

Mother, son team earn Master Farmer titles

BLAIN — A Perry County mother and son, who for years have been operating one of the most efficient farming operations in the state, have been named Master Farmers for 1980.

Mary and Nevin Rice, of R1, Blain, will receive the coveted award next month and will be inducted into the Pennsylvania Master Farmers' Association whose membership consists of all former award winners since the program was established in 1927.

The Rices combine a dairy and steer feeding operation on their 325-acre farm. Their 78-cow registered Holstein herd is a state leader in production with an average of 17,500 pounds of milk and 713 pounds of butterfat.

Another income producer is steer raising. The steers are housed with the heifers until they weigh 600 pounds, then are separated and fed to market weight using high moisture corn. They weigh about 1100 pounds at 15 to 18 months and often top the Carlisle market.

Crops to feed all cattle include 124 acres of corn, 77 acres of alfalfa, 32 acres of wheat, 20 acres of oats, and 15 acres of soybeans. All crops are highly productive, especially those in irrigated areas.

Mary Rice, considered the "cow lady," started the current 78-cow milking herd with 12 cow purchased at her father's sale in 1938. At 70, she is the first to reach the barn each morning to start the milking chores. She and Kenneth, a bachelor brother, milk the cows.

Nevin feeds the 200 cows, young cattle, and dairy steers. His wife, Ann, looks after the calves. But all four may be milking before they finish chores and go to breakfast.

Also helping are Nevin and Ann's two children, George, 18, and Beth Ann, 14. George is full time and concentrates on field and machinery work. Beth fits chores around school activities.

"My family always came first," Mary says. "When my mother died in 1927, I left school at 16 to help my

father. My duties included working in the fields with horses and mules. I did everything but plow."

After she married George Rice, the young couple farmed for her father until they purchased the farm in 1945. Early advocates of artificial breeding, the Rices improved the original herd without purchasing outside cows.

Today the herd is enrolled in a herd analysis program and cows are classified on disposition, milkout, stature, strength, and conformation.

Mary became the sole proprietor of Blain-View Farm in 1957 when her husband died. Nevin was in high school and with assistance from relatives, she maintained the operation until he finished school and helped to take over management of the farm.

With Nevin and Mary combining their interests, cow numbers more than doubled and another farm was purchased. An irrigation system was developed in the 1960's. Two new silos were constructed to store forages.

"The cows receive a haylage-corn silage mixture in the feed bunk and a ration of alfalfa and grass hay is fed at noon and nights during the winter," Nevin notes. "The grain ration is computerized with shelled corn making up two-thirds of the mixture."

Home-cooked soybeans, oats, linseed oil, and such essentials as dicalcium phosphate, molasses, limestone, salt, yeast, vitamins, and selenium also are added to the concentrate mixture for the milking cows. Dry cows, heifers, and steers receive different rations.

The land is worked carefully. Soybeans have been double-cropped with barley since 1972. Oats and corn are planted by the no-till method.

Irrigation water is drawn from a one-acre, spring-fed pond. And the increases in yield made the labor of moving the pipe very beneficial, the Master



Mary and Nevin Rice, R1 Blain, have combined their skills and energies into one of the state's top dairy and steer feeding operations. Both mother

and son have been selected as 1980 master Farmers.

Farmer adds Corn averaged 150 bushels per acre on irrigated land and 80 on land beyond reach of the pipes during periods of low rainfall.

Outside activities are a big advocacy on the Rice farm. Mary is a member of the state and national Holstein associations and Blain Zion Lutheran Church where she was secretary, treasurer, and vice president of various church groups. She's a long-time member of the church choir and Blain Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary.

Nevin, 39, has been president and treasurer of the Perry County Extension Executive Committee, chairman of Agway's Store and Petroleum Committee, and member of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association. Farm Management and Business Analysis Service Committee. He also has been director of the county DHIA and Northeastern Breeders Association.

Nevin served as township

auditor and is currently township supervisor. He is a member of the Lutheran

Church and served two terms on the church council. He has shown his skills by winning the county plowing contest three times and

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