

## Patti Johnson puts her love of dairy to the test

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Although farm women have had a place in the barn during milking time for as long as cows have been domesticated for their milk, only recently have women taken up the specified occupations relating to dairy farming such as veterinary medicine and milk sampling and testing to name a few jobs.

More and more women are taking their training and talents and applying them to once all-male employment areas. Patti Johnson, a twenty-one year old lass from York County has been a Dairy Herd Improvement Association Supervisor for the last eighteen months in neighboring Lancaster County. An interview with her recently at her home near Airville, Southern York County, gave her the opportunity to explain her reasons for undertaking this job and to share some of her experiences.

Patti has always been close to the dairy industry from a personal standpoint because she is the daughter of a dairy farmer. Patti and her two brothers and two sisters have grown up on the registered Holstein dairy farm in Lower Chanceford Township owned by their parents Mr. and Mrs. T. Edwin Johnson.

Patti, being the oldest of the family's children, took a serious interest in the work on the farm from an early age. And when she attended Red Lion High School she participated in the FFA programs available to her. She specialized in the dairy calf, cow and herd projects during her high school years. At the same time she also, along with the rest of her brothers and sisters, became involved in the 4-H dairy club in the area. Remarking that although she and her brothers and sisters did not always have the top ranking animals at the shows, she said, "It was good training for us, it was good for us to work on our animals and show them anyway."

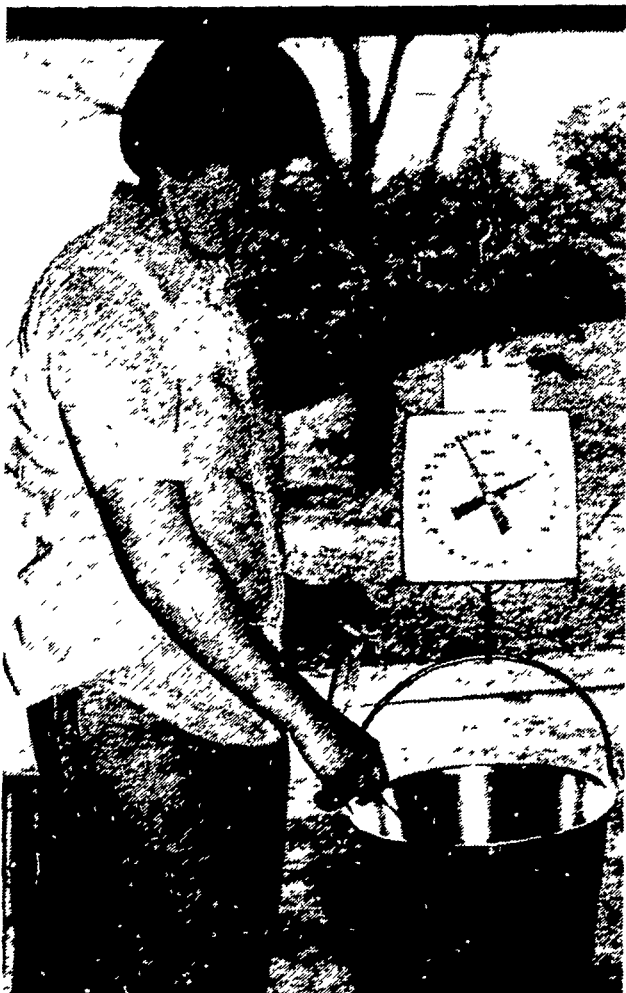
Never being one to skip out on the work at hand, Patti has readily taken her share of the workload for granted and gone on to complete her tasks with energy. Even now when she keeps long hours as a supervisor for the association, she still puts in a lot of time helping with the chores at home. Not one to say much about herself, Patti did admit that perhaps it was her farm background which helped her to be chosen to fill a vacancy in the Lancaster County Association supervisor's staff in October of 1978.

Prior to answering an ad in Lancaster Farming concerning the job vacancy, Patti had worked since high school at a restaurant and at a farm supply store near her home. She recalled that some time before she saw the ad, there had been a similar vacancy in York County as well. She said, "I guess I was just out of school and had not really decided in time to answer the ad. When I saw the Lancaster County vacancy I decided to apply for the job."

"I called the head supervisor, Wilbur Houser, filled out the necessary forms and went for my interview with Wilbur Houser and a County Agent Alan Bair," she continued. "About a week later I was hired for the job," she added.

