

# Milk Way Farm takes growth in stride

**BY BETH HEMMINGER**  
**SHIPPENSBURG** — Like watching a trail of spilt milk that's accidentally spreading and covering a larger area, the expansion of Milk Way Farms, Cumberland County can be compared to a trickle of milk that has turned into a stream.

But, unlike the spilt milk, Milk Way Farms' growth is not

something that Paul Hornbaker and wife Grace cry over. For it's this hard-working couple, along with their two children Gary and Karen who have supplied the driving force needed to take an 11-cow dairy farm and turn it into a thriving 170-head Holstein operation.

The road wasn't all smooth-sailing as the Hornbecker began

their journey to success. And, from the time Paul graduated from high school until the time the Hornbakers owned their own farm, their dairy operation spilled onto two farms.

Paul began his career in the dairy industry in 1952, one year after his high school graduation, on his father's farm. With a herd of 11 milking Holsteins, Paul began to make a niche for himself in the farming community. Then, after his father became ill, Paul realized he would have to move to a rented farm if he wanted to give his new business a chance to survive.

By 1959, the number of cows on the Hornbaker's milking string had grown to 30. That was the year Milk Way Farms could claim its permanent residence on Fort Road near Shippensburg.

Finally settled, the Hornbakers concentrated on growing a quality herd of Holsteins. As more and more replacement heifers claimed a spot on the farm, it soon became evident that Milk Way Farms was suffering from growing pains. So, in 1967, a second farm was added to the prefix.

Now, with the two farms, Hornbakers are kept hard at work growing most of the feed for their 170 milkers and 130 head of young stock and dry cows on 300 acres. High-yielding alfalfa and corn varieties, quality fertilizer, and efficient harvesting are the keys Hornbaker attributes to his success in producing the necessary feed to keep his cows pumping.

To handle each year's harvest, it would be easy to assume the Hornbakers rely on metal or concrete silos to store the large quantities of forage needed to feed over 200 head of cattle. But, there's only one upright silo on Milk Way Farms and it's used to store high moisture corn. The rest of the silage is worked into trench silos for the fermentation process.

"Trench silos are more cost-effective than the uprights for my



Hornbaker breezes through feeding time using his automatic unloading wagon. Silage on Milk Way Farms is made in three trench silos which hold 2,250 tons.



Paul Hornbaker, owner of Milk Way Farms, Shippensburg, inspects his lot of dry cows and heifers with son Gary. A new breeding system has been implemented by the Hornbakers to hopefully "guarantee" strong, healthy heifer calves for their growing registered Holstein herd.

particular operation," says Hornbaker. "It's a convenient method of storing large quantities and all we have to do is scoop the forage out with a tractor and feed it."

But there are always two sides to every story as son Gary illustrates by conceding that a trench silo "is inconvenient when it is pouring down rain and the rain is running down the back of your neck."

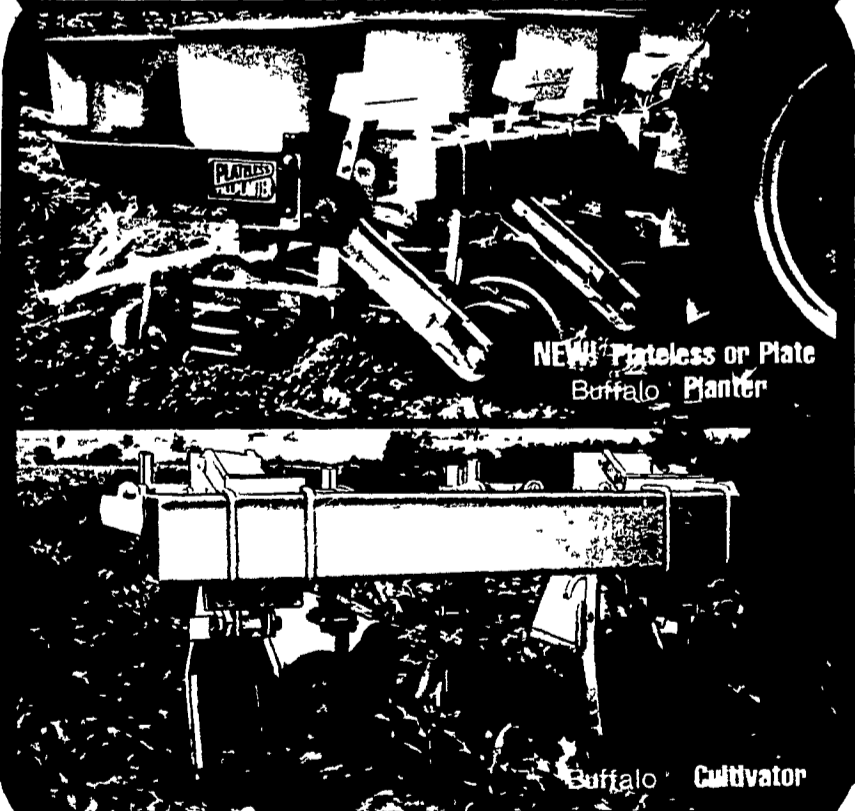
Milk Way's three trench silos are strategically located beside their

free stall barn. Two of the trenches hold approximately 900 tons of silage while the remaining trench holds about 450 tons.

The cows at Milk Way begin their day at an almost unearthly hour. They dine on a breakfast of high moisture corn, corn silage, haylage and wet Brewers' grain before filing into the double-five-herringbone milking parlor at 6 a.m. (You read it right — that's

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