

42 farm couples gather for co-op session

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

DANVILLE — Forty-two young farm couples from throughout Pennsylvania attended a two-day conference last week in Danville sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association of Farmers Cooperatives and the College of Agriculture of The Pennsylvania State University.

Sponsored by local farmer cooperatives, the couples had the opportunity to learn more about the cooperative way of doing business, and they learned how they can become more involved and concerned cooperative members.

Robert Reich, general manager of the Northeast Farm Credit and vice president of PAFC, challenged the group to go home and "use what you learn or you'll lose it." He urged them to decide several ways they can get involved in their cooperative and ways to get their friends involved within 48 hours of the conference. "We believe in you," he concluded as he explained the reason co-ops wish them to take a more active role.

Calling co-ops part of "your personal farming operation," N. Alan Bair, director of member services for Atlantic Breeders Cooperative, said, "Co-ops help to create an economic environment you can survive in." He, too, encouraged them to participate further in their local cooperatives.

One of the highlights of the conference was the opportunity to meet with cooperative leaders and ask questions of about 15 managers and directors from cooperatives such as dairy, artificial breeding, farm credit and supply cooperatives. They also had the

chance to raise issues concerning the future of co-ops.

Individual sessions for men and women allowed them to discuss some of the stressful situations shared by all farm couples, including financial concerns, partnerships and how they can be successful, hired help, time for vacations and adequate housing.

A "college bowl" quiz brought out the basics of cooperative principles, and a "mini-board" session with actual problems faced by boards of directors helped them gain insight into the role directors play in keeping cooperatives operating efficiently.

Dr. Kenneth Markley, a counselor for the Narramore Foundation, inspired the group to become more mature people on a personal level, helping them understand that mature persons are realistic in their thinking, are able to be cooperative with others, and can withstand frustrations and disappointments.

Markley told the group that mature people can stand on their own two feet and make decisions, and can accept both praise and criticism with poise.

A mature person, Markley said neither demands nor expects perfection, and he concluded, "The greatest test of maturity is 'Are we willing to reach out and give of ourselves?'"

The Reverend Al Lumpkin, chaplain for Geisinger Medical Center, told the couples that people were created to need each other. "We can't live life separated."

He said that a marriage can be kept alive when there is "an atmosphere in which the needs of two people are met constantly. When people have a marriage that is



Hal Doran, PAFC education director, congratulates the four farm couples who will serve as leaders for the 1985 PAFC Co-op Couples Conference. They were selected from 42 farm couples attending this year's meeting at Danville last week.

Seated are Dixie and Erick Coolidge, left, R7 Wellsboro; and Janet and Jeff Peters, R6 Meadville.

Standing are Jere and Jan Skiles, left, R2 Narvon; and Cynthia and Gary Pepple, R2 Clearville.

alive they did a lot of things to make it happen."

Ed Reichard, dairyman from Cumberland County, spoke to the group in his role as a part of the director couple for PAFC, and told them to remember, "If it is to be, it is up to me."

At the conclusion of the conference four couples were selected to serve in planning and leading

next year's conference

They are:

Jan and Jere Skiles, R2 Narvon, representing the southeast region and sponsored by Inter-State Milk Producers Cooperative.

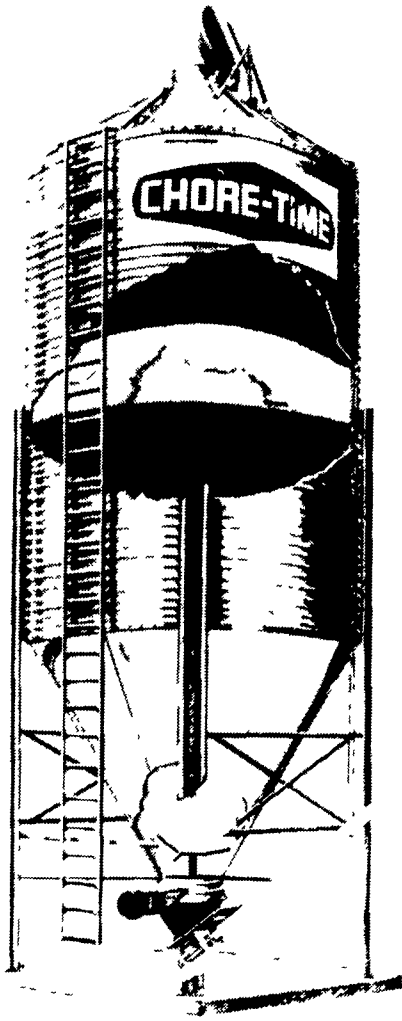
Erick and Dixie Coolidge, R7 Wellsboro, representing the Northern Region and sponsored by Headwaters Farm Credit.

Jeff and Janet Peters, R6 Meadville representing the

Western Region and sponsored by Meadville Farm Credit.

Gary and Cynthia Pepple, R2 Clearville, representing the Southcentral Region and sponsored by Lehigh Valley Farm Credit.

Serving as chair couple for the event will be Frank and Virginia Graybill, Hershey, sponsored by Atlantic Breeders Cooperative.



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