

# Guesthouse welcomes visitors to Lancaster County farm

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MANHEIM — Watching cows being milked or calves being born does not sound like the experiences of the average tourist in Lancaster County. But for those who visit the Earl N. Landis family guest house on their dairy farm near East Petersburg, the activities and sounds of farm are part of the vacation. And guests keep coming back for more.

Earl and Evelyn first opened the home for tourists in 1977, and after a slow period, business has picked up so that the only open dates on the summer calendar are those when the family plans to go on its own vacation.

The guest house dates to the late 1700's as does the main farm house, and although no one knows for sure, the Landises assume that it was originally a "grandmother's house," so it has simply been restored to what it once was.

It served many purposes since it was built, but most recently was the Landis' garage including a garage door built in one end. When they decided to renovate the house in 1975, they restored the wall to its original condition, and as they worked on the interior, they found original paint and other features which they incorporated into their guest house.

The house is fully air conditioned and heated, so the only months

which are really slow with reservations are January and February.

Evelyn explained, "We don't get your normal run of tourists. We get many families who are looking for something other than a motel. A lot of them have never stayed on a farm."

Because this is a first for so many, Evelyn gets lots of questions when she handles the phone reservations. She said she tries to allay any fears the visitors may have.

Once guests arrive at the farm, located just a mile from Route 283, they are welcomed with the visual treat of an immaculate lawn and flower beds, and with genuine warmth from members of the Landis family. The stone guest house stands invitingly next to the brick farm house with wide porches.

Most of the guests are "excited about everything," Evelyn says. Usually, though, it is the women who make an effort to get up to see the morning milking, and they are also the most interested in trekking to the barn in the middle of the night if there is an impending birth.

To accommodate visitors, Evelyn says they try to be aware of how guests see things, and she adds, "We try to keep things cleaned up." But the farm is a working farm, and milking, field



Earl and Evelyn Landis home opened the small house to the left of the main brick farm home to guests. Sandblasting and extensive restoration have returned the small "grandmother's" house to its former beauty and warmth and offers a respite to visitors from outside the area. The immaculate landscaping offers a tempting welcome as guests drive onto the farm.

work and other chores must go on daily.

The Landises try to educate while they go about their routine, and welcome guests into the barns to see how milk is produced - a first for most of the city or suburban-born guests.

"We let them try to milk a cow. Some people see it once and that's it. Others like to see it over and over. A lot of people say their grandparents had a farm, and so enjoy visiting one now," Evelyn relates.

After seven years Earl says the animals are accustomed to the visitors and don't seem ill at ease. When visitors wish to milk a cow; however, Earl says they do choose "nice cows."

Earl manages a 53 cow herd, averaging 17,400 pounds of milk. "Most people are glad to see how the milk gets into the tank," Earl states. "They are surprised to see how much a cow eats."

When they began the business, Evelyn said she talked to others with experience who gave some advice. Their first step was placing brochures with the Tourist Bureau and the Mennonite Information Center. Now they also pay to be listed in a Pat Dickerson directory called "Farm, Ranch and Country Vacations." And now, many visitors are repeaters or ones who

have learned of the farm through friends.

Evelyn says it is difficult to pinpoint the average length of stay because it varies so widely. Some stay two to three days, some for a weekend, and some for a week.

The visitors come from as far as California, but the majority are from the East coast, with many from New Jersey, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

The small house offers not only

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Evelyn Landis straightens the quilt on one of the beds in the guest house adjacent to their brick farm home near East Petersburg. The Landis family has been welcoming tourists to the house since 1977.



A fully-equipped kitchen offers guests the opportunity to do their own cooking while spending time in Lancaster County. The close proximity to local farm markets gives them the chance to taste Lancaster County's produce at its freshest.



Evelyn Landis handles most of the reservations, and often does it at this desk in the family room of their spacious farm home. The reservation book is filled for the summer, but dates are being reserved for fall and winter. Guests come from all over the country, but primarily from the eastern seaboard.

# Homestead Notes