

Sheep farm satisfies city girl's dream

BY JOYCE BUPP
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JEFFERSON — Billie Andrews is one of those rare persons who, even from early childhood, knew exactly what she wanted to do with her life. The Baltimore-born youngster planned, to somehow spend her life working with animals.

At age ten, Billie, the big-city youngster who had resigned to doing without a horse in her urban back yard, began breeding exotic birds like cinnamon ring parakeets and red siskins.

Today she's a full-fledged farmer and livestock breeder. Billie's Corriedale and Romney bloodlines are becoming well-known in purebred sheep circles, and her

high-quality colored fleeces command top prices from discriminating craftsmen.

In between the eras of the exotic birds and the 80-head flock of wooly beasts, she became an accomplished dog groomer and handler, pursued a mixture of college studies and spent time traveling and studying in Europe.

"I took my dog clippers with me wherever I went and could always find a job that way," she remembered of several memorable months spent working her way from Italy to England.

While in England, Billie had the opportunity to expand her knowledge of the dog grooming profession by working under some of the very best canine specialists,

including the wife of the then Keeper of the Keys of the Tower of London.

Returning to the United States, she decided it "was time to get on with my life," by first completing college. After earning her degree in fashion design, she settled in New York with a job in the garment district.

Not particularly happy with her career in the fashion industry, after about six months Billie returned to Baltimore, purchasing property to open her own dog grooming business, "The Dog House."

Determined to have only the most accomplished and qualified people running her business, Billie set up a program to train her specialists for the shop. Demand for her skilled employees soon told this entrepreneur that she could fill a need in the dog industry. Expanding her training program into a teaching center, Billie opened The Baltimore School of Dog Grooming.

The school has proven highly successful, with students applying for the 10-week course from all over the world. Classes are limited to five students per teacher, and every five weeks a new class begins studies. Not only do students learn technical expertise of dog grooming, they are actually taught how to establish and operate a business of their own.

With a successful school and a second branch of the Dog House opened in Washington, D.C., Billie still yearned for something more.

She wanted to farm.

A strictly methodical person from a family with real estate and statistical marketing backgrounds, Billie purchased a book. Written by Les Scher, "Finding and Buying Your Place in the Country" details anything from soil types to digging a well, and became her handbook, studied from cover to cover.

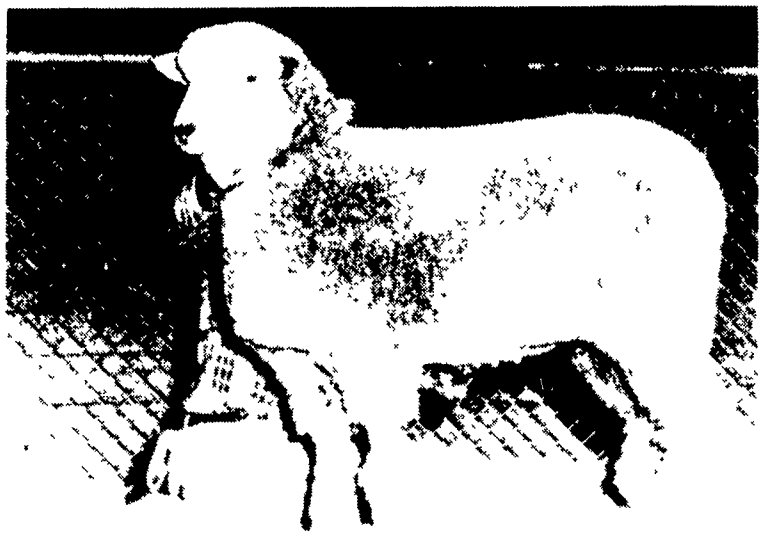
For several years during the early 1970's, Billie spent her weekends exploring the backroads of the middle-Atlantic states in pursuit of properties for sale. Having traveled over much of the world, she is convinced that this area is one of the most beautiful on earth, and the help-one-another philosophy of country people one of its greatest resources. But no property she examined was ever quite right.

"I had almost given up. This was after Hurricane Agnes went through, and it seemed like everything for sale was on a flood plain. But late one day we were out looking, again, and I saw a sign up at the end of this road. When we

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Astro is half of the cornerstone of the Corriedale breeding genetics. Bred by Philip Reister of Tenino, Washington, Astro was champion junior ram at the California Cow Palace expo in 1981 and reserve champion at Seattle's Pacific International.



Aurora, also bred by Philip Reister, is the other half. Aurora won champion junior ewe lamb honors in 1979 at the Pacific International show, then topped the Merlan-Reister 1980 production sale.



Diversity describes Andrews' flock, geared toward four separate breeding programs of purebred Corriedales and Romneys, a colored-fleece flock, and a red-fleece flock.



Learning to spin made Billie Andrews more able to understand her customers' needs for wool fiber. In the "wool room" near her spinning wheel are assorted retail samples and experiments she has underway. The skeins of wool have been dyed with natural colors from such plants as walnut and goldenrod.

Homestead Notes



On a detailed topographical model of her 100-acre farm, Billie Andrews plans additional pasture fencing and plots the location of the new barn to house her unique flock.