

Little Pond Jerseys garner top state awards

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
Staff Correspondent

TROY — Each year many dairy herds across the state are honored for besting all others of their breed in milk, fat, and lately, protein production. Sometimes a dairyman is proud to obtain two awards, for high milk and fat production, or high milk and protein production or vice versa. Very rarely can a dairy herd claim all three awards, but it's not impossible.

The Little Pond Jersey herd of Calvin and Judy Watson, R2 Troy, proved it. Earlier this year, the Watson herd was honored by the Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club with the awards for the highest Jersey herd in the state for milk, fat and protein production.

A young dairyman with a young herd, 23-year-old Calvin Watson is quick to point out that he had his father's help. His father, Roy Watson, helped him to purchase his farm and set him up with a dairy herd. Although Calvin moved away from the family for a time in 1982, the farm was waiting for him when he got back.

With a few of his own cows, Calvin's father again helped him get started by supplying him with first-calf heifers to fill the barn. With an average of 34 cows, two-thirds of them were 2-year-olds, this young Jersey dairyman achieved 14,616 pounds of milk, 5 percent butterfat and 737 pounds fat and 3.7 percent and 545 pounds of protein (actual production) in 1983 with his herd to bring him statewide honors.

"We had a good bunch of first calf heifers this last year," Calvin admits. Among them is a heifer his father had purchased as a calf which will be featured in the elder

Watson's Smokey Hill Production Sale. Pine Buff General Gladys in 365 days at one year and 10 months pumped out 18,568 pounds milk, 5.3 percent butterfat and 976 pounds fat.

Another herdmate that Calvin bought from his father as a calf, Smokey Hill Chocolate Mindy, milked 14,228 pounds milk, 5.1 percent butterfat and 731 pounds fat actual at one year and ten months of age. Calvin states that he likes to have his first-calf heifers milk at least 10,000 pounds and says that with proper care they usually do. He only culls them for a poor record "if she doesn't have any excuses."

According to Calvin, it is the fresh feed he makes available to his cows all the time that makes them milk and test so well. His cows receive grass haylage twice a day, corn silage twice a day and grain on top of the silage twice a day.

"Everytime we feed silage, we feed grain on top of it," Calvin says. The Watsons grind their own rations and balance it according to the forage that is being fed. Forage samples are taken every six months.

The haylage does not contain much alfalfa and, Calvin says, this helps to keep his butterfat test high. "Our herd average is running 5.1 percent now. We've never been under 5.0 percent," he says. No dry hay is fed to the cows and the haylage is chopped quite long. They do not use the recutter when chopping their haylage. Calvin adds, "The grain on the silage makes them eat it better, they'll eat more."

The cows are fed four times a day. Before each feeding, Calvin scrapes away any uneaten feed

and gives the cows fresh portions. Roy adds, "feeding on time is as important as milking on time," a fact he taught his sons as youngsters. Both Watson's admit that the herd average began to climb when the ration was

balanced according to their forage and when they switched to four times a day feeding. "I spend a lot of time out there, I feed them a lot," Calvin says.

Calvin got his start with Jerseys when he was 8-years-old. He said

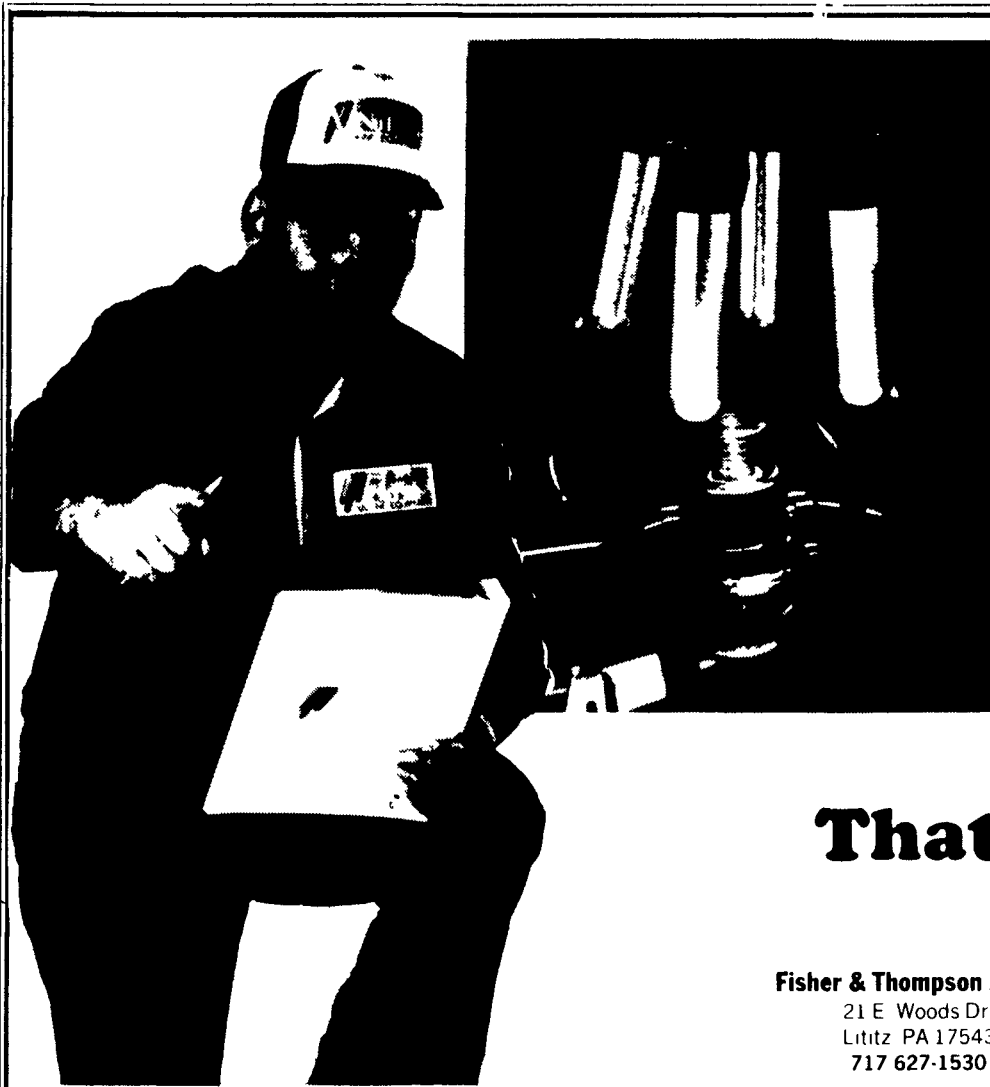
the deal was that dad gave them their first calf when they reached 10 years of age. "Since I went to the barn the earliest, I got mine when I was eight," Calvin says smiling.

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Young Farm Family



The Calvin Watson family, from left, Marty, Judy, twins Matthew and Mark and Calvin, stands with Honey Babe, an excellent 15-year-old which was Calvin's first Jersey cow.



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