

# Kellys call Spring Lane Farm "home"

BY PATTY GROSS  
Staff Correspondent

**SINKING VALLEY** — Spring Lane Farm, nestled in northern Blair County, sends an inviting message to passersby. With its long, winding lane leading to a large, friendly farmhouse, the Tom Kelly dairy farm joins its owner in sending out a heart-felt welcome to all who happen past.

Friends and visitors are urged many times by the Kelly family to stop and visit. The 235-acre Holstein farm is known for cooperating with area groups to help further the industry. The most recent outing to the R1 Tyrone farm was for the Central Pennsylvania Junior Judging School.

On the agenda: lemonade and watermelon served under the large shade trees. However, life on Spring Lane Farm isn't all play, as the students soon discovered. The Kellys brought out some of their best registered Holsteins for the young farmers to evaluate.

Tom believes farming is excellent for young people and he wants to do all he can to help. "It's difficult to start from scratch, which is basically what we did," he confessed. "I'm glad we started when we did."

"You've got to like it, to do it. There are many long work hours involved." He's a farmer who is sure of what he wants out of life for

himself, his family and his farm. However that conclusion comes after testing the waters elsewhere.

Some would say Tom is a farmer who has tried many things and has been many places. When he graduated from Penn State, he took a county agent position in Blair County. After 3½ years he left the county to become a fieldman for the Pennsylvania Holstein Association.

Although he enjoyed what he was doing at the time, Tom said he knew it wasn't permanent. He proved that five years later, when he changed jobs again. As a young man, he spent the next two years as a district manager with Curtis Breeding Service, and for 5 years following that position, managed the livestock shows at the Farm Show Building for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

"Different times I thought maybe I should be farming because I was raised on a farm in Southwest Pennsylvania," continued Tom. "We always had lots of work and I wasn't sure I wanted to continue that way."

"It's permanent now," he smiled. "I didn't know what I was to do, but God made it clear that I was definitely a farmer."

Tom is the first to admit that becoming a farmer is easier said than done. He and his wife, Peg,



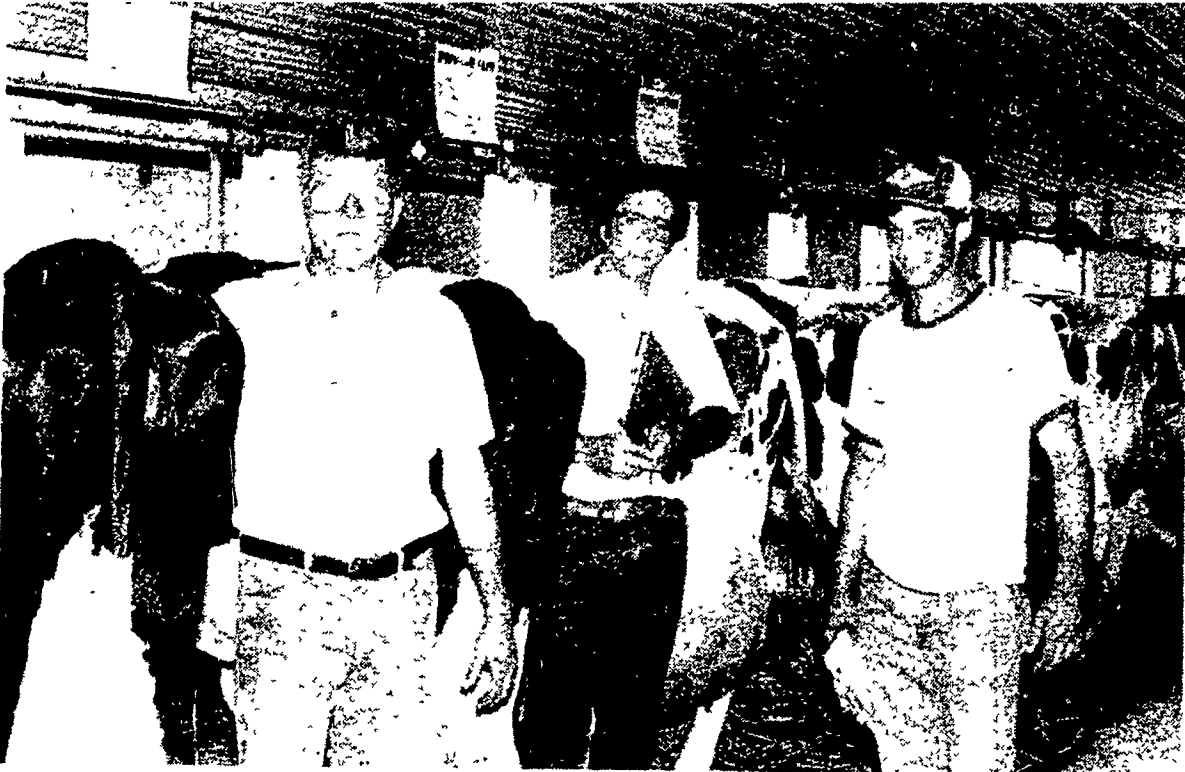
Spring Lane Farm in northern Blair County. They are known for welcoming groups to their farm to promote the ag industry.

