

East German immigrant finds pleasure in U.S. farming

BY BARBARA RADER
Staff Correspondent

SLIPPERY ROCK — The 51-cow Holstein herd of a former East German refugee, who is now living on a picturesque farm east of Slippery Rock, topped Butler County's 1983 DHIA record for the second consecutive year with a record of 21,499 pounds of milk and 759 pounds of butterfat.

Joe Lange's dairy operation has come a long way since he and his family fled from East Germany in 1953. Joe, his parents Paul and Erika Lange, sister Lisa and brother Paul left behind them their family farm, all their possessions and the Communist-rule only to live in refugee camps. After a year's correspondence with Ewald Lange, Joe's uncle, the family moved to the United States in 1954.

Ewald Lange had agreed to sponsor the family for the following five years, enabling them to immigrate to the United States and settle in Pennsylvania. Speaking no English and the children having only an 8th grade education, the family, with the help of Uncle Ewald, got jobs at a resort being constructed at Seven Springs.

As time passed, the family experienced unhappiness at not being able to do what they liked best -

dairy farming. So a farm was sought and Joe's parents rented a 176-acre farm which is now the main homestead. The milking operation is located on this farm, and is the home of hired hand Mike Campbell and his wife, Laura, and four children.

The farm was rented for four years until 1959 when Mellon Bank in Harrisville agreed to finance the Langes at a five percent interest rate. Starting out with a mixed herd of 25 to 30 Jerseys, Guernseys, Holsteins and one Ayrshire, the Langes began dairy farming in Pennsylvania. Three years later, in July 1962, the entire family took its oaths at the Butler County Courthouse and became U.S. Citizens.

Within 10 years, the main farmstead was paid for, and Joe was looking at expansion. In 1968, he purchased the 163-acre farm where his family now resides. The previous owner carried the mortgage at six percent interest, and the farm was paid for over a 14-year period. To connect this farm and the original homestead, Joe purchased an additional 43 acres.

In February 1969, Joe married Martha Pizor, a girl who lived on a dairy farm herself and had been employed by Agway. "If he hadn't

come to Agway for seed," Martha recalled, "I would have never met him."

Martha's acquired knowledge through her work at Agway gave her the responsibilities of being the farm's main bookkeeper, along with bearing two sons, Ron and Steve, who are now 12 and 8-years-old and attending Slippery Rock Area School.

Three years following his marriage, tragedy struck when both Joe's parents passed away. But in 1974 things were looking up when the Sunbeam Coal Company began strip mining for coal. This they did until 1977.

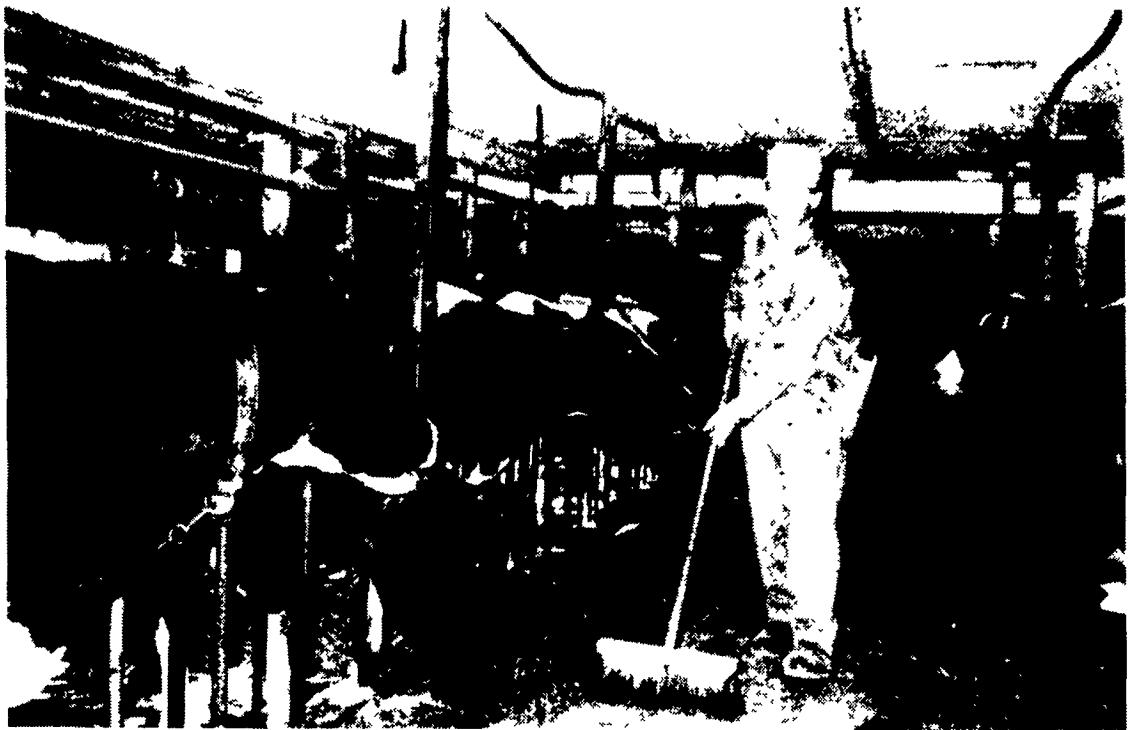
Joe said he wanted to reinvest the money into the farm, so he developed a better feeding program for his cows. That's when a Harvester Silo for corn was erected, followed a year later by another Harvester for haylage. In 1979 a Harvester Slurrystore liquid manure system was added, as well as up-dated farm equipment which enabled Joe to spend more time with his cows.

The dairy herd was enrolled in the county DHIA program in 1968. The mixed herd of 46 Guernseys and Holsteins topped the county records with 16,301 pounds of milk and 628 pounds of butterfat. Increasing cow numbers to 53, the herd again topped the charts with 17,437 pounds of milk and 676 pounds of butterfat in 1974.

Maintaining the herd at 53 cows, this time all Holsteins, Joe's cows set another high record of 19,834 pounds of milk and 694 pounds of butterfat in 1982. Joe remained on top this year in the county DHIA

(Turn to Page A32)

Getting close to milking time



Just before milking, Joe Lange sweeps the feed back in front of the cows.

Mike Campbell helps out



Hired hand Mike Campbell is in charge of keeping the barn and cows clean.

Hutches for smallfry



Clean calf hutches are part of the management practices used by Joe Lange, left, and hired hand Mike Campbell.

Picturesque farm is now home



This picturesque farm is home to East German immigrant Joe Lange and his family.

One of top producers



Joe Lange, left, and Mike Campbell look over Lori, one of the farm's top milk producers.