

Zartmans share Young Farmer experience, enthusiasm

BY WENDY WEHR

EPHRATA — Rallying to the theme "PYFA — Hope for Our Future," Young Farmers from across the state will gather in Somerset this week for their 25th Annual Winter Conference. On February 6 and 7, enthusiastic, interested farmers will renew their minds and spirits by combining education and leisure during the 1985 conference activities.

And right "in the thick of things" at the 1985 Winter Conference will be Tom Zartman and his wife, Barb, dairy and tobacco farmers from Ephrata. Tom, current president of the Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association, will be heading up the business meeting and awards banquet before turning over his gavel to the incoming PYFA president.

While Tom and Barb look forward to the winter conference this week, they also took time to look back on their busy year and the work that went into planning the PYFA Winter Conference.

Improving the Conference

"Being president kept me busy," says Tom, "but in some ways it was a breeze. I had a really great group to work with." And Barb agrees that the ability of the state officers to work in harmony made everything fall into place very well.

And while Tom holds the title of president, Barb has worked by his side as well, planning the ladies' programs for the conference and serving as "executive secretary" to her husband throughout the year.

Tom is particularly proud of the fact that he and the state officers were able to obtain agri-business sponsorship for two of the meals at the upcoming Winter Conference. Dekalb-Pfizer agreed to pick up the tab for the annual awards banquet, says Tom, which, with the meal, centerpieces, awards

and other expenses, will save the Young Farmers nearly \$5,000.

With this and other sponsorships, the conference costs for the Young Farmers will be nearly halved, and higher attendance is expected for the event, says Tom.

But that's not all the changes to be incorporated into this year's program. In developing the conference scheme Tom and the committee also looked at areas for improvement.

"In the past we always had comments from the table-booth exhibitors that the farmers didn't show enough interest in talking to the exhibitors," explains Tom.

"This year we have a totally different concept where the farmers can socialize with the exhibitors." Everything from all-you-can-eat ice cream to a single thumb corn shelling race to an antique identification contest — all of which will take place in the exhibit booth area — will draw the farmers and agri-business exhibitors together.

"The corn shelling contest even involves the seed corn representatives as judges," adds Tom. "The involvement is going to be there."

And the PYFA officers hope the educational portion of the conference will be a little better this year too. Previously, with three workshops squeezed into a short time period, the farmers experienced a lot of lost time and confusion in moving from one educational program to another.

This year, says Tom, the PYFA Conservation Tillage Contest will be the primary educational event, along with a short presentation on the current dairy situation.

Education, of course, is the main goal of the Young Farmer organization. "A Young Farmer is any farmer willing to learn, willing to participate in adult education in agriculture," reminds Tom. And the conservation tillage program is

just one example of the educational programs offered through Young Farmers.

Conservation education

The three-year conservation project is an "attempt to gather tillage data so that guidelines can be drawn up, and, if someone requests information, so we have something available," explains Tom. Two years of data have been gathered so far, and agronomist Bill Fleet, a former vocational-agriculture teacher who is now with Pioneer, will report on the contest results at the Winter Conference.

Any dues-paying Young Farmer can enter the conservation tillage program, which involves planting 2½ acres conventional and 2½ acres no-till, and keeping accurate records on inputs, costs, yields, moisture, weather, and so forth.

"This is not a yield contest," says Tom. "We gather the data to educate ourselves in the no-till or minimum-till practices."

Six contestants from the Ephrata Young Farmers participated in the program this year. And one day last July a group of Young Farmers went around to the different farms, viewing the plots while a representative from the local SCS office picked the plot to enter in the state contest. "The main thing we're looking at," adds Tom, "is soil erosion, and fertilizer and pesticide run-off."

Looking at the conservation tillage program and the other educational opportunities that Young Farmers provides, Tom never hesitates when answering the question "why Young Farmers?"

"Right away I relate the question to ag education," he says. "Whether it's computers or herbicides, there are new things every day. Any farmer who neglects to keep abreast, is way behind before he knows it."

"Even by going on a farm tour with the Young Farmers, a farmer is educating himself. He sees management techniques that he likes or doesn't, and he'll implement the good ones or make sure he doesn't do the poor ones," continues Tom.

Young Farmer benefits

Many Pennsylvania farmers, including some 2,500 members in more than 45 chapters, are attracted to Young Farmers for its educational benefits. "We're growing slowly," adds Tom. "In



The Zartman family includes Tom and Barb, and two future Young Farmers, Renee, age 11, and Tommy Jr., age 9.

February four new Young Farmer chapters will receive charters from the state." And that's the most ever chartered at one time, recalls Tom, since the founding of Young Farmers in 1955.

