

Meet the Wives of the Master Farmers

Teamwork Pays Off for the Rutts

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

Connie Rutt, wife of Master Farmer Kenneth Rutt, Quarryville, leads an active life on the farm and in the community. She and Ken work as a team both on the farm and in many community activities.

On their dairy farm Connie says she helps "when ever needed," working mostly with the young stock and handling feeding chores while others do the milking. The family does all the work on alternate weekends when the hired men have off, and Connie fills in at other times when they have off or have other work to do. When the family is on duty Ken and the

children milk and Connie handles the additional chores.

Connie and Ken share duties as the organizational leaders of the Solanco Community 4-H Club, which had 110 members last year. Connie has coordinated the sewing program and also serves as a leader for some of the 40 girls enrolled in the sewing project. She enjoys sewing, having learned herself as a member of the Mastersonville Club in northern Lancaster County, and keeps up to date by attending seminars offered through the Extension Service.

She and Ken were both active 4-H'ers and met as members of the County Council. Connie recalls, "I got a lot out of it including meeting



This desk is the center of much activity at the Rutt home. Connie does much of the bookkeeping for the farming operation and their retail business as well as work organizing their community 4-H club.



A recently learned craft is making baskets, and Connie demonstrates the technique in the kitchen of their farm home. Two samples of the finished product are on the table.

kids from all over the county with the same interests. We both hoped our own children would have a good experience in 4-H and so we got involved."

Ken traveled with the livestock judging team, and Connie attended conferences at Penn State, so they both know the opportunities available through 4-H.

Connie pointed out that they like their 4-H work and think it's important for children.

"I don't think kids today get a lot of responsibility. When they decide to take a project they have the responsibility to attend meetings and to complete the project. Responsibility is one of the biggest things I think we teach in 4-H, as well as the responsibility of leadership. We try to get as many kids involved in leadership as possible."

The Rutt children are all in 4-H. Fourteen-year-old Lorri sews, and takes cake decorating as well as her dairy projects. She is also a teen leader, Philip, 12, is in the dairy club and 9-year-old Matthew has a dairy project and takes pet care. This year the children are in three different schools, but they are all within 1 1/2 miles of the Rutt home, south of Quarryville.

About Ken's being named a Master Farmer, Connie says, "I was quite pleased and proud of him. It makes you pleased just to be nominated." Indeed, when you learn that 300 farmers are nominated and 17 were selected for on the farm interviews, the six winners are very special. Connie added, "It was interesting to see

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Homestead Notes

Bookkeeping Duties Kept Irene Busy

BY SALLY BAIR
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Irene Hess lives in the country, but not on the farm. That's not to say she hasn't been involved with her Master Farmer husband Claude in his poultry operations over the years, but they never lived on the farms where the poultry were located.

Irene recalls when her husband gave up a garage business in which she did the bookkeeping to raise poultry on a farm near Brownstown. Those chickens were on the

range, but within seven years Claude had built a cage house, one of the first in the county. In those days Irene was gathering eggs each morning.

Bookkeeping became Irene's contribution to the operations over the years and she also worked as a bookkeeper in a local restaurant. Claude went on to found Plain and Fancy Egg Ranch with two others and then sold out his interest there to begin his present operation. It was eight years ago when he took an interest in computers and

discovered their use in his poultry operation. With the advent of the computer Irene became less involved. She says, "The computer does what I used to do by hand."

After having lived for 23 years along the New Holland Pike in Lancaster, last year the Hesses moved to a home on the lake at Mount Gretna, putting Irene happily in the peace of the country and Claude just six miles from his poultry operation rather than the 24 it had been previously.

Irene says, "I like the quiet. I like the views and I love to walk." Indeed walking has become part of Irene's daily routine since it is necessary to walk 1/2 mile to the local post office to get the mail. That's just the start for Irene, because she often goes in the opposite direction when she sets off to make a longer, more interesting walk.

According to Irene, everything stops in that small community at Labor Day when the summer vacationers go home. But this winter she has joined a group called the "Winterites" and is getting to know a larger number of her country neighbors.

Irene was thrilled when Earl was recognized for his efforts. She says, "He's always trying something new." The visit to the Farm Show in Harrisburg was an enjoyable experience and Irene called the awards ceremony "beautiful." She says she looks forward to meeting with the other Master Farmers at each year's Farm Show and also at a summer picnic.



Irene Hess plays the baby grand in her living room, a pleasure which brings her both relaxation and enjoyment. She is an accomplished pianist and organist.

In the fall, Claude was one of many local poultrymen who had his flock depopulated in the avian flu threat. It was particularly bitter for them because his flock was killed before laboratory tests were complete. Irene recalls the bleak Sunday when the task was done, "I cried all day." Her deepest concern in the matter, however, reaches to those young farmers who will not be able financially to withstand losing their flocks.

Her concern for people is evident

each Wednesday when she travels from her home in Lebanon County to Lancaster General Hospital to work in the gift shop as a volunteer. She said that is one activity she doesn't plan to give up, despite their move.

An accomplished pianist, Irene began piano lessons at eight, then studied music at Elizabethtown College where she played the piano for chapel. In Lancaster she then lived just one half block from the Lancaster Church of the Brethren,

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Creating beautiful embroidery is a hobby which Irene puts a lot of time into. Here she works on one of the many pieces she likes to have going during the winter.