

British farm visitor finds same language, different ideas

BY SALLY BAIR
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For Peter Lee, being in the United States is a dream come true. "I've always wanted to come to America — America is my dream," he said.

Peter, 25, is visiting in Lancaster County through the International 4-H Youth Exchange program, and could not be happier. "I'm very happy just to be here. This is super—fantastic," he says of the program.

After his arrival in the United States on May 11, Peter spent three days in Washington, D.C., then traveled to Lycoming County where he had three host families. In Lancaster he is spending two weeks with the Elvin Brenneman family, Mount Joy, and will spend two weeks with the Curtis Akers family, Quarryville R.D. before leaving the Commonwealth and traveling for Montana for the second half of his visit to this country.

Peter is enthusiastic about Pennsylvania and feels pretty much at home here, saying it reminds him of his native southeastern England.

"The countryside is so beautiful. Here is it very much like southern England. I was afraid I'd miss the trees, but there are lots of trees."

"I'm having a wonderful time. People are so friendly. I want to learn and people open up to me," he says with pleasure. Peter's good natured sense of humor surfaces repeatedly, and with his instinct for learning, he seems the perfect candidate for an international exchange.

Peter has been a member of Young Farmers for many years, and it is that organization that sponsors him as an IFYE. This is not the first year he applied to come to the United States.

He explained, "I tried when I was 21 and when I was 22, but I didn't make it. Finally last year I wanted to come so I flew to California and joined a group called Trek America. We traveled through the southern states to New York. I met so many people and people were so friendly.

"When I got home I decided I would make one last try. It was my last crack at the whip. I thought the fact that I'd been here would go against me but I think it went the other way. I learned more and I knew why I wanted to come."

He explained that to become an IFYE from the United Kingdom an applicant must pass three different interviews, at the county, regional and state level. There were 28 people who made it to the national level and four were selected.

"We have exchanges with 36 countries and now have 200 people abroad, but initial interest in the American IFYE program was about 300 people," he said.

While Peter is active in the Young Farmers, he was not raised on a farm. His father is a banker. Nonetheless, he has extensive knowledge of farming, having worked on farms after graduation from school. He first worked on a 1000 acre farm, saying, "It was great fun, but it was factory farming. It was a business."

After that he worked on a 60-acre, 40-cow operation which was more to his liking, but eventually the farm was sold and became part of a 700-acre farm.

While attending a Young Farmer convention, Peter chatted with the principle of the local agricultural college who persuaded him he ought to attend.

"I'm glad I did," Peter states. "College isn't only formal education. You learn a lot about yourself. I was there for a year and graduated with credit. I was quite happy with that."

When he completed his college credits he went to work for six months on a dairy operation near his home, but eventually gave up farming to become a charter bus driver.

He said he decided to make the change because "there was too much of the world to see. England is not very big, but I did not know much of England. I thought 'This can't be right.' I think you can make the world as big or as small as you want too. I looked for a job where I could get to see the countryside."

While he thoroughly enjoyed his bus driving, when he came to the United States he gave up his job. "Six months is a long time and I thought it wasn't fair to expect to hold on to it," he explains.

Homestead Notes

Agriculture in England differs somewhat from here, but not greatly. Peter says, "We grow basically the same crops, except that we grow no corn for grain. Our 'maize' we grow only for the silo."

He adds quickly that upright silos are not common in England.

"Back home if you have a silo you are a very big farmer. We dump our silage on concrete pads and cover it with plastic. But here it seems the first thing a farmer does is build a silo. Everybody has a silo."

Near his home, farmers grow a lot of wheat, barley and oats and "a lot of grass for hay and for the silo." He continues, "I think we tend to put cows out for grass more than here."

Although alfalfa is grown, he says he has only seen it dried into pellets not baled into hay as is the custom here. He adds, however, "I think alfalfa is the crop of the future, with fertilizer going up in price so dramatically."



Peter Lee says he "loves" cows. Here he poses with some of the Brenneman herd in the background.



Peter Lee relaxes on the Brenneman's porch while reading Lancaster Farming.



Corn for grain is something unknown in the United Kingdom. Peter stands by some of the Elvin Brenneman's corn as he visits with the Brenneman family on the first half of his stay in Lancaster County.

He said most farms are family farms and explained, "There was a tendency a few years ago to specialize, but with farming so unpredictable people like to have a little of everything."

He states, "I'm really impressed with the agriculture here as a whole. There is not a lot of wasted land; it is well farmed. All the farmers seem to take care with their farms."

He would not hazard a guess as to the average farm size in the United Kingdom, simply saying, "It is very difficult to say an average because we go from nothing to 200 or 300 acres. Most dairy herds are between 80 and 100 cows and they are milked in parlors. There are only a few pipelines. 'Economics are dictating larger herds,' he added.

Dairying is what Peter enjoys, except for the demand of the milking hours.

He said he feels there are more registered cows in this country, but points out that the Black and White Holsteins in this country originated in Germany, while the Friesians of England are native to Holland.

"The Friesians are the predominant breed. A good proportion of dairy herds are not using artificial insemination, and we buy a lot of semen from Canada."

In the United Kingdom there is one milk marketing board which acts as a single cooperative for dairy farmers. "Farmers have to sell to them and they have to buy it," Peter states. "Everybody gets a fair price. It is run by farmers for farmers."

Peter said it is his impression that at home they consume more dairy products than in this country. He said, "We use more cream, butter and cheese. The three of us at home use 10-12 pints of milk a week."

He pointed out that English farmers get about \$12 per hundred for milk, but adds, "Our feed is much more expensive. We pay about \$200 a ton for feed."

At this point Peter explains the difficulty of translating money and amounts from one language to another. For

instance, in the United Kingdom they use an Imperial gallon which is slightly larger than an American gallon.

There is also the necessity of translating pounds to dollars, and in the end, Peter notes, "It's very difficult to start talking about why prices are higher in England. We must talk in 'real terms,' and in 'real terms' do we pay that much more?"

In discussing the high prices in England, Peter laughs and says, "To me England is the norm, and America is cheap."

He added, "I'd love to have the standard of living you have here. I think people live very well over here, and luxury goods are probably more expensive in England. Food is very cheap here. At home we pay \$5.00-\$6.00 a pound for steak. And a meal at MacDonalds would cost \$3.50 for one person."

Because of his recent experience in this country, Peter said he didn't bring many clothes with him. "Clothes here are half price," he said.

Before he came to this country, Peter said it had been his impression that the English were more conserving than Americans. However, he said, if the average family drives from 8000 to 10,000 miles a year it is about the same as in the United Kingdom.

He said he pays about over \$3 for an Imperial gallon, which is larger than American gallons. For the same amount, their price is about double the price here.

Peter had the unusual experience of being in this country over the Fourth of July, as Americans celebrated

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