

Williams family hosts Indian IFYE

BY SALLY BAIR
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MIDDLETOWN — Twenty-two years ago Tom Williams traveled to India as part of the International Farm Youth Exchange program, and lived with families in that country for six months, learning their agriculture and their way of life. In May, the Williams family had an opportunity to return the hospitality extended to Tom by sharing their home with Naveen Gowda, 20, the son of one of Tom's host families.

The Williams family, which resides on a Jersey farm near Middletown in Dauphin County, has hosted many foreign visitors over the years, but were especially happy to be hosting Naveen, whose family had one of the few privately-owned dairies in India. The Williams had corresponded with the family over the years since Tom had been there.

Naveen's family even has some Jersey cows, along with their Holsteins and Red Danish, although he explained that the cows are not purebred, but mixed with local stock for strength.

The climate is quite different from the climate in this part of the United States, and cows must regularly withstand temperatures of 100 to 105 degrees. Tom explains that it is not humid, "just hot," and Naveen describes his home in Bangalore as the "coolest place in South India." His home is on a plateau, 3,000 feet above sea level.

The mild climate and the ready supply of labor makes dairying in India quite a different proposition than in Pennsylvania. The milking parlor is an open "shed," and the milking is done by hand. Naveen explains, "We don't have milking machines. We can afford more labor."

Another difference a large labor force can make, Naveen says is that "We use people instead of fences." The animals go into a main enclosure at night, but during the day people watch to make sure they don't wander off.

With 40 acres and about 20 cows Naveen characterizes his farm as "pretty small." That's by American standards. In fact, most true dairies in India are owned by the government, and could have up to 1,000 cows. At one time the Gowda family had a herd of 75 cows, making it the largest private farm in the state.

Naveen's father had a tremendous interest in dairying. Naveen recalls, "My Dad started with one cow, to give milk for my brother, then he increased to five. Mother milked the cows then." A

keen breeder of top quality animals, Naveen's father had many show animals in his herd as it increased to 75 head. He bred one nationally-recognized cow which was used as a model. Today top-quality cows may bring from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

After his father died, Naveen's mother continued to operate the dairy, but cow numbers have decreased. In fact, Naveen foresees selling out all the cows, explaining, "We aren't making income on it."

The family markets its milk directly from the farm, with people bringing their own containers. When the dairy was at its height, they delivered milk to customers.

Although it is rare for women to milk in India, Naveen says his father introduced the idea, and today they still employ one woman milker. Milking two times daily, Naveen says a milker may be paid \$1.00 per cow per month.

Breeding is done artificially, with most of the semen imported from the United States and Europe. Naveen said the Red Danish cows are "like Holsteins but with more butterfat."

Calves are weaned as soon as they are born, but are fed their mother's milk for a month. Because of the protected status of cows in India, there is little market for beef, and Naveen says they give their male calves to the butcher. He later corrected that assertion and says they get about \$1 per calf.

He said that veterinarian services are free to most villagers, who usually keep one cow for their own use. Other agricultural services are also free.

When the family had 75 head of cows they bought fodder from outside sources, but with the reduced numbers, they now produce their own fodder and purchase grain concentrate. Production is low by U.S. standards, averaging 3,000 to 4,000 pounds per lactation.

A big difference from the dairy situation in the United States is that milk is in very short supply in India, making it very expensive to buy. Naveen estimates that it costs about 3 rupees for a liter of milk, and the average wage is about 7-8 rupees a day. Milk produced by the individual cows in the village's is of poor quality, he states, but that produced in dairies is good quality with high butterfat.

Naveen notes that in India it is believed to be bad luck to have a black cow, and that the most desirable cow is one that has a white "v" on its forehead.

Since Hindus do not eat beef, it is the cheapest meat available. Conversely, turkey is the most expensive meat in the country, followed by chicken, pork and mutton.

Naveen said, "At home we have what you have here to eat, but we have rice every day." But he adds, "I miss my spices." Even the bottle of hot sauce on the table at the Williamses doesn't add the necessary zip to the foods. He points out that curds are frequently served as an antidote to the hot food.

