

*Former Boy Scout camp is leading beef operation*

# Champion alfalfa grower enters corn in Farm Show competition

BY PATTY GROSS  
Staff Correspondent

**SPRUCE CREEK** — The Herman Espy farm has gone from a part-time job and Boy Scout camp to a large scale beef operation.

Herman says his father ran the 110-acre farm at the same time he worked for the railroad. That was years ago, before Herman took over and added 256 more acres.

The huge sign on the barn reads "Camp Espy Farms." The Huntingdon County farmer remembers nearly 900 Boy Scouts coming to his father's camp every summer until the 1936 flood.

A DHIA supervisor for 18 years, Herman began farming with a few beef, which he could work around another job. The herd now has grown to a full-time job.

Herman buys feeder calves at 550 - 750 pounds and fattens them out to 1,200 pounds. His herd stands at 431 now, but he usually fattens out 650 steers in a year.

Large beef operations run in the Espy family. Herman's brother, Paul, has been active as president of the Pa. Beef Council.

The Espys have two of the three sizable beef operations in Huntingdon County. There also are a half a dozen smaller set-ups in the primarily dairy farm area.

Because of the availability, Herman usually buys his feeder calves in Virginia, West Virginia and some in Lancaster. Most of his beef is marketed in Lancaster County.

The Espy operation can't be overlooked as you travel through Huntingdon County. The Juniata River flows adjacent to the farm, through the narrow Spruce Creek Valley.

Herman and his wife Connie, who is a LPN at J.C. Blair Hospital in Huntingdon, were recently honored as the 1981 grand champion alfalfa growers in the state. Espy's crop competed with 77 others. The award was presented for an all-time high yield of 10.7 tons per acre by Penn State, the Pa. Seedsmen's Association and the Pa. Forage & Grassland Council.

He began preparing for the competition in the spring of 1980 when he spread 40 tons of steer manure per acre and 500 pounds per acre of 10-20-20 fertilizer. In

two applications he applied 225 pounds of phosphorus and 335 pounds of potash.

Herman says the field won't see any more steer manure for four or five years, when it goes back to corn. Prior to the new seeding with Saranac AR alfalfa and Pennlate orchardgrass, the field was in corn. Herman uses a companion crop of oats to keep his rolling fields from eroding.

He admits that he experiments alot on his fields. "You really shouldn't put so much on. I was just seeing how many tons I could get to the acre," referring to the mixtures of fertilizers that went on prior to seeding.

The Huntingdon County farmer took 4 cuttings from his championship field. The crop had 3,590 pounds of crude protein and over 11,700 pounds of total digestible nutrients.

This year Herman soil tested 44 fields. He follows the recommendations of Penn State, but in most cases exceeds them in trying to get more yield on the deep Hagerstown limestone soil.

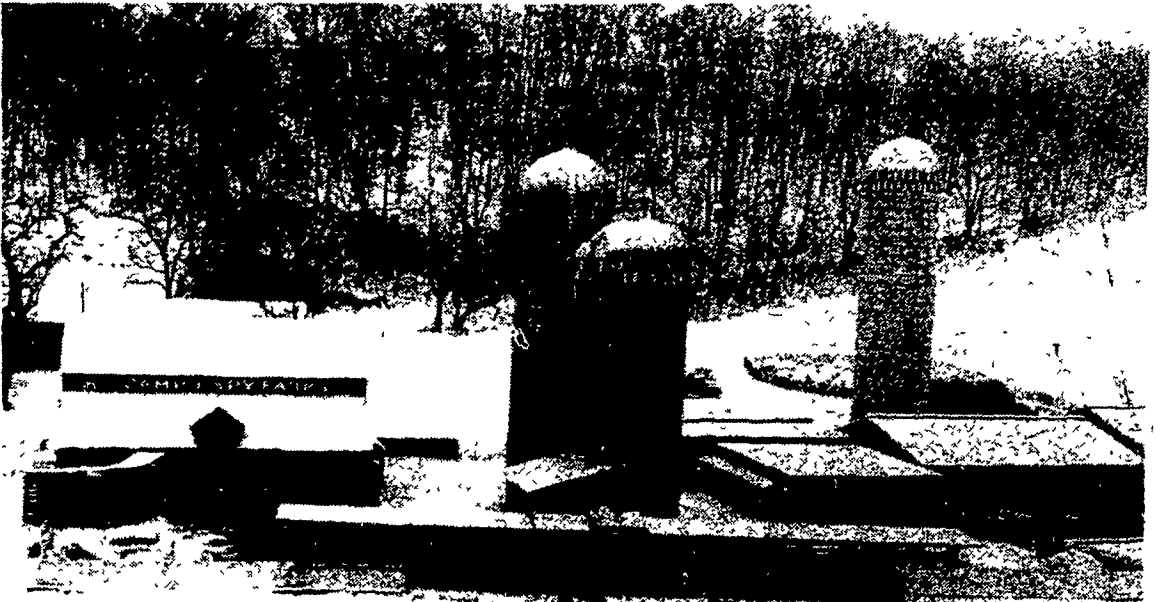
He said he plans to enter the competition again next year. "I'm going to try to top that 10.7 tons. I have another field primed." Herman confessed he 'saw the award coming.' "I've raised hay for 20 years. We've had yields probably that good before."

Competition isn't new for Espy. Every year he finishes high on the list in the 5-acre corn contest. For 1980 he had an average yield of 173.5 bushels per acre, placing him eighth in the state. In past years Herman has been ranked third.

