

Farm wife paints, promotes dairy life

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

BALLY — At five-foot-two, eyes of blue, petite and blonde, Linda Moser raises eyebrows when she announces she's a farm wife.

But this dairy farm wife, also a talented artist, is walking commercial for the milk industry, says, "I try not to be the typical farm wife."

"People tell me I like to be a maverick, doing my own thing, and it's true. I'm discovering our children are the same way too," she says.

Linda, known professionally through her art work as 'Lyn,' resides with her husband LaVerne and their two children Sandy, 15, and Mark, 13, on their 205-acre LaLisa dairy farm in Berks County.

Lyn, true to her character, became a maverick in her art work, also, when she ignored formal art education in preference of self-study.

"I wanted to develop my own style, and I have. I love painting trees and skies and doing landscapes. I'm very emotional about my work and people feel comfortable with it because it's realistic," she relates proudly.

This love of landscape painting combined with her interest in

farming made Lyn a natural for painting farms, although farmers make up only about 15 percent of her clientele.

"Farmers do generally not like to come in to my studio," Lyn says. "They know what they want. They want a picture of their farm, or cow or some logo work done."

Though she doesn't enjoy painting cows because "farmers are so particular with the pictures — they know every hair on that animal" — she relishes the opportunity to paint farm landscapes whether it be from a snapshot, slide or personal visit to the farm.

"When people hear you can paint, they think you can paint anything, so they ask you to," she confides. And the strangest subject she's ever been requested to paint?

"A frog," Lyn laughs.

The largest art work she has ever completed was a hex sign for the Holstein Convention in Reading. Dairy farmer Galen Crouse from Lancaster County later purchased the sign. The same design was also included on the cover of the Convention booklet.

Lyn says she first discovered her interest in art in elementary school, but only dabbled with the talent until she graduated high school.

At the time she was considering college, but "then I met this terrific farmer," she remembers.

"He, of course, asked me to marry him rather than go to college. At that time, I was getting more interested in my art work and saw some potential for that, so I said 'yes.'"

Lyn remembers that "he said then that the farm would have to come first. As any farm wife knows, the farm always comes first. But as we got established, I found more and more time for my art work."

"I'm my own person and I do something I need to be doing," she says of her art. "But my husband encourages me and recognizes that I have to do something I want to do."

She laughs as she remarks, "The most scary words are, 'Wife have you got a minute?' Or, 'Can you run for a part?' This is common of all farm wives," she says wryly, "that when you come back with the part, and they gave you the wrong piece, it's YOUR fault. You never get the right part the first time. And of course, they're not angry at you, but you're the closest one."

Lyn describes her husband as her "worst critic," and that the thing that irks her most is that "he's usually correct; so I appreciate his input."

Although Lyn enjoys painting almost any subject, using virtually any medium, and creating on different forms (she once painted a 6-foot tack box for a farmer), her passion lies with China painting.

China painting is an ancient art involving a unique process of deep colors painted over lighter ones. According to Lyn, this is done through a succession of three or more coats of paint; each coat being fired into the glaze before the next one is applied.

Her 13-year-old studio, housed in the basement of her 31-room estate, displays many pieces Lyn has completed through her teaching. On display, and all for sale, are vases, plates, necklaces and earrings, and pitchers.

Besides her painting, her occasional demonstrations of Middle East dancing, and being a full-time farm wife, Lyn still finds the time to demonstrate art work to groups.

It's on these occasions that Lyn's maverick personality fully surfaces: "I always give a commercial," she announces.

"I take pamphlets and brochures about milk and cheese with me. Usually somewhere in my art demonstration I announce 'Every show has a commercial, so here's mine.' Then I proceed to tell them that I'm a farm wife and that they should eat dairy products."

"The commercial makes a novelty. It's something different. The groups are usually non-farm wives, so when they find out you're a dairy farmer, they realize that they forgot farms wives can be fashionable, and outgoing."

According to Lyn, the women usually get very inquisitive,



Lyn Moser is particularly proud of this milk can because it's painted "very differently" from other milk cans. The colors, as well as the scene, wrap the sides and slowly fade into whiteness.



Though most people recognize flowers as the most popular subject for China painting, Lyn chose to paint a landscape complete with Holstein cows on this one, resulting in a very pleasing work of art.

asking, "Do you drive the tractors? Do you milk the cows?"

"Then I'll tell them what an untypical day would be like for me," Lyn laughs. "I count the number of times I change my clothing in one day. . . in the house I dress nice, in the field where I dress for a suntan, in the barn

where I dress in old clothes, and then changing again to run into town for a part."

Lyn says her commercial is always received well. "People love my commercial and people just love dairy recipes."

"And it gives me a chance to say, 'Hey, milk is not fattening. And cheese certainly has its place in the diet. The commercial gives the women something to talk about. They met this crazy lady who paints and farms and promotes milk.'"

Lyn also relates an experience she had while on an art trip in Arizona. "The water was terrible and I couldn't drink it. So I asked for milk. Then the next night somebody heard me, and also asked for milk. The next night a few more asked for it and it just spread around the room. By the end of our stay there, the director came up to me and said, 'Do you know we had to make a special trip into town and get some milk to make sure we had enough.'"

"The women never think of drinking milk," she says.

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Lyn Moser stands by a buffet filled with her China paintings. The buffet, only one of several cabinets holding samples of her work, rests in the studio-basement of her home in Bally, in Berks County.



LaLisa Holsteins, named for LaVerne, Linday and daughter Sandy, was the name given to the 205-acre farm before son Mark was born. Combining her interest in art with the family's business of dairy farming, LaVerne and "Lyn" created this design.



Next to necklaces and earrings, the smallest work Lyn does is belt buckles. The centers of these buckles are China painting, requiring three separate firings and three paintings.