

Perry Co. YC's stay with a safe bet...dairying

BY DONNA TOMMELLEO
MILLERSBURG — On the other side of the Rockies, not too far from the Pacific coast, rests a city, bejeweled in neon signs, blackjack tables and one-arm bandits. Infamously dubbed, "Sin City," Las Vegas, Nev., nevertheless, annually beckons millions of tourists seeking an easy fortune.

In 1981, however, Las Vegas attracted thousands of individuals that know all too well that fortunes follow hard, hard work. American dairy farmers.

The internationally known Caesar's Palace was the sight of the recent National Milk Producers Federation annual meeting. The contrasting lifestyles proved an interesting experience for many dairy producers including Perry County Holstein breeders Jane and Ken Benner.

"It's different," noted Ken. "You almost had to wear sunglasses at night because the billboards along the strip were so bright."

Of course, while most dairy farmers rise before the sun, the Benners found they weren't alone in their habits.

"You could walk through the casino at five in the morning and find people gambling as much as they were the night before," Jane recalled.

Aside from the entertainment Las Vegas provided, dairy farmers from around the nation had a chance to gather, learn from hindsight and plan for the future. And according to the Benners, members of Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association, overproduction was the hot topic discussed by everyone.

"No segment of farming is in good shape," noted Ken. "Grains are down, beef's down, pork is down. And that doesn't help anybody get out of the dairy business."

Some solutions and proposals did evolve from all the discussion. National Milk proposed a nationwide advertising campaign for manufactured products, particularly cheese, Ken explained.

"What they want to do is take a nickel a hundredweight off every dairy farmer to pay for the campaign," he said.

Another National Milk proposal, they explained, was a national dairy board made up of Secretary of Agriculture appointees.

According to Ken, the board

would assess dairy farmers and the money would be spent on buying back a portion of the national surplus.

"The dairy farmers would own their own product and hopefully sell it for more, possible in the world market. The government would still buy what it needed for its programs," reported Ken, a Penn State graduate.

The Las Vegas trip which provided a few proposals to the countless questions from dairy farmers, began for the Benners almost two years ago.

At the urging of a co-op official, Jane and Ken decided to compete in the Young Cooperators contest. However, Ken was ineligible because he was six months too old but Jane continued.

With the help of her supportive husband, the Virginia Tech Dairy Science graduate waded through a multitude of questions over a period of two days.

In June 1980, the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association had a new Young Cooperator in Jane Benner.

The YC program put the Benners in touch with hundreds of dairy farmers in their region. That year they attended National Milk's annual meeting in Miami, Fla. But this year, their participation in the worthwhile program further increased as both Jane and Ken were elected Regional Vice Presidents of the National Young Cooperators.

As Region III vice presidents, the Benners will represent young dairy couples from 11 dairy cooperatives located in 10 Southeastern states extending from West Virginia to Mississippi.

When they're not busy traveling to and from meetings and enjoying the company of other young dairy farmers, Ken and Jane can be found working hard on their 420 acre farm, Santee Acres, a name derived from Jane's Virginia background which means, "heavenly mountains."

The Benners are milking 60 registered Black and Whites. The Bootmaker, Ivanhoe, Mars, Bell and Tony daughters, to name a few, helped put the Benners at the top of the county DHIA with 20,000 pounds of milk and 789 pounds of fat.

The Santee Acres work force is comprised of Ken, Jane, daughter Irene, 12, and hired man David Myers.

Tied in the stall barn, the high producing Holsteins are fed about



Santee Acres owners Ken and Jane Benner check the fruits of their labor. They kept the bulk tank busy this year by topping Perry County with the highest average of milk and fat. The Benners turned in records of 20,031 pounds of milk and 789 pounds of fat.

40 pounds of corn silage, 20 pounds of alfalfa haylage and five pounds of alfalfa hay daily. The ration is top dressed with a 15 percent protein dry ear corn mix.

Dry cows and heifers receive mixed hay and a different grain ration.

In the future, the Benners would like to start some embryo transplant work. Ken also reported that he'll be striving for type in his breeding program.