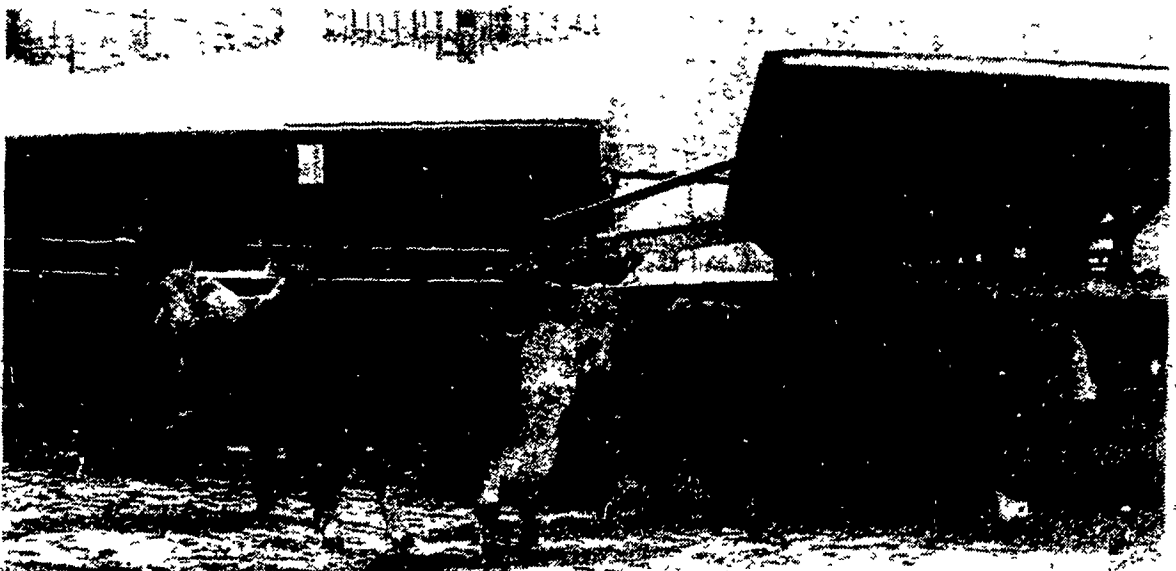
At Farm Show time he will find out how this year's 202 bushel to the acre rates. For six years he has received corn-growing championship awards, and in 1964 he was given the DHIA Supervisor award.

The Espy children are winners too in 4-H. Windy, Herman, Lisa and Kristie have taken their beef to the Huntingdon County Fair and have won 2 grand champion, 3 reserved grand champions, and 2 grand champion fitter honors. Espy proudly explains, "That's usually in a field of 70 participants."

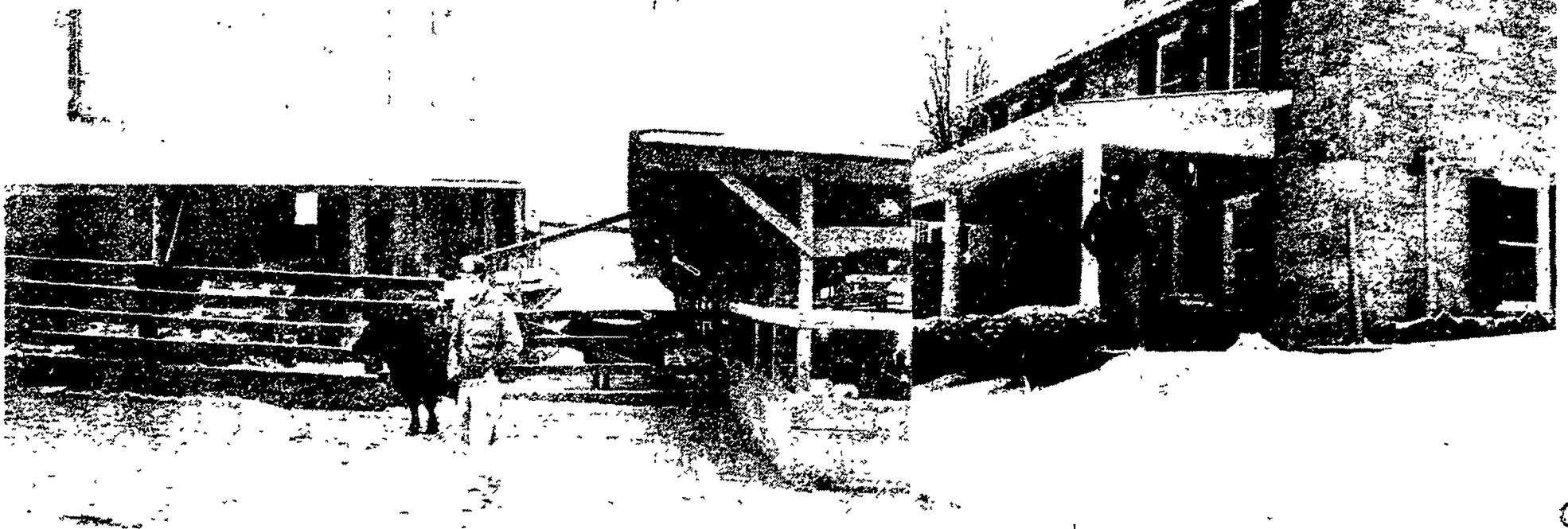
(Turn to Page E32)



Silos and feedlots under roof mark the Espy a Boy Scout camp. It is now one of the top three beef operations in Huntingdon County.



Espy says he's not particular to color when it comes to feeding cattle. Their price tag seems to be the deciding factor for the cattle he ships in from Virginia.



Huntingdon County alfalfa grower and cattleman Herman Espy checks his cattle in one of the farms' feedlots. Most of the alfalfa

and corn raised on the family operation goes into producing top quality beef.

The high yielding soils which produce Espy's championship corn and alfalfa crops is Hagerstown limestone. The family homestead is an architectural clue that this land has some of nature's most productive soils, with chiseled limestone rocks serving as its building blocks.