

Glenn Miller and his daughter Melinda, are partners on this Bedford County farm. The building

on the left houses the milking parlor.



Melinda and her father Glenn go over some milking records. Melinda says, "We get along well and discuss almost everything before we do it."

Homestead Notes

Partnerships take a pleasant change

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

WOODBURY — When Glenn Miller started farming 28 years ago he had a dream much like that of other dairy farmers - to own and operate a successful dairy production and someday share it with the next generation.

After the birth of two sons, Larry and Robert, and the growth of his dairy herd, his dream seemed well on its way to becoming a reality.

Well, folks, it has come true - but with a slightly different, yet, modern twist. Instead of a partnership with one of his sons, Glenn works beside, confides in, and plans a partnership with his youngest daughter, 22-year-old Melinda.

"My brothers never took an interest in the farm the way I did," Melinda says. "I always helped in the barn and the fields when I was younger and I grew to enjoy the freedom farming offers. When I went to Penn State, I decided farming is what I wanted to do so I majored in ag business."

Before college however, Melinda spent many mornings, evenings, weekends and summer vacations milking cows.

"I used to help milk every morning before I went to school and every evening I'd go straight home to help out. I've never held any other job. I've never needed to," Melinda beams.

But what's it like, being another boss on the farm and having your opinion count as though the decision depended on you?

"It's great. My dad and I really get along and we discuss everything before we do it. We never have any disagreements and he listens to any ideas I have to offer," she said.

"The only time there are any problems is when salesmen or other people come here and ask for the boss. They never believe I am one and when I finally convince them, they automatically assume I don't know anything."

However this dedication to the farm helped her receive the title of FFA sweetheart at Northern Bedford High School her senior year, 1976.

After high school she started college at the Altoona campus. She commuted so she could return home to the farm every day.

When she received her associate degree in 1979, she was voted the representative to accept the degree for all associate degree recipients at her graduation ceremony.

"After graduation I was happy to come back to the farm

because I like the country and I like the idea of being my own boss," she said.

The Miller Farm she returned to, known in the area as the Blue Ridge Farm, is nestled in a large valley between the Appalachian Mountains in west-central Pennsylvania, off Hickory Bottom Road, and down a dirt lane three-quarters of a mile in length.

The valley, known as Morrison's Cove is famous for its fertile farmland and sets on the southern end of Blair County. It extends into the northern part of Bedford County.

"We own 400 acres of the cove, 195 of it is woodland and 205 is tillable land," Melinda said. The majority of their farmland is used for alfalfa and corn.

But Glenn Miller and his daughter Melinda as partners is not the only thing the cove farmers are talking about. The Miller homestead itself is an absorbing story.

While Melinda was still in junior high school, the Blue Ridge Farm consisted of an aging barn, a house which Glenn built, one silo and a few old sheds.

Now the farm boasts two Harvestors, three conventional silos, a milking parlor, two free-stall barns (one for calves and one for milking cows), a hospital area for breeding and calving purposes, a new implement shed, a machinery shop, and a shed for housing large machinery.

Melinda is especially proud of the building which houses the milking parlor unit. On the walls surrounding the unit a large picture of their farm has been painted. On the other side of this particular wall is the office - complete with files, desk and pool table. In one corner sets an elevator connecting the upstairs office with the downstairs milkhouse.

According to Melinda it only takes her two hours to prepare, wash, milk and clean up after then 85 Holstein cows using the milking parlor unit her father designed.

Glenn Miller adds, "I wanted to be able to leave and enter the unit at anytime during milking so I constructed a stairway in the center. Also I wanted to build my parlor such that there would be nothing to interfere with cleaning up the floor afterward. So the unit is mounted on wheels on a track which moves as the unit itself moves around."