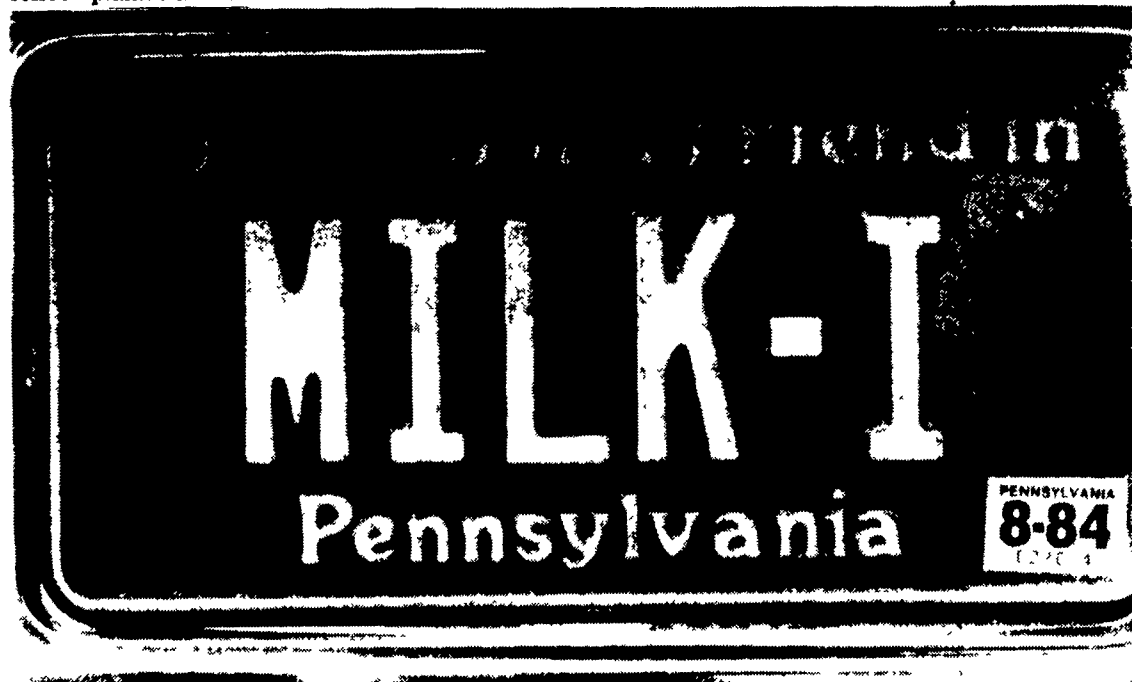
Naveen's mother is Danish, and therefore they eat meals on a schedule similar to that followed in this country. He said that Indian families would have breakfast of curries and hot food, a hot lunch, a tea which would include a large snack, and the big meal of the day at 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. His family eats the evening meal earlier.

Having completed 12 years of schooling in India, Naveen speaks exceptional English because he attended a British private school. He spent a year on the family dairy farm, and now is at the end of a six-month trip to this country, visiting family and friends.

When he returns to India, Naveen will probably work on the family coffee plantation, located about 200 miles from the dairy. The coffee plantation is in Chick-



Letters from home help keep Naveen from getting homesick for his native India, although he does admit to missing the spicy foods to which he is accustomed.



Advertising is always valuable, and Tom Williams decided to let everyone know about the product he produces. When he applied for the license plate, the plate MILK -1 was already taken, so he used some ingenuity and applied for the letter "i" instead of the numeral "1." Now he can encourage people to drink milk wherever he goes, and in this active family, the car goes many places.

magalur, the source of 75 percent of the coffee produced in India.

There the Gowda family raises 400 acres of Arabika coffee and robusto coffee. They raise the seedlings in a nursery, transplanting them as needed to the coffee estate. A coffee plant is productive for 40 years, Naveen explained, but there is a continuing process of removing old plants and adding new ones. A plant will begin to yield at three years, and must be

constantly pruned for highest yields.

The coffee is harvested by hand mainly in December and January, using 150 workers. Naveen explains that the family provides living quarters for the workers, and school for the workers' children.

The coffee plantation, owned jointly of Naveen's father and uncle, provides the family's major income.

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Feeding the Heifers hay is one job that Naveen can easily do in the few weeks he is spending with the Tom Williams family in Dauphin County.

Homestead Notes