The job requirements Patti applied for and hoped to accomplish were well known to her because her father had been a part of the York DHIA for some time. Since Patti routinely helped with the milking on her parents' farm she had ample opportunity to see a testing supervisor (a term Patti says sounds very prestigious - too much so for her modest character) at work.

For those who do not know what a DHIA supervisor



Patti is shown setting up the testing equipment part of her job as DHIA supervisor for some of the herds in Lancaster County.

Packing away the tools of her trade into the car trunk, Patti gets ready to go to the next Lancaster County herd for testing.



## Homestead Notes

does, Patti explained that her task is to contact participating herds assigned to her for monthly visits to the farm during milking time to weigh and record total pounds of milk produced by each cow, take a sample of each cow's milk, properly package and identify each sample for each cow, record feed amounts and costs, breeding and freshening dates and other information pertinent to the computing of the actual production and profit or loss of each cow in each herd she is assigned to.

Since she must go to the various farms during the regular milking time (some twice a month) for one night and then the following morning milking, Patti's daily schedule is never the same. She gets up any time from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. and returns home from the evenings milkings any where from late afternoon to after eight o'clock at night.

Sometimes, she says, she is at a farm for as long as eight hours during the day and on other farms she may only be there a few hours. The time she must be on the farm depends on the number of cows being milked in the herd and the individual dairyman's management of the milking operation.

Her ability to work with so many variables such as ever changing hours, commuting to different farms each day and getting along with so many different personalities is second nature to Patti now that she has worked this year and one-half.

Another aspect of her job which also changes daily, or almost daily in most cases, is the method or equipment she uses from one herd to the next to weigh and sample the milk. Patti has 29 herds she tests at night and the following morning. She also has one herd which tests only one milking a month. In addition she has ten herds which are called owner sampler where the samples are taken by someone on the farm other than the DHIA supervisor. Of these thirty herds to which she goes to take the samples and record the milk weights, eleven have pipeline milking systems which require meters to be installed during testing to properly measure the amount of milk coming from each cow while being milked.

Ten other herds do not have pipelines so Patti takes a bucket and spring scales to these herds to hand weigh the milk. Several other herds are milked in parlors where weigh jars are a standard part of the milking system and only require proper reading and recording of milk weights and drawing out a sample. Some dairymen have their own meters which are nice for Patti she says because she does not have to carry them to and from the farm or need to

wash them up. "The bucket and scales system keeps me warm in winter, she quipped, implying that the extra movements involved in lifting, pouring and dipping from buckets and scales keeps her busy.

No matter the equipment she uses at each farm, Patti records the pounds of milk and takes the samples to be later tested for butterfat and records the herd information required. Then when she gets back home sometime in the middle part of the day from the morning milking, she packages and wraps the records and samples to be ready for United Parcel to deliver to Penn State to be tested and finally recorded on a computer readout. The computerized information for each cow in the herd and herd information is then mailed directly to the dairy farmer. The monthly testing records tell the dairyman the amount of milk per cow produced, the amount of butterfat per cow, the profit over feed costs and many other factors helping dairymen to better manage their herds.

Patti says she likes the idea that her job helps people to keep their records and plan their dairy operations and she likes working around farm animals and on farms. Some day she would like to have her own farm, she said. Right now she is kept busy testing six days a week at other dairy farms, helping with the field work and chores on her parents farm and milking at home on Sundays.

Patti says she likes the field work best of all the work on the home farm. Her parents have corn silage, baled hay and haylage as their main crop work. They own ninety acres and rent eighty more from neighboring landowners. The Johnsons feed their crops to their registered Holstein herd, one half of which is polled. Patti said her father hopes to eventually have the entire herd polled.

Patti's sister Abbe has been testing in York County since last October, starting one year after Patti did in Lancaster County. Their younger sister Edwina and two younger brothers Chip and Keel all help out on the farm.

When Patti leaves the farm in the morning or early afternoon to go to test some herd in Lancaster County she packs up the papers, scales, buckets, plastic sample packets and the rest of the necessary equipment into the trunk of her sporty Trans-Am and heads out the lane. Her closest herd is eleven miles away and her furthest herd is twenty-five miles away. Patti is one of sixteen Lancaster County supervisors. Although she is young, small of build and a woman as well, she says she has encountered no problems in her job related to being all three.