

For Montour County's Georges, there's no place like home

BY JACK HUBLEY

DANVILLE — Young Bobby George was only 14 years old when his father died at the age of 40. Maybe that's why family life is so important to Bob George today.

Whatever the reason, family unity is the keystone in the foundation of George Farms, a combination dairy, beef and butcher operation near Danville in Montour County.

But there are plenty of other important building blocks in that foundation, and the elder George underscores the winning formula as he reviews the past four decades. Diversification, helpful neighbors, a few prudent decisions and a willingness to "do it yourself" have all been important ingredients, according to Bob.

Bob brushes one of his favorite quarter horses and recalls his pre-War start in the poultry business.

"I was out of high school in '38, and from then on I knew I had to work to help provide for mom. So I started selling chickens. Sold quite

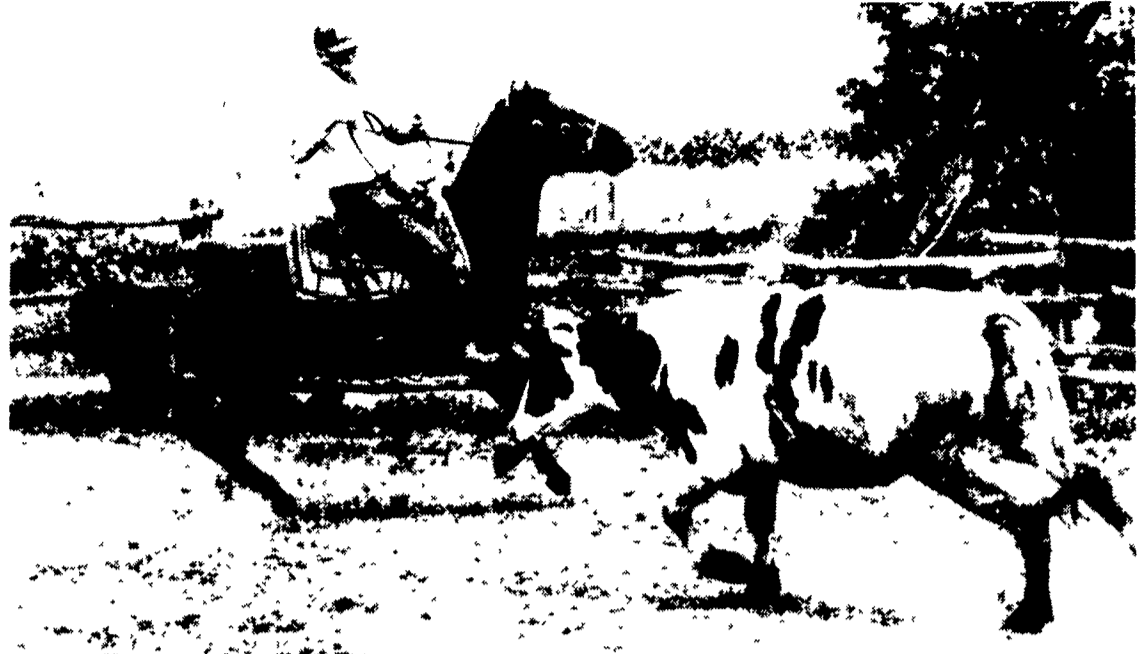
a few during the war years when meat was rationed." And the enterprising young farmer didn't stop there.

"It wasn't long before I started dressing a pig or two, and I had some neighbors who taught me how to make sausage and scrapple. As the years went by, I started doing beef and each year the business grew.

"In 1945 I bought this farm and thought I'd become a full-time farmer, but I soon decided that my wife Ruth and I would still need the butcher business if we were going to raise six kids and keep the bills paid."

In the late 1960's, with the advent of new federal regulations governing meat packing, George had to make an important decision. Should he close his doors, or revamp his operation to meet government standards? He still regards his decision to continue processing meat as one of his wisest business moves.

In 1970 a new sales room was



"When you're on a horse you can forget about work for a while," says Bob, who trains his registered quarter horses to handle cattle.



The "do it yourself" philosophy pervades all facets of the George family operation. Marty built the farm's 10 calf hutches for what he figures was a fraction of the cost of finished units.



Youngest of the George farmers is Ed's son Matt, whose duties include care of the farm's young stock.

added to the shop, and today Bob's son Ed manages the butcher business, processing up to 30 hogs and 15 beef cattle a week. Ed's sisters, Jane and Alice, handle sales and assist in processing, with Jane also taking care of the bookkeeping chores.

Expansion and upgrading of the meat processing facilities continued, using as much "homegrown" labor as possible.

"I always thought it was good management to do as much as you can yourself," says Ed, pointing to an efficient overhead rail system as an example of George family handiwork. "We've never had a building 'made to order', and all of the lumber used in the farm buildings has come from our own woodland," he continues.

Though Ed says that his shop's schedule is flexible during the holiday seasons, Monday and Tuesday are normally reserved for beef processing, and Wednesday and Thursday for hogs. All day Friday as well as Saturday morning, the shop opens its door to retail customers.

"I'd advise anybody who intends to go into the business, to make sure his shop can be easily cleaned, because it will be cleaned," Ed emphasizes, stressing that only those shops that can stand up to rigorous government inspection will survive.

Though inspection isn't required for those animals slaughtered on a custom basis, Ed nevertheless encourages it, stating that the customer can feel confident about what's going into his freezer.

Though the family fattens some of its own beef cattle along with a number of Holstein steers for the butcher shop, all the hogs are bought for slaughter. Ed also buys



Ed manages the butcher shop, handling up to 30 hogs and 15 head of beef during the peak fall months.



Pete manages the 45-cow Holstein herd. Much of the farm's new free-stall barn was constructed by the George brothers, themselves.

dairy cows for bologna and ground beef, and steers from other Danville area farmers. "That way I can tell my customers where their meat comes from and even what it was fed," he asserts. And this is the kind of attention to detail that pleases Ed's father, who points out that, "one dissatisfied customer can sure do a lot of advertising."

After electing to expand the butcher business, Bob once again

was called upon to make a number of important and expensive decisions. Expansion was required if he hoped to keep the family together, so in 1974 George purchased his wife's brother's farm, adding 190 acres to the existing 150-acre farm.

At the same time, the family elected to increase the size of their dairy operation, necessitating increased feed storage capacity.

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The George family farmers take time out for a picture. Bob George rides herd on son Marty, grandson Matt, and sons Ed and Pete. And where are the George women? "They're too busy working to pose for pictures," chuckles Marty.