had no family farm to take over. Initial attempts at finding a place suitable for the Kelly family failed. But the deeply religious farmer said God led them to the picturesque farm and made the land available to them.

The native of Eighty Four, Washington County, doesn't regret



Tom and Peg Kelly with their youngest daughter, Rebecca, are old hands at farming. The Kellys were both raised on farms, but did not decide they were "farmers" until 1974 when they purchased over 200 acres in Blair County.



Kelly, left, discusses farming with two Penn State Agriculture Programs, says his son will be joining the visitors this fall as a Dairy Science student in Virginia.



It's milking time at Spring Lane Farm, R.D. 1 Tyrone. The herd has grown from 27, when Tom Kelly began farming in 1974, to a present size of 140. The 65 cows milking produce a herd average of over 19,000 lb.

the many jobs he held before taking up farming. Tom chalks them up to good experience.

Spring Lane Farm began with one barn and 27 cows. Today it has grown to a 140-head herd. In 1974 when the Kellys moved back to Blair County and began farming, they added 2 silos, a heifer barn, a bulk feeder and 32 more stalls onto the 72-foot dairy barn. Just recently the family expanded the farmhouse, giving Peg a larger kitchen and Tom an office.

The 65 milking cows produce a herd average of over 19,000 pounds. Tom said they are working on strengthening the herd even more. For the past three years the farm has been participating in the embryo transfer program. In about a month the group will start to calve. He hopes to see the value of his herd increase as they produce better animals.

Milk production is most important to the Kellys, however Tom claimed his registered Holsteins are worth much more because of their showing records. He attributed the farm's survival to selling excellent breeding stock. It would have been difficult, he said, to stay in business if they had depended entirely on the milk check.

The Kellys aren't loyal to one bull. They try to learn as much as they can about the different bulls and select them on that basis.

The show-oriented farm is continually preparing for the next event. Holsteins from Spring Lane Farm are regulars at the Morrison Cove Dairy Show in Martinsburg, Holstein Championship Show in

Huntingdon, the Pennsylvania All-American Dairy Show and the 4-H district and state competitions.

Three of the Kelly children, Brian, 17, Susanne, 15, and Miriam-9, are active showmen. The two younger children, 6-year-old Rebecca and John David, 3, are still too young to be working on the farm.

Miriam is new to the 4-H scene, but the two older children are recognized as outstanding achievers. Two years ago, Brian, and this year, Susanne, won Pennsylvania Distinguished Junior Member in the state Holstein Association's Junior Division. They also are representatives on the Pennsylvania Junior Holstein Association's Executive Committee.

The Tyrone Area School District students take after their father when it comes to organization memberships. The director of the Blair County Holstein Club and the Blair County Farmers' Association chairman of the Grassroots Committee for Penn State and is involved in Penn State dairy organizations.

Peg, a Blair County native, also graduated from Penn State, making the Kellys strong supporters of the University. They were surprised, but now pleased that Brian selected Virginia Tech. He will leave the farm in the fall to major in dairy science.

Most of the time the Kelly family can be found at home, because they decided eight years ago that Spring Lane Farm is "home." A farm, where they belong.