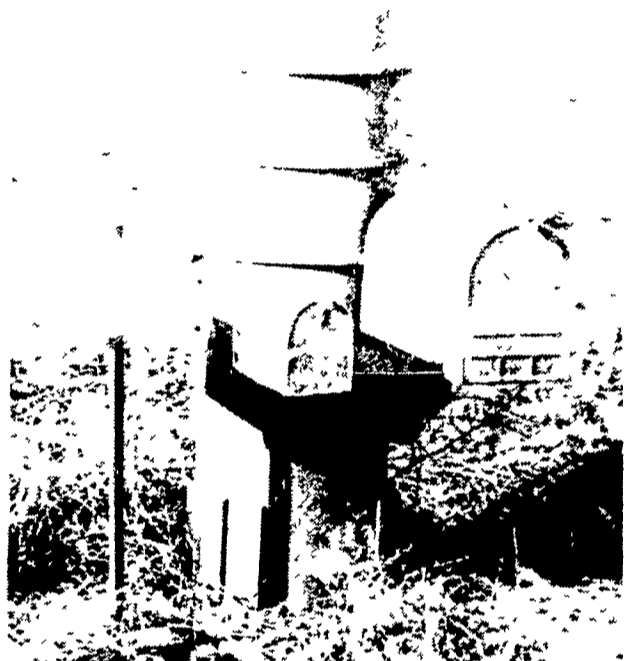
Besides drawing up the floor plans, designing and building a majority of the parts, Miller constructed the building himself. He has in fact built all of his buildings with the help of timber from his wooded land and "Melinda's muscles."

Melinda and her father recently finished constructing a free-stall barn for their calves. "We bought the rafters from my brother, Larry, who is in that business," Melinda says proving that the project was truly a family affair.

Melinda reports their next projects are "a barn in which to start calves and a small shelter around the silo conveyor belts so they don't get wet."

"I enjoy helping dad build things - we've really turned this place around in the past few years," Melinda laughs.

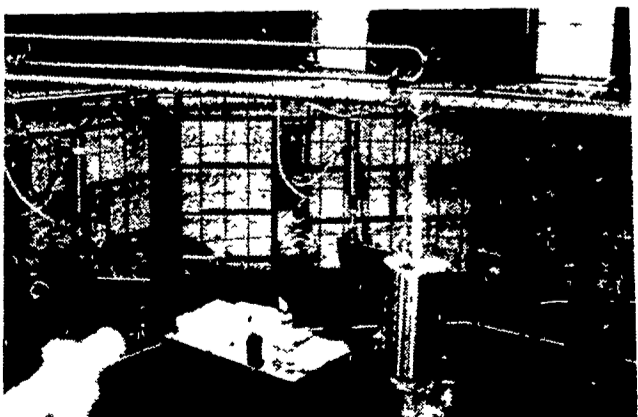
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Even the mailboxes resemble the Blue Ridge farm. These boxes set at the end of the three-quarter mile lane.



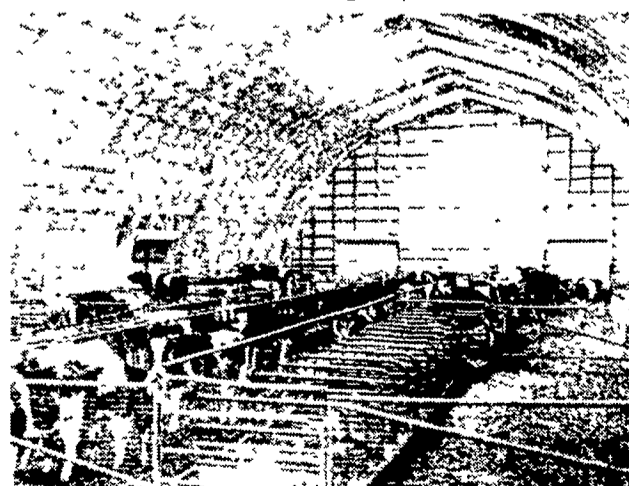
This painting resembling the Miller farm covers the wall around the office of the barn.



The milking parlor, designed and built by Glenn, is Melinda's favorite addition to the farm. She can complete milking in two hours.



Melinda poses with her dog D.J., a big Saint Bernard. Her other dog, Tigger, is, according to Melinda, a "Heinz 57 dog, a little bit of everything."



Melinda and her father built this freestall barn. They purchased the rafters from her brother Larry who is in this business.