will encourage other Flying Farmers' wives to become qualified at Landits. She talked about her other duties, "I will also be hostess at Fly-Ins and attend the regular monthly meeting. I will welcome old and new members."

While she does not have an interest in learning to fly herself, Verna says, "I go along with Bob a lot of the time. I enjoy going along, but I never really cared to learn to fly." When asked how she feels about her husband's flying, she answered, "I know he's happy doing it. He loves to fly."

Homestead Notes

Flying is not new to them. Noll says, "I've been flying for at least 30 years, and the airstrip was put in in 1949."

He recalls that he became interested in flying as a young man when basic instruction was given to pilots during World War II at the old Lancaster Airport, located where Landis Brothers now stands on the Manheim Pike. "One evening after work, in 1945, we went for our first lesson," he recalls, adding that it cost \$5 per hour for the plane and \$3 for the instructor. Now, Noll says, it would cost about \$42 an hour.

"I was at it for three years before I got my private license. We only went when we had money." At the time, he pointed out, he was working for his Dad and was being paid 12 cents per hour.

Noll purchased his first plane in 1949. It was a Piper J3, and cost \$600 as a two-year-old plane. He got his present "Super Cub" in 1958.

Despite his obvious enthusiasm for the flying, he says, "I don't fly more than 50 hours a year." He also admits, "I'm a fair weather pilot."

Most flying farmers own airplanes for a combination of business and pleasure. Since airplanes are certainly not a necessity for this part of Pennsylvania, Noll says he uses it for business but flies mostly for pleasure. "Not many people do things just for fun," he says with a smile.

In the Midwest and the West, Noll observes, "They use their planes to check cattle. Their plane is as important to them as their combines. They often fly into town for supplies. We're so close to everything that we don't have that much opportunity to use the plane."

The Nolls farm 44 acres at their home on the Rohrerstown Road. They have broilers and raise hogs and steers, along with corn and wheat. Their son, C. Robert, works with them and farms near Mountville. The airplane is frequently used for short trips to the second farm.

Verna is a busy farmwife, being actively involved in Farm Women Society 18, and in the Black Rock Auxiliary,



Verna and Bob Noll enjoy taking a quick airplane trip in good weather. Here they prepare to take off in their Piper Super Cub at their landing strip near Rohrerstown.



The Nolls' airplane is as important to them as a car is to most people. It is often used for short trips and for pleasure trips. They both agree it is a

terrific way to see the beautiful areas in central Pennsylvania.



When she was selected as Flying Farmer Queen, Verna was crowned by the outgoing queen and received roses and a trophy from Cessna. The 1980 queen will represent the Flying Farmers and participate in their activities.

the Rohrerstown Fire Company Auxiliary and the Rohrerstown Mennonite Church.

She is very much at home in her kitchen, enjoying baking and cooking. She also likes to sew and maintains a small garden. She grew up on a farm in the Lititz area.

One of her big interests, not surprisingly, is that she likes to travel, although much of her travel, far and wide, has been done by commercial airline. A favorite trip in their private plane is to Harrisonburg, Virginia, to visit their daughter and her family. The Nolls have three daughters and a son, and six grandchildren.

Verna will attend functions like Ag Progress Days where she will tell the story of the Flying Farmers, and she hopes to do as last year's Queen did by attending the Farm Show and having brunch with Governor Thornburgh.

Another opportunity for Verna as Pennsylvania's Flying Farmer Queen, will be attending the national convention in San Diego where she will participate in a contest for the International Flying Farmer Queen title, along with 49 contestants.

One of the big advantages of membership in the Flying Farmers, according to Verna, is that it is a family organization, "where members get to know families. We have programs that appeal to all family members."

Bob characterized their meetings as "interesting and educational. We always have a chapter meeting, then tour areas of interest."

The objective of the flying farmer organization is "to sponsor education and research in agriculture and aviation." They also work toward the development of public acceptance of light aircraft and want to encourage the use of "close-in" landing strips for towns and cities.

The flying farmers promote safe flying through pilot proficiency checks and educational clinics and they work toward obtaining favorable legislation for the safety and economy of general aviation.



Verna Noll enjoys cooking and baking in her farm kitchen and will combine her role as farm homemaker with her duties as Flying Farmer Queen.



As the Flying Farmer Queen, Verna acquired a scrapbook of previous winners, along with other general information. Here she looks it over in her farm kitchen.

While regulations are not a problem in Pennsylvania, Noll pointed out that more and more air space is becoming controlled, which means that the ordinary guy who wants to fly for fun has to purchase more and more expensive equipment to fly within this controlled airspace.

Furthermore, Noll noted that in the West, where flying is more a necessity to check out huge ranching operations, regulations are establishing the necessity of having huge fuel tanks on farms. Gas suppliers are reluctant to deliver and farmers cannot afford huge reserves.

Members of the Flying Farmers, Noll explained, also receive a 10 percent discount on their insurance.

For Verna, the prospect of representing Pennsylvania's Flying Farmers is an unexpected pleasure and one she is looking forward to. With flying so important to their lives, she is anxious to tell others about the joys of flying.