A peak membership of nearly 3,000 was attained in 1981 when PYFA hosted the National Young Farmers Institute at Hershey. And for some, like Tom and Barb Zartman, attending those national meetings tops the Young Farmer experience.

"We've visited at least a dozen other states in our Young Farmer work this year, from Indiana and Wyoming to California and Hawaii," recounts Tom. And, he said, learning about farming and ways of life in those other states was an enriching experience. Barb adds that they'll always value the friendships that they've made with Young Farmers across the country.

It was his visits to other states that reinforced Tom's decision to seek agri-business support for the PYFA programs. "I saw the chemical companies and agri-businesses taking care of other states, so there's no reason why

they can't fit us into their budget, too," he reasons.

What was the hardest part of serving as the PYFA president this year? "Having work here at home and having meetings to go to," laughs Tom. The Zartmans milk around 100 head of Holsteins and farm over 400 acres, including about 12 acres of tobacco.

We never have time off, but we take time anyway, agree Barb and Tom. "When they handed me the gavel, I said I'd accept the challenge and do the best I could," adds Tom.

Looking back over the year, Tom and Barb do feel good about their accomplishments and the experience, so maybe it won't be too hard to hand over the gavel to president-elect Jay Grove.

"We're excited and prepared for the 1985 Winter Conference," say Barb and Tom. And they hope that everyone will still consider attending the conference, whether preregistered or not.

The dates are February 6 and 7 at the Ramada Inn, Somerset, off of Exit 10 of the Pa. Turnpike. For more information, call Jeffrey Hillegass at 814-267-5714.



Mt. Joy Co-op honors producer-members

BY WENDY WEHR

MOUNT JOY — Top producers, honor roll herds, and a long-time co-op director received recognition Wednesday at the Annual Meeting of Mt. Joy Farmers Cooperative Assoc. A strong attendance by the co-operating dairy farmers filled Hostetter's banquet room in Mt. Joy for the noon meal on January 30.

President of the Mt. Joy Cooperative's board of directors, Roy Alger chaired the meeting and honored retiring director Henry E. Garber.

A Mt. Joy board member from 1968 to 1985, Garber and his wife received a silver tray for their faithful service to the organization. "I'm proud that I could serve with a man of such caliber," remarked Alger as he made the Garber presentation.

Alger, who also serves on the board of Atlantic Processing, Inc., praised Mt. Joy's affiliation with Lehigh Valley Farmers and API over the years. The farmers were also reminded that more members and more milk is needed.

"Our greatest hope is to have all API's milk provided by our own

producers," said Alger. The member cooperatives of Atlantic Processing, which is actually holding back from making more dairy sales, now supply 80 percent of API's milk.

Reminding the members that Mt. Joy provides a guaranteed market for their entire supply of milk, Alger encouraged them to expand. "We need to grow with them (API)," he concluded. "The more milk sold, the larger our share of equity, the more patronage dividends we will receive."

Following Alger's presentation, Mt. Joy manager Paul Hostetter recognized top producing and honor roll herds. Shipping the most milk last year was Kenneth E. Zurin, with over 4 million pounds of milk.

Others top suppliers were: Donald, Brian, and Gerald Risser; Stoltzfus Farms; C. Robert Greider; Irwin W. Engle; Joe C. Wivell; Floyd and Barry Kreider; Harold Drager and Sons; J. Richard Groff; Fertrell Company (Rufus Miller); Elmer, Emma, Walter, Mary Jane Myers of Donegal Manor Farm; Paul and

Elvin Kreider; Jay L. Bixler; David L. Landis; Titus B. Stoner; and John N. Hertzler.

Mt. Joy and the other API co-ops offer two quality bonuses to producers. By keeping bacteria and SCC counts low and meeting other quality criteria, the dairymen can qualify for either a 10 cent or 20 cent bonus.

Honor roll producers who received plaques from Hostetter were: Harold G. Shelly, Joe C. Wivell, J. Ivan Hanson, Eli W. Breneman, J. Kenneth Miller, Dan K. Breneman, Lester S. Wenger, Glenn M. Shelly, Carl K. Martin, D. Lamar Witmer, and Kenneth E. Zurin.

In other business, two co-op directors were elected by the membership. Roy Alger, president of the board since 1974, was re-elected, and Elvin L. Kreider, a Lebanon County dairymen was also elected.

Special guests at the meeting of the Mt. Joy Co-op were Lancaster County Agent Jay Irwin, and Lancaster and Lebanon Dairy Princesses, Judy Miller and Ellen Hanson.



Roy Alger, left, presents a silver tray to Martha and Henry E. Garber for their faithful service to the Mt. Joy Farmers Cooperative.