

Non-Farm Students Study Ag at Penn State

UNIVERSITY PARK — Agriculture is not just for farm youths anymore. Many students enrolled in the agriculture curriculum at the Pennsylvania State University have not grown up on farms but plan to seek careers in the field.

Peter Schafer, of Laureldale, Berks County, a senior majoring in dairy production, became interested in agriculture when his seventh grade football coach asked him to find farm work to build up his muscles. That summer he started working on a friend's dairy farm. He proudly says that he has wanted to farm ever since.

At Penn State Schafer was vice president of Delta Theta Sigma agriculture fraternity and an active member of the Dairy Science Club. He will graduate in December and return to the farm he worked on. It is not clear, however, if a partnership is in the scene.

"I'm not as fortunate as most farm kids," the Berks County student said. "I don't have the same rights birth gives you to the farm."

Karen Long, of Akron, a junior in dairy production, grew up in rural Lancaster County where agriculture was all around her. She spent a lot of time on her uncle's dairy farm and was very active in her high school FFA chapter. She was on numerous judging teams in high school and received her chapter's chain dairy calf.

"When it came to choosing which area of agriculture I wanted to specialize in, I guess you could say I showed partiality," Long pointed out. "I chose dairy because that is what my uncle had and I really grew up with."

She is an active member of the Penn State Dairy Science Club and currently is secretary of the 1985 dairy mall promotion committee.

Long, who is a dean's list student, plans to pursue a career in animal breeding.

"Hopefully, I'll land a job with a bull stud," Long said. "I am currently being considered for a summer internship with Select Sires, Inc."

Last summer she gained experience as a milk tester for the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association. "I really learned a lot about recordkeeping, feeding programs, and keeping milk at its best quality-wise," she said.

James Fitzpatrick, of Doylestown, a freshman in dairy production, has always wanted to farm. "I used to see commercials advertising tractors and dreamed of someday being a farmer, you know, like most kids dream of being a fireman."

Fitzpatrick went to work on his neighbor's Jersey farm, where he started for \$1.75 per hour. As he gained experience his pay increased.

"I was green and I didn't know how to act around animals. I was amazed to learn where we bought feed, how to know where to sell corn. There is just so much to know in this business."

Although just a freshman, he has taken advantage of the activities the Penn State Dairy Science Club offers. He helped with the Ag Arena dedication ceremony, Nittany Lion Fall Classic Dairy Sale, and set up the club's booth at Ag Career Days.

He plans to work as a herdsman on a dairy farm. "I don't know if I could ever afford my own farm and cows today. I enjoy working with the animals so a herdsman's job it is," the Doylestown student noted.

All three students feel they have a lot to catch up on, both on the farm and in the classroom. They all agree that practical education



V. Allan Bandel (center foreground), an Extension agronomist at the University of Maryland, answers questions from farmers during "quiz the experts" session following last year's Mid-Atlantic No-Till Conference. Behind him is A. Morris Decker, a fellow professor of agronomy at the College Park campus. Bandel spoke on nitrogen placement, and Decker spoke on no-tillage establishment of forage crops. Decker will be back for this year's program on Dec. 19 at York. His topic will be "Cover Crops for No-Till."

doesn't seem to be as hard to learn as the theory.

"While most farm boys and girls know from habit when to plant and harvest the different crops, I had to work double time to learn he dates," Long said. "Most of my ag professors take for granted that the seemingly simple items are already known by students, so they have us refer to things back home rather than explain them thoroughly."

As a freshman, Fitzpatrick feels he has a lot to learn. He's never been involved in showing animals and helping at the Nittany Lion Fall Classic gave him an opportunity to find out what is involved.

"I helped wash animals for the club sale and got them ready for the leadsman," he said. "Now I'm really excited about showing a

dairy animal at the Dairy Exposition to be held next April. I will finally get to clip and lead an animal in a show situation. College is a great place to learn all these things because you don't have so many different styles to learn. It also gives you a chance to find a way to learn to do clipping and showing on a do-it-yourself basis."

Schafer and Long feel that studying agriculture and working with farm-reared students have helped them prepare for their careers.

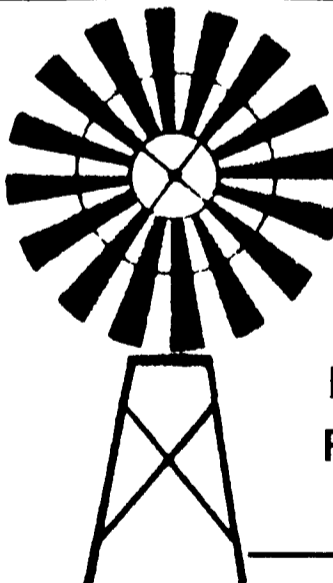

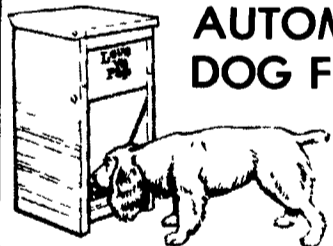


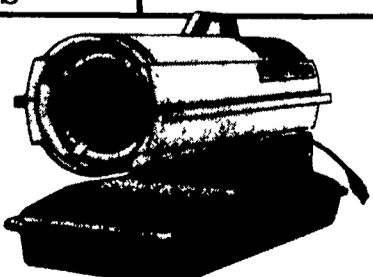

"We're learning to work with other people and have confidence in what we're doing. Penn State is giving us a sound agricultural education and the experience we're receiving is extremely valuable. The desire to work in the ag field is stronger now than ever before," the two agreed.

Now is the Time

(Continued from Page A10)

milk, eggs and meat.

I point this out so that people working with our farmers understand the needs and cares of others. We all need to be patient and understanding and look at the many good things we have to be thankful for... our families, freedom and the ability to come back after being down. Take time to talk with your friends and neighbors and share the many good times you've had together. Let's enjoy the holiday season and be thankful for all the good things in life.

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