

French agricultural student spends a month in Lancaster County

Veronica Chable is comfortable in southern Lancaster County

BY SALLY BAIR
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Veronique Chable is a French agricultural student who is spending a month on a southern Lancaster County dairy farm. She has found few surprises after all, her father drives the same kind of tractor as her host family and there are the same kind of milking machines to be found on French dairy farms.

Nevertheless, she is finding the experience valuable, saying, "It is good to see this country. In France we imagine what it is like, and it is interesting to see for myself."

Twenty-one-year-old Veronique is staying in the home of Bill and Evelyn Suydam, R1 Quarryville, and their three children, Isaac, 4½, Leona, 3, and Clayton, 1. She works along with them on their farm, but they have taken her to neighboring farms and plan to show her more while she is here. Evelyn said, "She knows the basics, but we want to take her to different farms and give her a view of as many different kinds of agriculture as we can."

Veronique is at home in the Maine region of France which is south of Normandy. Her father farms approximately 185 acres of wheat, corn and rape. The family feeds about 20 steers on some land that they cannot cultivate, and her mother raises rabbits which are marketed for meat. Her mother has 100 female rabbits, and a buyer visits the farm every two weeks, Veronique said.

In the region where she lives, Veronique relates that it is common for farmers to rent land, and rented farms are generally larger than farms which are owned. She said that farms are rented from aristocratic families who have large land holdings, and the right to farm is inherited by the son in the family much as ownership would be. If a farmer should not have an heir, he can designate the person whom he would like to have follow in his footsteps—a nephew, perhaps or some other relative. In the case of the Chable family, Veronique's 19-year-old brother will inherit the right to farm. Her father had inherited his right from his father.

Veronique explained that farm rental is long-term, with an 18-year lease and an almost guaranteed right to renew. She said further that it would be very difficult for her father to rent additional acreage because, according to law, preference is given to a person who is not in farming.

This policy is in line with the government's wish to keep small farms operating. Veronique said the disappearance of small, traditional farms is a problem in France, but that the government has taken steps to keep more from disappearing. She echoed words heard frequently in this country with regard to farming operations. "It is not possible to live on small farms; they must get bigger and bigger. To get money for farming from a bank, you must have a diploma in agriculture. It is more and more difficult."

The government's policy on land use, Veronique said, was developed within the last few years. She states, "There is not much land in France." In fact, France is about five times the size of Pennsylvania, according to some hasty research done by the Suydams, and its population is more than 50 million.

Veronique explained that her father markets his corn directly from the field because he would need a dryer if he were to store it and that would be very expensive. Wheat, on the other hand, is stored and marketed through April or May. She said farmers use both cooperatives and private

Veronique Chable, left, and her host Evelyn Suydam look over some Dairy Herd Improvement records. Veronique is visiting from France in an effort to learn more about agriculture in Pennsylvania, and will stay on the Suydam's dairy farm for one month.



merchants, and prices are dependent upon the European Economic Community.

While Veronique has not yet decided what kind of job she wants to have when she graduates, she says that she will be able to choose from any number of jobs because she will have a degree in agricultural engineering. Eventually, she says, "I should like to have a farm." In the meantime she will work for another farmer or in an ag-related industry. "We can do many things with our diploma," she states. "We can do every job in agriculture."

Homestead Notes

She is attending a "Grand Ecole" for which she needed to take a competitive exam which included such subjects as math, biology, physics and other science. There are 400 positions in the several "Grand Ecole" throughout France, and entrance is given according to top scores.

While job hunting was easier about four or five years ago, Veronique said graduates from her school do not have difficulty getting jobs because the school's reputation is so good. She said it is not like attending a university where any student can be admitted.

Being a woman in agricultural schools is not difficult for Veronique, but she said the female students were ad-



Helping with the milking is one of the chores Veronique has learned since her arrival two weeks ago. Although she had never milked a cow, she now helps regularly with milking chores.

mitted just 10 years ago, and then only one or two. Slowly more girls became students there, and today there are 30 women studying agriculture. "Every year there are more and more," she says.

Just as in this country, Veronique states, "More and more women work outside the home in France." She is looking forward to a career, but she adds, "I should like to live on a farm because then I can work and have children."

Although she has never lived on a dairy farm, Veronique proudly says, "Now I know how to milk cows." She works along with the Suydams whenever possible, although August is a time when little field work is being done. One of her favorite jobs, she admits, is feeding the calves in their hutches. This is one new idea she will take back to France with her.

Dairy farms here are very similar to dairy operations in France, although Veronique says only very large farms have silos because they are so expensive.

Veronique said, "I am not surprised to see that all is bigger here. That I knew. It is very easy to adapt to life here." Evelyn adds, "She has accepted our way very well."

Veronique feels that the way of living is much the same in the two countries, especially on the farm, but was surprised about the importance of a car to American



Veronique's favorite job on the farm is feeding the calves in their hutches. She says raising calves in hutches is one new idea she will take with her when she returns. In other respects, dairy farms in France do not differ much from American dairy farms.