

# Krall Open House

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man in the group cued the young man. Then, as the basket's arc became shorter and shorter, the operator disembarked with a quick jump.

As the crowd broke up, I headed straight for Tom and some answers to questions about this new "machine."

I found out that Tom was one of John Krall's sons. Both Tom, 22, and brother Tim, 24, work on the farm. Younger brother Brian, 20, lives on the farm but is employed as a car salesman, and sister Rosella, 19, is living in Texas.

This newfangled machine was actually called a "swing gym", said Tom, with a grin. He said he built it for exercise and recreation.

"That's what putting up those Harvestors can do for you," chimed in one of the departing onlookers. "They give you time to do this."

Still not 100 percent sure I was understanding this story, I asked Tom again why and how he built it.

"I had seen a similar type of gym at the Lebanon Fair this year and decided I'd like to try and build one," recalled Tom. "I figured exercising with this would be a lot better for you than running — it's not as hard on your knees because there's no jarring."

"The gym is like a swing until you're halfway around. It helps to develop your legs and arms, along with the cardiovascular system."

Tom explained how he built the gym using materials he found on the farm, like bearings out of old car spindles and parts of an old silo unloader. He stressed that his model is purely "experimental."

Since they began using the gym a short while ago, Tom said, he and his brothers have had contests to see who can make the most revolutions in a certain period of time. Smiling, modestly, Tom confessed he holds the record to date — 100 revolutions in 4 minutes — and that's from a dead stop.

"I'm dead after that," Tom admitted.

Keeping physically fit is important to this young dairy farmer, and he stressed staying in shape is important for all farmers. "You've got to take care of yourself as well as feeding your cows the best to stay on top of this business."

The Kralls have Tom's invention to help them out with keeping their muscles toned, and the help of their two new upright silos and a new rotary batch mixer to keep

their 140 head of grade Holsteins eating right.

To show their 'appreciation', the 100 head of cows on the milking string are pumping out an average of 54 pounds of milk a day with a 3.7 percent test.

There's a saying, "You are what you eat." And to help their cows be the best they can be, the Kralls place great importance on growing, harvesting and storing food.

Fifty acres of alfalfa are cut and blown into the 20 x 90 foot Harvestore, and the 20 x 80 silo is filled with high moisture ground ear corn. Corn silage is stored in the concrete stave silo. Altogether, the Kralls plant and harvest 120 acres of corn for feed.

The corn is double cropped with rye, Tom explained. As soon as the corn is taken off, rye is sown and provides a winter cover for the fields. Then, the next spring, the rye is harvested as ryalage, the ground is turned and corn is planted.

"Last spring we filled 80 feet of the 90-foot silo with ryalage," said Tom. "That's a lot of feed." He pointed out the family has been double cropping corn and rye for the past 5 years.

