

# Meet the new House Ag Committee chairman

## Chester Co. dairyman Sam Morris

**BY SHEILA MILLER**  
**PUGHTOWN** — Standing tall in the Pennsylvania legislature is an easy task for Chester County Representative Samuel W. Morris, the new House Agricultural Committee chairman. The 64-year old state legislator, who has been serving his 155th District constituents since 1967 (with a two-year break between 1978 and 1980), makes all of his 6'2" presence felt when it comes to tackling farm problems.

Morris' keen concern for

agriculture in the Keystone State can be attributed to the fact that he, too, is a farmer. He bought his first farm in Phoenixville in 1942, the same year he enlisted in the armed services. Following his tour of duty, and with the pressures of a growing family, Morris told *Lancaster Farming* that he purchased his present farm, a historic landmark located along Route 100, in 1946.

Over the years, the thrust of Morris' farming efforts were diversified between livestock and

dairying. Today, a newly remodeled Dutch-style barn houses 31 head of registered and grade Holstein cows on the home farm, a small flock of chickens roam a fenced-in coop providing the daily supply of eggs for the Morrises, and a lot of growing feeder pigs squeal as Morris wanders over to check their "pork" progress.

Things are quieter at the farm, now, since the seven children have grown up and left the farm. The big stone farmhouse, built in 1796, is filled with family pictures, books and heirloom furniture — and quiet as a mouse. Both Morris and wife Eleanor are kept busy off the farm — he, devoting most of his days to "farming" the legislative hall in Harrisburg, and she, guiding the efforts of the French and Pickering Conservation Trust.

While the Morrises are away from the farm, the well-being of the dairy cattle is seen to by herdsman Kenneth Brown. Although the Morris dairy barn at one time held 55 milkers, the milking string has been cutback to its present 31 head who pump out a rolling herd average of 14,500 pounds milk and 550 pounds fat with a 3.5 test.

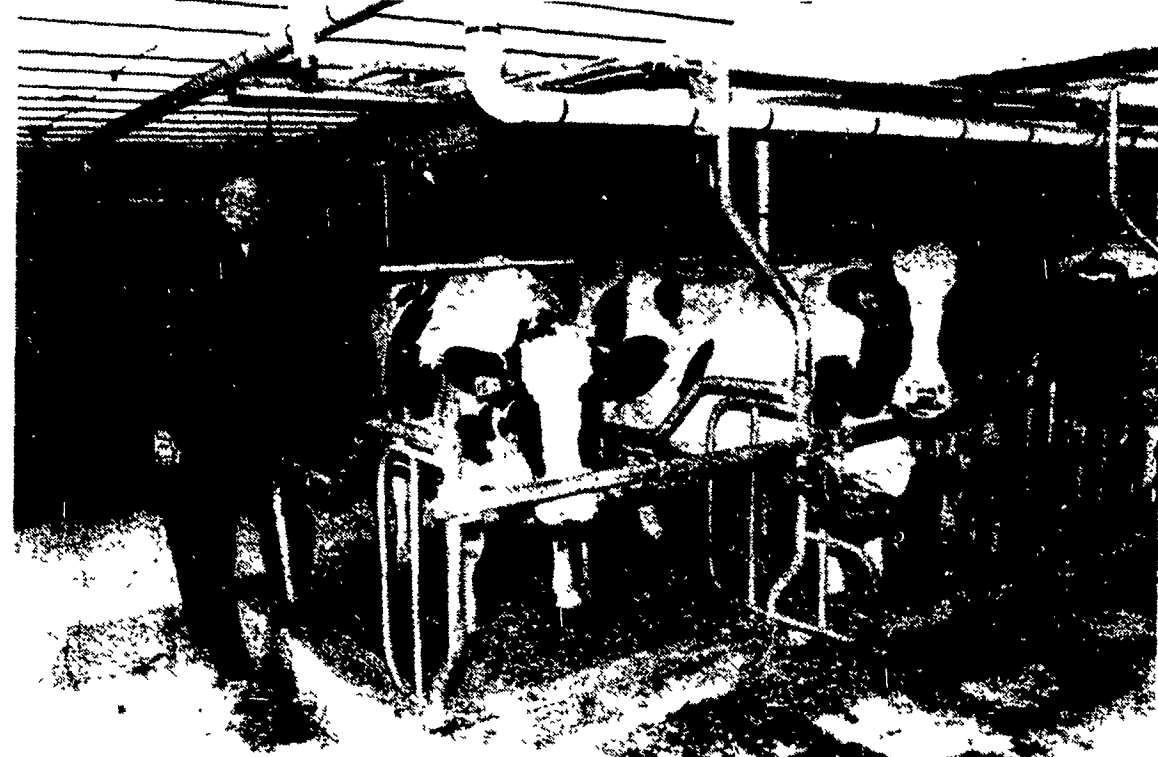
The milking string rests comfortably on cow mats in the renovated comfort stall barn, waiting for the time when the stainless steel pipeline will carry their half-day output to the waiting Surge tank (the big white tank is



