

City folks find new home, business on a farmette

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LANCASTER — Less than two years ago, the Kepir family lived in Lancaster City. They operated a used car business and had no pets — not even a goldfish.

Today, Judy Kepir, her husband, Alex, and son, Kip, live on a three-acre farmette that is home for their four dairy goats, 40 rabbits, three German shepherds, one cocker spaniel, and numerous cats.

"We wanted to be out in the country away from the hustle and bustle," Judy explains. So, they sold their used car dealership, purchased a farmette near Strasburg, and began to live out their dream.

But living in the country was only part of the dream. They also wanted to open their own antique business and their farmette was

the perfect place to do so. Their property includes two barns, where the Kepirs store and display their antiques, and there is plenty of room left over for their dairy goats, rabbits and pets.

"We always had in the back of our minds that we wanted an antique shop," Judy says, explaining their decision to sell the used car dealership and leave the city behind.

Judy and Alex have been collecting antiques for years and nearly all of their furnishings speak of an era gone by. Judy says they prefer unique country antiques for themselves and their antique business reflects their personal taste. Most of the antiques they have to offer are what Judy refers to as unique country in "as found" condition. City antiques, she explains, tend to be

fancier and more elaborate than the country ones.

By buying and selling antiques in "as found" condition, the Kepirs say they and their customers can be certain that their purchases are genuine antiques and not reproductions. Sometimes, Judy explained, people try to pass off reproductions as genuine antiques, and, if the reproduction is well done, it is often difficult to tell the difference.

Buying from private dealers is another way to avoid falling into the reproduction trap, Judy said. "By buying that way, we have a little better chance of not getting involved with reproductions," Judy says. The Kepirs do buy most of their antiques from private individuals, but they also purchase some at auctions.

The Kepirs do not refinish any of the antiques they handle at this time. "It takes all of our energies just to get the merchandise," Judy explained.

While Alex does most of the buying, Judy is in charge of selling. They sell their antiques from the two barns on their property. One barn holds primarily furniture, while



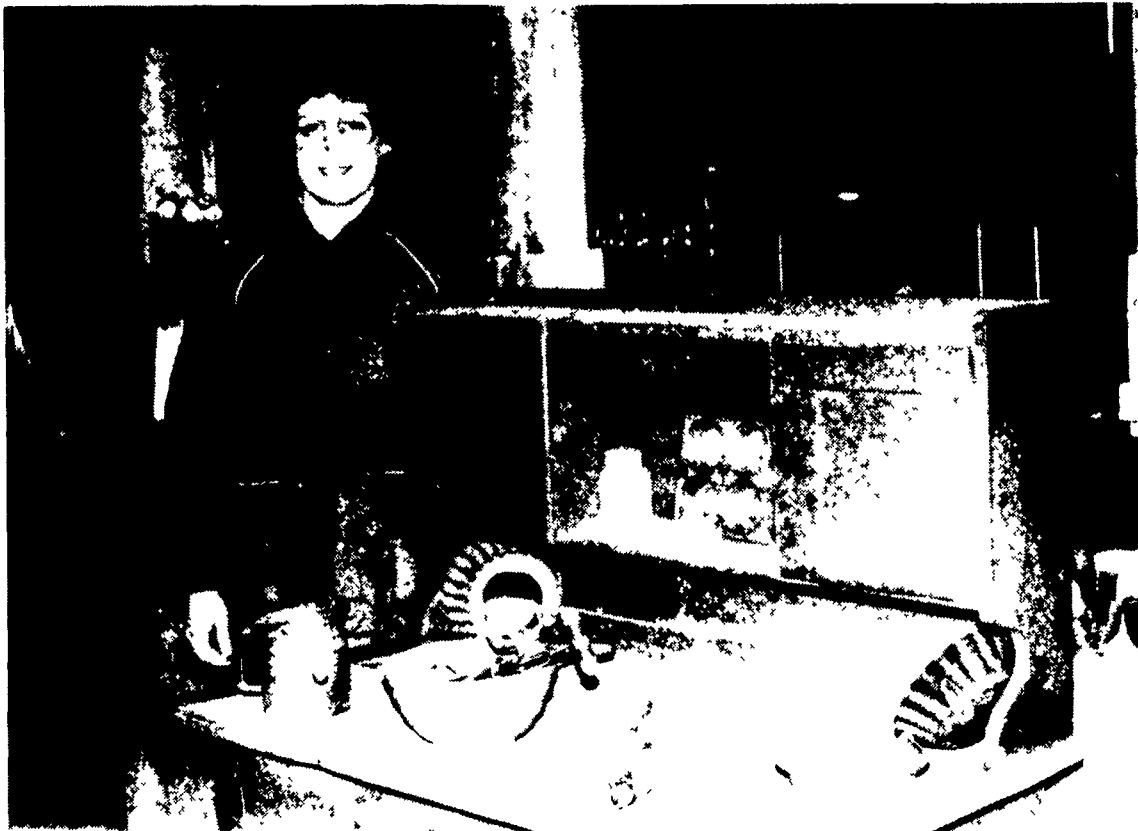
Judy displays a pie safe that has punched tin "windows" for ventilation.



Kip gently holds a new addition to the rabbit pen.



Judy's son, Kip, shows just how friendly the family's four dairy goats really are.



Judy Kepir poses with an antique baker's cabinet loaded with many essential baking tools.

decorative antique items are on display in the other.

Getting the barns ready to house the antique business was quite a chore, Judy admits. The barn that holds the decorative items was previously used as a chicken pen, so it needed a lot of cleaning. But the Kepirs made it a family project and after several weeks of hard work, the barn was ready.

The Kepirs also added new roofs to both barns and are working on restoring their farm home. They have traced the ownership of their property back to 1865, and although they know it dates back further, they haven't yet finished tracing its history.

Most of the Kepir's customers are dealers, but Judy said they are

trying to generate more local retail sales. To do that Judy has composed a letter that she sends out to newly engaged couples. Judy says she is "really pleased" with the response to her letter.

"Young people are really getting into antiques," she says, noting that young people today seem to be more aware of investments than they used to be.

She says she hates to see young people spending their hard-earned money on new furniture that depreciates as soon as it leaves the store. Instead, she would like to see them invest in an antique of their choice. And, by buying an "as found" antique, she continued,

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Homestead Notes