

# Ayrshire herd proves dreams do come true

By Sally Bair  
Staff Correspondent

Ann Young believes in dreaming dreams and then working hard to make them come true. In fact, she says candidly, "Dream what you want. There are not enough dreams today."

Her dream began as a youngster and is realized today in the herd of outstanding Ayrshire cattle she has built by sheer hard work. "From the time I was ten years old I wanted to be a farmer," she recalls. "My father had Ayrshires and I kept all his records. I was the only one in the family that liked cows."

From a meager beginning following graduation from high school "scared to death," Ann now owns, with her husband J. Nelson, Timberlawn Farm in Chester County, well known for its Ayrshire breeding stock.

She points out, "I started raising heifers when I was about 12, and I paid for every one. I never took any money from my family." She got the money for that important first heifer by raising chickens and saving the egg money.

She laughs as she recalls that she was not allowed to have a calf as a 4-H project despite the fact that she took clothing and cooking projects. "My mother wanted me to be anything but a farmer," she says.

Characteristically that did not deter Ann. After graduation she worked for her father for "thirds" one year, then struck out on her own, renting a barn and pasture near Chadds Ford, and borrowing money to purchase 10 heifers. From there she has increased her herd size to 94 milkers and about 120 heifers.

When she married Nelson "in 1946 or 47" it as a good partnership because with his fondness for crops and hers for cows, all the work on the farm got done. Of course, there is plenty of sharing, and Ann says with pride that she bales all the hay. Their five children, four girls and a boy, all helped on the farm as they grew up. Son Charles is now farming with the Youngs and it is his wife Debbie who helps Ann with the milking chores. All the girls took an interest, Ann says, and one

is now on an Ayrshire farm in Iowa.

She says wistfully, "A farm needs everybody. It takes everybody to make it work."

Ann today is a very independent person, and was liberated before her time. After attending Catholic School in ninth grade, her family moved and was near Unionville schools which had ag classes. Of course, Ann wanted very much to be in those classes, but in 1940 that was unheard of. "The ag teacher went to the school board 14 times before they let me in. I loved every minute of it and had two wonderful teachers, Bob Struble, and John Corman."

How did the boys react to a girl in their classes? "They respected me and I respected them," Ann replies. "I got along with the boys."

Her enthusiasm for Ayrshires stems from her father's herd, and she says he established it in response to the small dairy to which he shipped which wanted "baby milk." With its very small fat globules, Ayrshire milk is very easily digested.

One primary reason Ann likes Ayrshires is simply their robust health. She says, "Ayrshires are very hardy, and they are very good at using roughage. Calves are very easy to raise. They don't have big calves like Holsteins, and we don't lose them at birth."

The one disadvantage which people associate with Ayrshires, Ann says, is nervousness, but adds, "I think nervousness is past. We have no trouble with that."

A member of the National Ayrshire Breeders Association since 1942, Ann has been active in its activities. She is currently a director and is up for re-election at their April national meeting, and she served a term in 1971-72. She is also a director for the Pennsylvania Ayrshire Association and is active with the Southeastern Pennsylvania group.

She says, "I enjoy the Ayrshire Fraternity. We always have lots of guests dropping in and I enjoy that part. We have a common bond."

Ann explains that the first Ayrshire cattle came to this country when shipowners carried



Ann Young is proud of the registered Ayrshire cattle at Timberlawn Farm which she owns with husband J. Nelson. "All I ever lived for was a good herd of Ayrshires," Ann states, recalling that she wanted to be a farmer from the time she was 10 years old. She purchased her first heifer at age 12.

them along to provide fresh milk for the arduous Atlantic crossing. The origin of the breed is County Ayr in Scotland, where, she says, "Every farm has them."

The highest concentration of Ayrshire cattle is in northern England and she says 88 percent of the cattle in Finland are Ayrshires. They can also be found in countries like Russia and Czechoslovakia.

The European Ayrshires resemble the American strain except that in Scotland, "They have a shorter leg. Ours are taller, but I think that's partly environment. Those cattle live on pasture and hay and receive no grain," Ann states.

Optimistic about the breed's future, Ann says, "The numbers are up. A lot of young folks are interested in Ayrshires. They choose Ayrshires over Holsteins because the Holstein association is so big. They like to get in where they feel a part of it."

And, of course if protein testing becomes a reality, as Ann feels it will, Ayrshires will have a definite advantage. "They give us good protein, and you can sell protein; you can't sell fat."

In Pennsylvania, Ayrshire breeders with cattle to sell are overstocked, but in some parts of the country it is difficult to find large numbers of Ayrshires for sale. Ann says she tries to consign animals to every sale.

A firm believer in DHIA and DHIR, Ann notes, "If you want to know what you're doing, you use those records."

Her breeding program is largely AI, with her husband doing the breeding. She says, "I buy semen wherever I can, from Canada and everywhere. What I like about AI is that you plan things. It gives you a choice. Before AI you looked and hoped, but that's all. You used one bull it was a game of chance. That has ruined more dairymen than anything else."

The Lippitt Roger bull which she purchased in 1968 had a big influence on the Timberlawn herd. Ann says, "He came from Rhode Island with purely Scottish breeding. He was the first bull who really helped with type, production and disposition. He gave us size and was a big influence. I used his sons."

Ann has a lot of pride in families she has bred and appreciates it when an outsider recognizes the strong influence on her herd.

One cow of whom they are particularly proud is Timberlawn Hi White Rose II, from the Rose



Relaxation for Ann means looking through records or reading material pertaining to Ayrshire cattle. Currently a director for the National Ayrshire Breeders Association, Ann is up for re-election at the Association's annual meeting in April. "I enjoy the Ayrshire fraternity. We have a common bond," she says.

family. She has a record of 18,234 milk, 3.8 test and 702 fat.

About the future of her herd, Ann says, "I hope I can always be improving. I'm always looking for better sires. If I can hold onto what we have, I'll be happy. Things nicked just right, and I hope to hold it. If you don't breed just right, you can lose it."

Ann is candid about the rough days she lived through establishing her herd and farm, and suggests that one problem, with young people entering farming today is the heavy debt load they are encouraged to take on. "You didn't but anything if you couldn't pay for it when I was going into business," she says. She feels credit institutions and the extension services must share the blame for encouraging heavy debt.

The first farm she purchased was her grandfather's farm near West Chester, but they were forced to move there when "houses moved in" and all the land they rented became unavailable. From there they moved to London Grove, about five miles from their present farm which is just off Route 1 in Chester County. "It took us about a

year to move here," Ann says with a laugh.

The Young's farm is an historic one, having been purchased in 1868 as the Eastern Experimental Farm, a fore runner of Penn State. The farm had nurseries, greenhouses, ice ponds and ice houses, pig pens, chickens and a variety of other farm-relative enterprises. A grove of trees remains which has "every kind of tree you can name," Ann says, including many which were grafted and have two kinds on one trunk. There's a ginkgo tree on the farm that's over 100 years old.

Ann is also in possession of the original William Penn Deed for thousands of acres of land in the area, including their present farm. It dates from 1694. The newest part of the farm home was built in 1840.

So far, the farm remains isolated, despite its nearness to Route 1, but Ann notes, "The houses are starting to close in on us. They are within sight of the barn." When the bypass went through it reduced their acreage from 220 to 160, and they rent additional land for a total of about

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## Homestead Notes

