

Inter-State's Outstanding Young Cooperators

Dairy diplomats promote and push to peddle product

BY DONNA TOMMELLEO

NARVON — When Jere and Jan Skiles were selected to represent their district at Inter-State's Outstanding Young Cooperators Contest, last month they didn't know what to expect.

The Narvon couple didn't know they'd have to speak in front of more than 50 people. They didn't know their topic could range from dairy legislation to economics. And they didn't know that 19 other young couples, eager to promote the industry, were the competition.

About the only thing they were sure of, explained Jan, was a two-day vacation at the Hunt Valley Inn, Md., the competition site.

Jere and Jan waited and listened while a half-dozen couples took the podium in turn and discussed cooperative operations, adulteration policies and energy-saving goals.

Finally, they took the platform and fielded a question that asked for a dairy farmer's obligation to promotion — an emotionally charged subject for the couple.

The jitters evident in some participants, never surfaced in the zealous Skiles. They called for teamwork and urged producers to make contributions for advertising. Jere cited a New York survey that reported a two-fold increase returned for every dollar contributed.

Their soapbox sermon was good enough for the judges and as a result Jere and Jan, Inter-State's Outstanding Young Cooperators for 1981 will attend the National Federation of Milk Cooperatives Convention in Las Vegas this November.

In the absence of judges and participants at their farm, Pequea-Meadows, the couple is no less enthusiastic when it comes to promoting their product.

Jere, 25, says he is pleased with the latest ads from UDIA which include the co-sponsors Foster-Grant, MacDonald's and Py-Co-Pay toothpaste. He admits the co-sponsor approach to promotion can be economical as well as effective.

"If we're not going to spend millions to compete, we've got to ride their (larger sponsors)

coattails. We've all got to work together."

Effective advertising, Jere says, could remedy the current surplus problem.

"I'm not so sure that maybe we haven't created a problem (surplus) with the base system," he says although he admits the base system does have merit.

Jan, 22, also a strong advocate for promotion is assistant manager at a local fast-food restaurant. She explains the milk sales are only one-third of total beverage.

Her restaurant sells only 10 to 12 cartons of milk on an average weekend day which attracts about 1200 customers.

However, Jan admits she's pleased the milkshakes are complete dairy products, unlike shakes of many fast-food chains.

The Skiles explain that promotion can be as simple as word of mouth.

"You've got to talk to your city friends and verse yourself well enough to explain the industry," Jere emphasizes.

"Relate to them and make them want the product."

Jere suggests promoting milk components, such as protein, as well as the whole product.

Eager to practice what they preach, the couple have hosted many groups at their 284-acre farm.

Jere studied dairy herd management at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical Institute. After graduating in 1976 he returned to Pequea-Meadows and entered into a 50-50 partnership with his father Kenneth.

At that time the Skiles expanded their operation from 40 to 72 Holsteins. They added a free-stall, double four straight-sided parlor and began feeding a total mixed ration.

"We do less work with 72 head than we did before," Jere explains.

Except for Timothy hay for the dry cows, the father and son team ensile the remaining hay crop.

The Skiles keep careful tabs of their ration and sample forage every time they think it changes, says Jere.

Just as they adapt to ration and forages changes, the Skiles keep

up with the progressive dairy industry. Jere explains that his father was one of the first people in the area to start on-the-farm A.I. more than 10 years ago.

They superovulate the outstanding individuals in the herd and have pending contracts for 12 bull calves, says Jere. The black and white herd which is 85 percent registered has a rolling herd average of 17,075 lbs. milk and 647 lbs. fat.

Fly control, which can be a sore spot on many farms, is a "tight fire with fire" method at Pequea-Meadows.

For \$50 a year, the Skiles purchase predator flies from California and turn them loose on their earthen bank manure storage.

The small predator flies lay their eggs inside the eggs of nuisance insects and destroy the larvae.

The Pequea-Meadows work force consists of Kenneth, Jere and a neighbor boy who helps with the milking and Jan is ready to milk in a pinch if needed.

Although she's not from a farm background, Jan, a native of Parkesburg, Pa., finds country life peaceful and rewarding.

Married a little over a year, the Skiles are members of the Parkesburg Baptiste Church and are active in the Pequea-Valley Jaycees.

Jere is vice-president of their local co-op, New Holland-Leola and a board member on the Lancaster County Extension Board. The active couple also belongs to the Pennsylvania Farm Association and the Lancaster County Farm Association.

Jere and Jan are looking forward to the Las Vegas trip not only

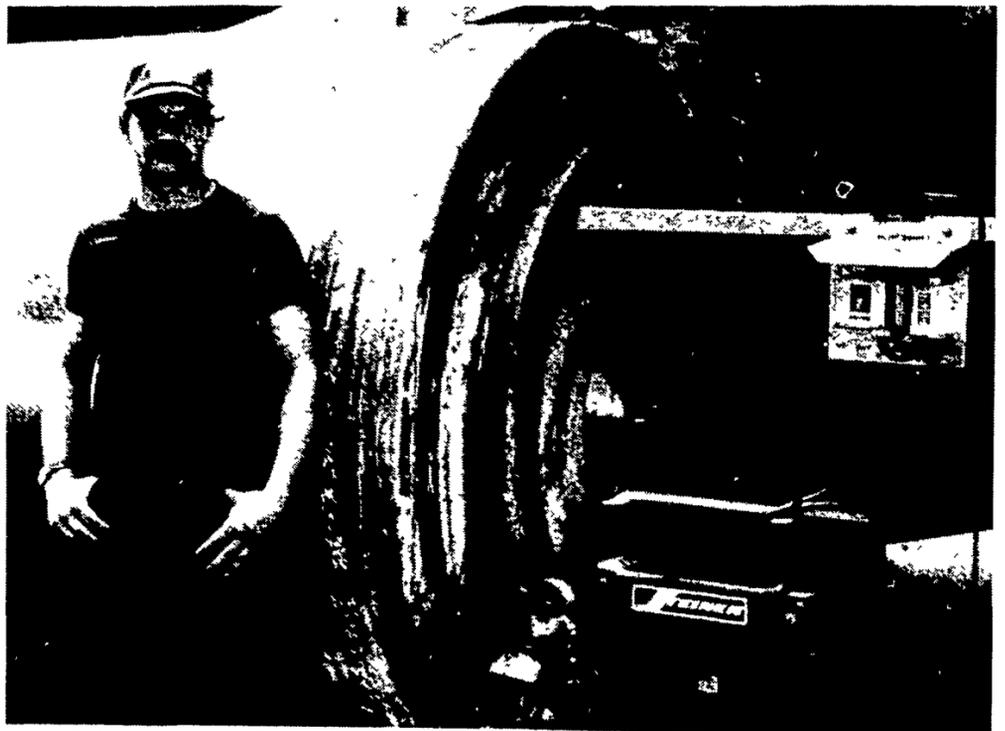


Inter-State's Outstanding Young Cooperators, 1981, Jere and Jan Skiles, Narvon, will be attending the National Federation of Milk Cooperatives in Las Vegas, Nevada this November.

for the R & R aspect but also for the education.

"We hope to get a total picture of the dairy situation on a national level," Jere says.

The Skiles may have won a trip in November but the true winner is the dairy industry which will benefit from the progressive and positive attitudes of these two eager ambassadors.



The Skiles feed a total-mixed ration with the help of this tumbler mixer, one of only a few in the nation.



The free-stall barn, which houses the 72-cow herd, is one of the additions that resulted from the Skiles' 1976 expansion.



The Skiles' farm, Pequea-Meadows is silhouetted in the waning moments of a cool July evening.