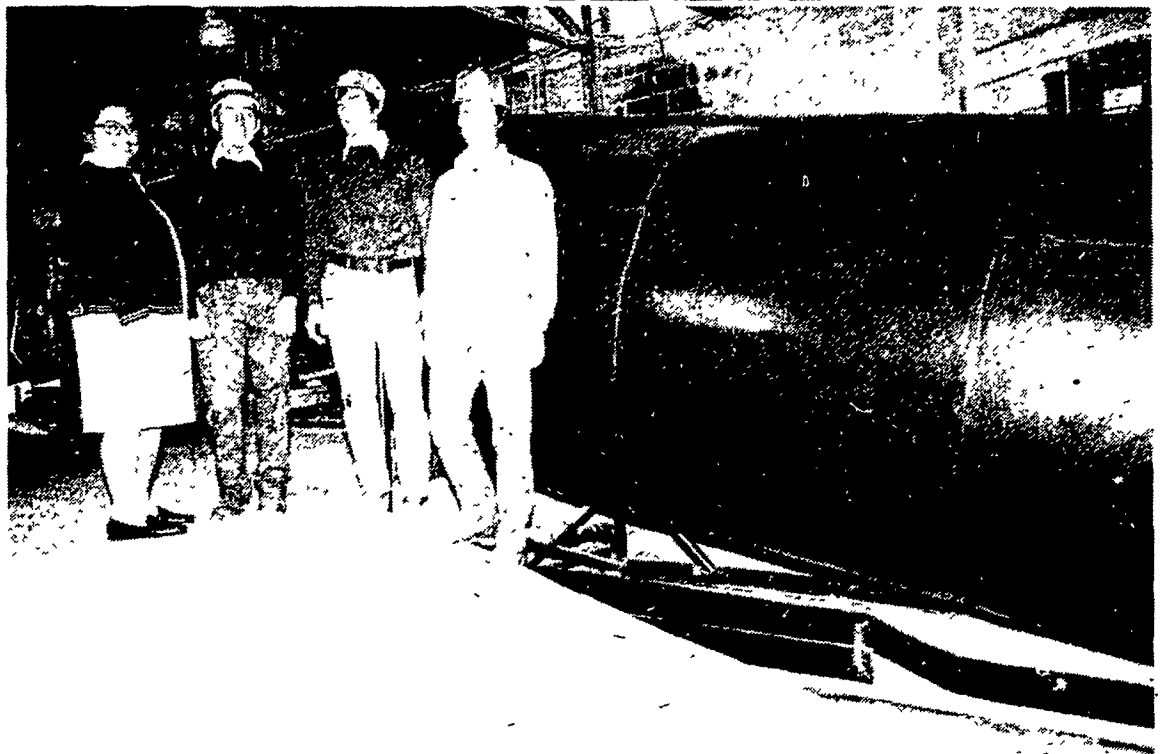
Inside the feed shed, the proof of the pudding is determined as conveyor belts carry the finished products of the four silos to the cows. But before the sweet-smelling, fermented feed is tasted by any of the Kralls' cows, it goes through a thorough mixing.

Twenty-three-year-old Jim Zimmerman of Farmersville, Lancaster County invented this special rotary batch mixer where the corn and silage mingle with soybean meal protein supplement and minerals before being served to the waiting cattle at the rate of 50 pounds per head.

Flipping a switch to show how the mixer operates, Tom explained that the feed comes out "tastier," and is since everything is mixed together, the cows can't push it around and nose out what they don't like. He noted their top producers get a little extra grain while they're in the milking parlor — a double-six herringbone built in 1968.

According to Zimmerman, he invented this mixer after having built another auger-type mixer. "I figured there had to be a better way to mix feed — with less wear and tear on parts and less power."

The outcome is this rotary batch



The hard-working Krall family, Lois, John, Tom, and Tim, pose next to their new rotary batch mixer, designed and built by Lancaster County's Jim Zimmerman of Farmersville Manufacturing. The mixer pours out a "tastier" feed, claims son Tom.

mixer, patent-pending, that runs off a 3 HP motor — one-half the power needed to run the other auger-type mixers.

"This mixer needs less maintenance because there's fewer moving parts," stressed Zimmerman. "It saves energy."

The other new addition to the farm's operation is the new manure storage structure put up last December. The 62 x 19 Slurrystore holds a half year's buildup of manure. The Kralls use a Calumet injector to incorporate the manure before seeding rye and after the winter grain is taken off in the spring.

"It took us 30 hours this spring to unload it," said Tom, noting that it

wasn't quite full at the time. His enthusiasm for the storage and injection of manure was hard to hide as he reported how neighbors never noticed the smell. "This way you don't have that daily hauling, and you don't see or smell the manure," he remarked.

The manure scraped from the freestall barn is stored in an underground pit for a month before being agitated and pumped into the Slurrystore. This year the Kralls are trying out a bedding of finely chopped, dry corn fodder stored in an old tile silo instead of sawdust. "Hopefully, the fodder will cut down on the mastitis that comes with using sawdust for bedding," expressed Tom.

Tom's hope for the future is not limited to herd health, alone. Looking at the future of the dairy business on which his family depends for their livelihood and 'recreation', Tom stated, "A dairy farmer today has to stay on top of things with newer and better equipment. It becomes more of a challenge to make a go of it when the price of milk doesn't rise."

With the new silos, mixer, and manure storage, the Kralls have a helping hand in staying ahead of the game. When things get tough, Tom can always work out the frustrations of farming and stay on top with his "aerobic" gym that keeps his feet 12 feet off the ground.

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