

20,000 celebrate 'hot time' at Keister's

By Glenn B. Knight

MIDDLEBURG — Keister's Pennsylvania Agriculture Promotion is fast becoming the ag happening of the year for farmers and city-folk alike. Tuesday marked the third year for the Middleburg event and, despite scorching 90-degree temperatures, 20,000 visitors turned out.

The heat helped the milk exhibits to sell 250 gallons of ice cream and 57 gallons of milk punch — the surprise hit of the show. Walt Keister, event promoter, also announced that 560 pounds of beef, five complete hogs and an uncounted number of "bunny burgers" were all sold out by 6 p.m. An estimated 2,000 quarts of strawberries were bought by the crowd.

When not eating or discussing farming at one of the 46 agricultural exhibits, much of the crowd enjoyed the horse-pulling competitions. Twenty one draft teams were entered in the day's events, 11 in the heavyweight (combined 3,200 pounds or more) division. Jim Howard and Lester Specht of Ebensburg took first place in the lightweight division with their team pulling 6,000 pounds for 20 feet 3 inches.

Many of the various ag exhibitors spiced up the midway by bringing along their princesses and queens. The Pennsylvania Pork Council topped off the list of royalty with their Pork King, Eugene Wenger of Mount Joy.

The whole day was a study in contrasts. Hard working farm people were relaxing for a day. Big monster four-wheel drive trucks shared parking spaces with Amish wagons. Flea Market antiques were set against a back-drop of satellite television dishes.

Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, J. Luther Snyder, spent much of the day lending an ear to the people his office supports, taking thoughts and feelings with him back to Harrisburg.

But the continuing theme of the entire day was food. "We farmers produce it, why shouldn't we enjoy it," shouted one elderly gent in his clean bib overalls. And eat they did — to maintain the three-year tradition of running out of food.

Keister said, "We started out by just inviting anyone who wanted to come and enjoy themselves and in only three years we have grown to what it is today." He continued on to state — for perhaps the hundredth time — that the 46 agricultural exhibitors were not charged for their space. "We want the best representation of Pennsylvania agriculture that we can get."

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Thousands of visitors jammed the outdoor flea market at Keister's Auction.



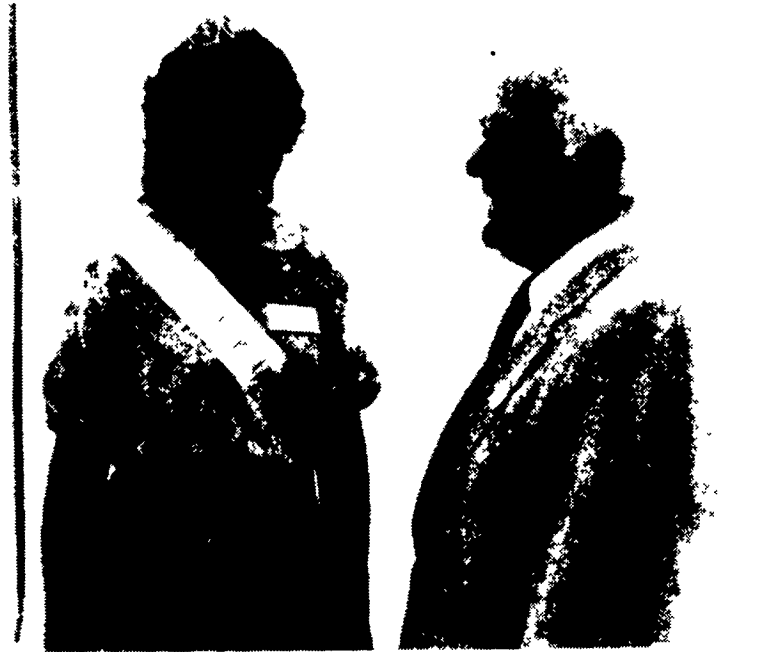
The Pennsylvania Pork Council's Pork King, Eugene Wenger of Mount Joy, helps prepare one of the five hogs that was sold out by 6 P.M.



Nine queens and a king team up to offer visitor's samples of some of Pennsylvania's finest foods.



Harold and Walt Keister take a break in the day's action with Joan Liesau who was representing the Pennsylvania Meat Marketing Program of the Department of Agriculture.



Heather Schofield, Millerstown, has some advice for Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, J. Luther Snyder. Heather is the 1984 Pennsylvania Cattleman's Queen.



Sam spent much of the day delighting little people who could talk with him on his own level.