

Experience, persistence and training land ag jobs

BY DORIS HENRIQUE
NEWARK, Del. — During a recent panel discussion sponsored by the Agricultural College Council of the University of Delaware, five women graduates of the University's College of Agricultural Sciences talked about their present careers and described how they got the jobs they now hold. Included on the panel were a soil conservationist, a veterinarian, an entomologist, a farm loan officer and a laboratory

researcher with a major chemical company. They said it took good preparation and lots of persistence to get where they are now. Plus knowing the ropes, when it came to job-hunting in their particular fields. But the effort was well worth it, they all agreed.

What kinds of careers exist for women in agriculture? A wide range of challenging opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, said panel members.

Soil specialist Debbie Tarburton works out of the

U.S. Soil Conservation Service's Dover field office, helping local governments and individuals solve soil-related problems. A 1976 graduate of the University with a B.S. in plant science, she surveys, designs and stakes out sites for the creation of ponds, dams and ditches. She began as a part-time student trainee for SCS while still in college. She took a number of engineering courses then which gave her much needed skills for the work she does today.

One of her present assignments is to survey agricultural waste systems in Kent county. She is meeting pollution-control standards. She said she spends a good bit of her time in hip boots on this all-weather, outdoor job. The work is strenuous but satisfying.

Tarburton is Delaware's first woman soil conservationist. But the field is opening up more all the time to women, she said. Advancement in this profession requires considerable mobility. You could be assigned a post anywhere from Tunisia to California. For some women, this may be a limitation—especially if, as she is, they're married to a farmer and thus more or less tied to the land.

Another panelist, Marie Stuart, holds an M.S. degree in plant pathology from the University of Delaware, as well as certificates to teach both English and biology. At one time she considered becoming an extension agent. "But coming from urban north Wilmington, I didn't think I'd have the necessary rapport with farmers," she explained.

Instead, she nailed down a job as a researcher, screening agricultural chemicals for the duPont Company. Over the past three years she's seen a growing number of women enter her field.

Pregnant now, she said she plans to re-enter the job market after her baby is born—possibly working on the registration of new agricultural chemicals for EPA.

Entomologist Lynn Harrison took two and a half years to find the job she's got with Delaware's Department of Agriculture, but is glad she persevered. "It's not a job for fancy clothes and hairdos," she told the young women gathered to hear the panel talk about career possibilities in agriculture. "But it's great for a woman who's not interested in being tied to a desk." About half her time is spent with agricultural crops. The other half is devoted to dealing with insect problems on garden plants and nursery stock.

This summer she'll be working on several biological control programs, including one aimed at control of the Mexican bean beetle on soybeans, another designed to prevent the spread of the gypsy moth in Delaware, and one for control of cereal leaf beetle on small grains.

Harrison and her husband recently bought an 88-acre farm outside of Kenton. In her free time she helps him work this. They raise corn and soybeans, as well as some livestock.

There are many opportunities for women entomologists at both the state and federal level in the areas



Entomologist Lynn Harrison finds her post with Delaware Department of Natural Resources a welcome challenge. The job involves helping control insect pests on field crops and nursery stock. She says more and more women are seeking careers in agriculture.



Lea Tammi and her friend, a pet mackaw, Tammi, who runs a small animal hospital near Newark, is one of several women vets practicing in New Castle county.

of conservation, forestry and mosquito control, she said. But you need to be willing to move around to get them. In many cases, that's also the only way to advance. For those interested in entering this field, she recommended a college degree in either entomology and plant pathology, or entomology and applied ecology. Other possible jobs available with this training are lawn and garden center work, sales and research, pest extermination, or work with a chemical, fertilizer or seed company. But based on her own experience, it can take time to find what you want.

Eleanor Laws' ag degree got her a job as a farm loan

officer with the Farmers Home Administration's Dover office. This rural credit agency makes low to moderate income housing loans and also lends farmers money to buy and operate farms, install irrigation, ditching and make other improvements.

If she had it to do over again, she said she would probably take more agricultural economics courses—her major was animal science. Even so, she has done well on the job and recently was reassigned as a district supervisor stationed in the FHA office in Chestertown, Md. She said more women are entering

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