Quieter now that the seven children have grown up and left home, Morris' old stone home, built in 1796, provides a quiet place for the new House Ag Chairman to contemplate the ever-present issues facing farmers.



Part of the remodeling effort tackled last year included the installation of this picket-fence manure holding structure. Morris said he was convinced that this was the "way to go" after visiting the Lancaster county dairy farm owned by Robert and Susan Kauffman, Peach Bottom, where a similar structure was operating successfully.



Morris' 31 head of registered and grade Holstein milkers rest comfortably in their recently remodeled Dutch-style barn. The Morris girls record an average milk production close to 15,000 pounds with a 3.5 test.



Chester County Representative Samuel L. Morris (D-155th) receives the support needed by a busy Ag Committee chairman from equally-busy wife Eleanor. The couple raised seven children, four boys and three girls, on their Chester County dairy farm, while farming and pursuing careers.



Helping hands on the Morris farms keep the 500 acres of cropland in production and the cows in top condition. Dan Hammond, left, has been working on the Morris farm for the past seven years while herdsman Kenneth Brown, center, has been learning the dairy business for the past five.

dubbed "Moby Dick" by Morris' youngest son Christopher, 22, a student at the University of Pennsylvania).

Explained Brown, the cows are fed according to their DHIA production records. A 50-pound cow, he said, receives 15 pounds of high moisture corn, 2 pounds of concentrate, 2 pounds of roasted soybeans, 20 pounds of haylage, 25 pounds of corn silage, and 12 pounds of alfalfa hay. All of this feed ration is grown on the Morris farms, which now number three, except the commercial concentrate.

Few replacement heifers are purchased to fill out the milking string, said Morris. He pointed out that his heifer calves are "homegrown" in calf hutches, and are products of several popular AI sires — Danny Boy, M-Jaybee Astro Josie, Arlinda Astrocharm, Elm-Creek Astro Don, Bayless Astro Sneaker, Marvex, and Superior. These bulls are selected for their production genetic potential.

Treated green lumber fences the concreted barnyard in front of the bank barn where dry cows and older heifers bide their time in a freestall wing. And the barn's gutter cleaner travels underneath this scraped-clean loafing area to a year-old picket-fence manure holding structure.

In talking about his extensive

remodeling efforts carried out in 1982, Morris said, "I took the bull by the horns and did a lot at once. It was either do something, or get out of the dairy business." A trip to the Robert Kauffman farm in Lancaster County convinced him on the manure storage structure, he recalled.

Although modern-day milking machines did away with the need to milk each cow by hand some time ago, Morris, who wasn't raised on a farm, said he used to milk each of his eight cows himself when he first started farming. "I like to milk cows," said Morris, pointing out that he'd still do it himself if time allowed.

But the demands of politics leave little time to farm 500 acres and milk cows, although the concerns of the operation are constantly a reminder to Morris of the farming situation.

"I remember a time back in the '60s when it didn't pay to grow corn, and I wondered why I was growing it. If it wasn't for the fact that I needed the crop for silage, I could have bought it cheaper," he recalled. He observed that the same situation is facing farmers today.

"Agriculture has plenty of problems in good times," he philosophized. "And these aren't good times."

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