

Milk haulers compete in Lancaster truck rodeo

EAST EARL — Two milk haulers, more accustomed to navigating their big rigs over the narrow back roads and tiny farm lanes of Eastern Lancaster County, took part in a different type of driving experience today.

Instead of maneuvering around slow moving vehicles on the roads and being particularly alert to

young animals or small fry around the farmstead, they matched their driving skills and knowledge against other truck drivers in a "rodeo" held at the Lancaster Treadway Inn.

Taking part in the competition were two drivers for John S. Ewell, Inc., of East Earl. They are:

Lowell C. Kurtz, of R3, Narvon,

whose milk pickup route covers 17 Amish dairy farms in the Bird-in-Hand and Leola area.

And, Leroy Smith, of Landisville, whose route covers 10 dairy farms in the White Horse area.

It was the first such competition for the two drivers in the truck rodeo, which is held by the Lancaster County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association.

Both participated in the tanker category of competition. Other divisions of competition include box trailers, flatbeds and straight trucks.

"We've been looking forward to enjoying the competition," Smith said.

"And, also to learning something about competitive driving."

The competition includes both written testing of vehicle, driving and safety knowledge, plus operation of a rig through an obstacle course.

"One of the operational tests is parallel parking in a space only four feet longer than your rig," Kurtz explained.

"To do that, your turn must be just right."

On their regular routes, the two truckers serve Lancaster County dairymen who ship to Inter-State Milk Producers Cooperative.

The provide that vital link between the farm and the processing destination of the milk, which might be Philadelphia, Carlisle or, as around the Memorial Day holiday, out-of-state to places like New York or even Wisconsin.

Both Kurtz and Smith were raised on area farms, the former in the Oley Valley of Berks County, and the latter in Lancaster County. Smith's parents have retired from farming.

"I still farm about 30 acres of soybeans and corn on my parent's farm," Kurtz said.

"I do it more or less as a hobby now."

Kurtz has been hauling for the Ewell milk transportation firm for seven years and Smith for about four years.

Both report that their duties on the road and at the farms have been pretty much routine on their route days, which can stretch from 7 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m., depending on the milk's destination and the

number of tankers waiting to unload.

"About the only thing unusual that ever happened to me," according to Kurtz, "was helping out with the delivery of a calf."

And since he grew up on a dairy farm, he knew just how to pitch right in and help the farmer.—DA



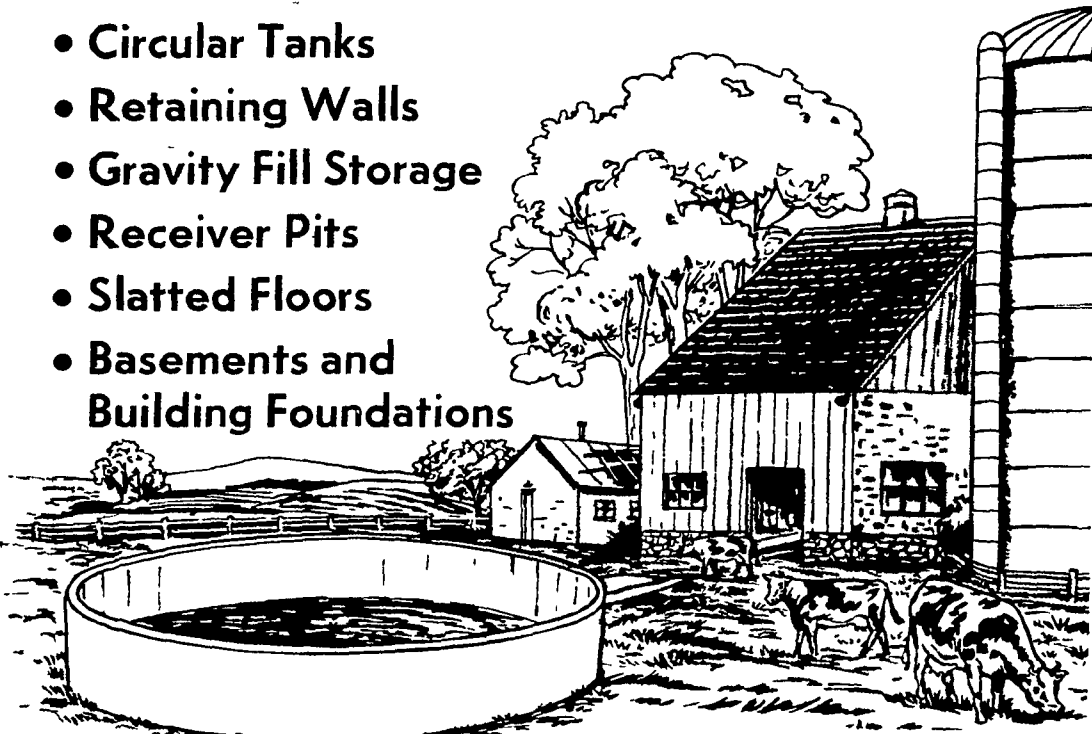
Leroy Smith, of Landisville, covers a route in the White Horse area for the milk hauling firm of John S. Ewell, Inc.



Lowell C. Kurtz, of R3 Narvon, prepares to climb into the cab of his rig for milk pickup route through the Bird-in-Hand and Leola area.

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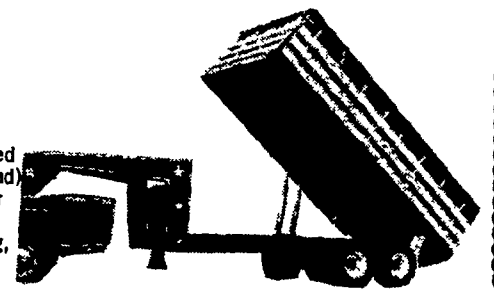


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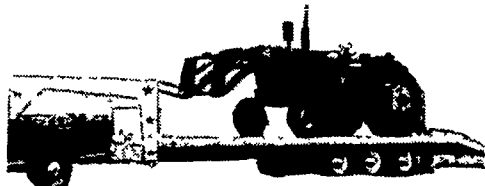
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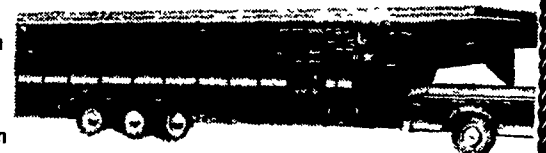
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