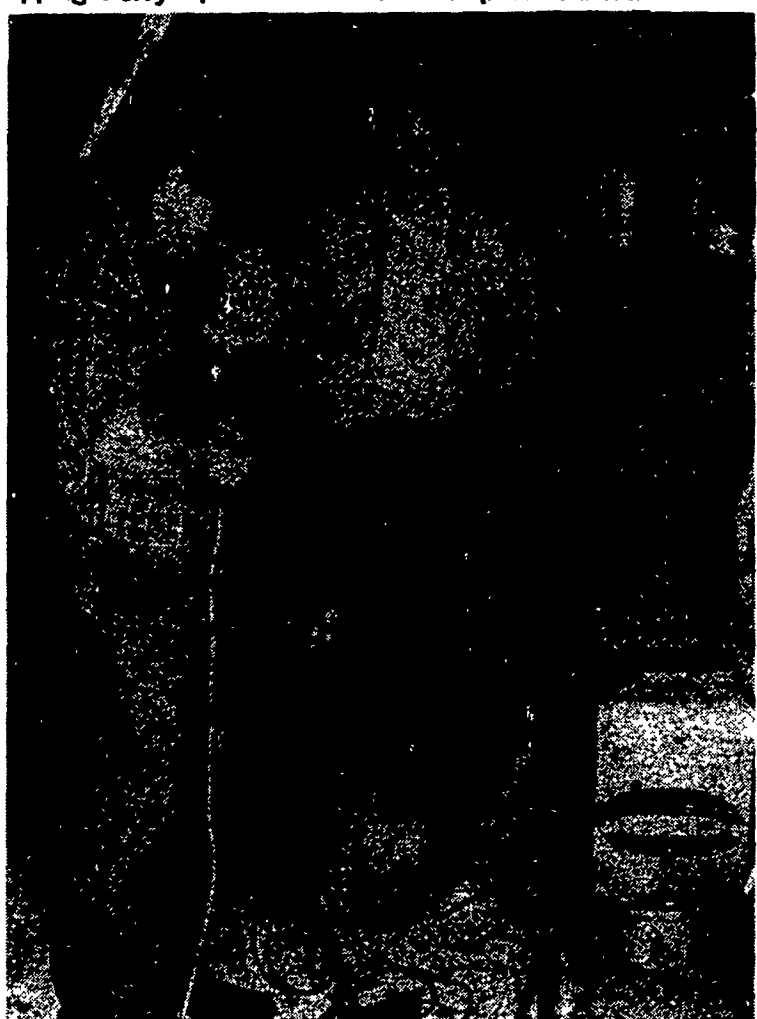
As regional YC vice presidents these top-notch dairy farmers will vote on important issues and help spread the news in the dairy industry. On a local level, the Benners reach out to still more through 4-H leadership and other county activities.

Jane is the Perry County 4-H dairy judging team coach, a reporter and youth chairman for the Holstein Club and an advisor to Farm Journal.

Ken is president of the Perry County Holstein Club and a past president of the county's DHIA.

Continuing to work with and help YC's on a regional level should not be too difficult for the already active Ken and Jane Benner.

Just like their product, they're a natural.



Ken, Jane and hired man David Myers, left, share a joke, while preparing to vacuum a freshly clipped cow. Jane explained that the cows seem to look forward to the "Hoover" treatment.

Montgomery 4-H plans beef supper

NORRISTOWN — Members of the 4-H Livestock Club are busy preparing for the Annual Montgomery County 4-H Roast Beef Supper scheduled for Saturday, January 30, 3-8 p.m. at the North Penn High School on Rt. 363 near Lansdale.

The club annually serves about 1,500 people who travel from many locations to enjoy this country style dinner featuring beef from prize-winning 4-H steers.

Tickets are available from 4-H leaders, livestock club members or by contacting the 4-H Office at 277-0574.

Prices are \$7 for persons over 10 years of age; \$3 for children 5-10. Checks can be made payable to "4-H Roast Beef Supper" and sent to 400 Markley Street, Norristown, Pa. 19401, stating number of tickets needed and a self addressed stamped envelope. Remaining tickets will be sold at the door but it

is advised to get tickets in advance.

Other features of the evening include a red meat sale, a bake sale and the sale of bread loaves. Chairman Deb Martin of Hatfield

notes that take-out orders are also available at the supper.

Proceeds from the supper benefit the Montgomery County 4-H program.

Fall crop harvest reflects good growing conditions

HARRISBURG — Final estimates for fall harvested crops showed Pennsylvania farmers produced more corn for grain, corn silage, soybeans, hay, potatoes and tobacco in 1981 than in 1980, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Based on acres harvested and yield, 1981 production of Pennsylvania corn for grain totaled 134,400,000 bushels, up 40 percent. All hay, at 4,535,000 tons was up eight percent and corn silage at 7,371,000 tons was up 17 percent;

Soybeans production at 3,100,000 bushels was up 23 percent; Pennsylvania white potato production at 5,250,000 cwt., was up 26 percent, while tobacco, at 25,160,000 pounds, was up two percent.

National quantities produced and percent changes from 1980 are as follows: corn for grain, 8.20 billion bushels, up 23 percent; all hay, 143.1 million tons, up nine percent; soybeans, 2.03 million bushels, up 13 percent; and all tobacco, 2.05 billion pounds, up 15 percent.



A long way from home, Ken and Jane shed their dairy shoes and step into those of regional vice president of the National Young Cooperators, during the recent National Milk Producers Federation convention in Las Vegas, Nev.