

From farm kids to Outstanding Farm Couple, Spanglers share commitment to land

BY MARGIE FUSCO
Staff Correspondent

MIFFLINBURG — Lee and Kathy Spangler of Mifflinburg speak shyly about being chosen a 1984 Outstanding Farm Couple Under 30 by the Pennsylvania Young Farmers. "We didn't really do anything," Kathy says, "We just filled out the forms." But it's what the Spanglers put on the forms that made them outstanding.

Lee and Kathy were farm kids from the start and proud of it. They met through 4-H when Kathy was growing up in Middleburg. The romance blossomed through shows, sales, and fairs. By the time they reached college, the couple had made not only a commitment to each other, but also a commitment to the land.

"I thought at first I wanted to be an ag teacher or a veterinarian," Lee recalls of his first year at Penn State. Finally the elective choices drew him into ag ed. He was the top student in his class his junior and senior years, and he completed his student teaching and found job offers waiting. "I wanted to have the degree, and I like knowing that I have my certification I can fall back on, if I have to," he says. "But I knew by then that I wanted to go back to farming."

They were married in 1979. Kathy still had a year of school remaining, and she commuted 45 miles each way to State College to complete her bachelor's degree in horticulture. Today she has her hands full with the couple's two daughters, but she continues to work in a local flower shop and do private consulting on weddings. She also finds time to keep a large garden, can in season, and help out with the heifers.

Lee credits his parents with instilling in him strong values about education and farming. His father, Eugene, with whom he now farms, encouraged Lee and his older brother Glen and younger brother Barry to get involved in farming from the start. The boys were involved in decision-making about the farm, and they were encouraged and rewarded for helping with the work. Their late mother, Martha, a Penn State graduate and former Extension Service home economist, joined their father in encouraging the boys to pursue a college education.

"We knew that it was expected of us," Lee recalls. When the boys made any money from a 4-H or FFA cattle sale, the money went straight into the bank for college. By the time they were ready for more school, they had enough money to pay for their tuition. The Spanglers also hired their sons to work on the farm during summer vacations, then extended their pay through the school year, an incentive that made them look forward to coming back to the farm each summer.

Lee and his father now farm 250 acres and maintain a herd of 84 milking-age cows. Glenn is a vo-ag teacher at the Mifflinburg Area School District, and Barry is a sophomore at the high school. Both help out on the family operation as time permits. The farm has been planned for labor-saving and efficiency.

The heifers stay in the old barn at Lee's house; the milking cows are a few acres away, at Eugene's more modern barn. Eugene Spangler purchased the farm in 1964 after several years of renting in nearby Swengle. "Dad got us involved from the start," Lee says. In 1970 they put in a herringbone milking parlor. In 1973 they renovated the heifer barn. They added concrete silos to Eugene's barn in 1970 and 1975, and more recently they built a 16x60 ft. poured concrete silo at Lee's barn, with additional space to expand the

square footage of the heifer barn. The Spanglers have also built a heated, insulated shop where they can do equipment repairs during the winter months.

The Spangler dairy herd currently enjoys a rolling average of 16,550 pounds milk, 658 pounds butterfat and 4 percent test. The fat levels are about 50 points below last year because an outbreak of cowpox hit the herd and did its share of damage.

Eugene has been breeding his own cows for years. Recently Lee has taken over more of the breeding, and they have begun to use the ABS computer genetic evaluation service. They're now breeding for greater production, body type and udder traits, using bulls like Chairman, Vic, Milkmaster, Columbus and Geranjo.

The present herd is about 60 percent registered and includes two 11-year-old cows. With the end of the cowpox and some better bred cows coming along this spring, Lee is looking forward to watching production levels rise.

The Spanglers' interests don't stop at farming. They're concerned about the community and about conservation as well. Lee and Kathy are active in their church and are youth group leaders and Sunday school teachers. Lee is a member of the Union County Economic Development Council, the Union County Agricultural Land Task Force, and the Vocational Ad-

visory Committee to the Mifflinburg Area School District. He is also a past president of the local chapter of Pennsylvania Young Farmers and a member of PFA.

Kathy teasingly likes to characterize the couple as "a pair of workaholics." Lee doesn't quite agree. He sees them working for results: "You can't get anything done if you're not willing to get out and do it."

When they're not on the farm, the Spanglers enjoy the outdoors. They take camping vacations, and Lee is an avid hunter involved in both archery and guns. He is also a licensed pheasant propagator and has a serious interest in wildlife.

In 1981, the Spanglers bought a 17-acre piece of land that linked their property to Eugene's. They turned the bottom land, which was cut through by a meandering stream, into a wildlife refuge. By damming the stream and building a pond, they established a waterfowl preserve where great blue herons, mallard ducks, Canada geese, and whistling swans are visitors or residents.

Both Lee and Kathy are committed to their family as well. One visible sign of that commitment is a huge playhouse Lee constructed for their older daughter, Valerie. The house takes up nearly a quarter of the large family room. When their second daughter, Sheila, was born, Lee added a "kitchenette" inside complete with stove, refrigerator, and sink.



Lee and Kathy Spangler display local and state awards they received as Outstanding Farm Couple Under 30.

While their daughters dart in and out of the play kitchen, Lee and Kathy take time to sit and talk in their grown-up kitchen. Kathy tells about the bear Lee shot last year,

and he points out a flower arrangement his wife recently made. It's apparent that each is proud of the other, and that they value each other for their differences.

"I don't know that we're doing things any better or worse than others," Kathy muses. "We try to work hard at whatever we do. And we try to be understanding. Farming takes long hours, and marriage takes a lot of work. You have to remember both of those things when you're the wife up in the house and he comes home late and tired." They exchange a smile across the table.

Joyce Ruppert becomes York dairy princess

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

YORK — Joyce Ruppert is York County's 1985 dairy princess, after being crowned by outgoing princess Judy Perry, as the highlight of the annual pageant at the 4-H Center. Alternate princess is Kelly Kilgore.

Joyce is the 21-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Ruppert, Harrisburg Street, East Berlin. A 1982 graduate of Dover Area High School, she is employed on the family farm, assisting with the 56-head herd and 168 acres of cropland. Joyce is also an artist, specializing in painting, and studied for a semester at the Antonelli Institute of Art and Photography.

During her high school years she was class treasurer, Honor Society member and a member of the track team through all four years. She also served on the yearbook staff, homecoming and prom courts, and won several school awards.

Joyce's milk promotional skit was one of the two selected for presentation during the pageant. Also chosen to give her promotional presentation to the audience was contestant Loretta Cooper.

Alternate princess Kelly Kilgore is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Kilgore, Airville R2. Kelly is 17 and a 1985 graduate of Red Lion Area High School, where she has been an active FFA member and officer. She is past chapter president and served as the county's first woman FFA president.

Owner of six head of cattle, Kelly exhibits in both FFA and 4-H dairy competition, and does some of the artificial insemination work for the 70-cow herd. She plans to continue working with the home farm, and hopes to pursue studies as a licensed practical nurse.

A special feature of the 31st annual pageant was a reunion and update on the activities of York's dairy princesses of the past 30 years. Ten former winners took part, including the first princess, Hope Hanley Bradley, of Delta, who won the crown in 1955.

Other former princesses attending were Carolyn Falkenstein Markey, York, 1956; Louise Smyser Frye, York, 1957; Vicki Evans, McFarland, York 1972-73; Cindy Rutter Johnson, Cockeysville, Md., 1976; Susan Adams Becker, Dallastown, 1977; Patricia Greek Jones, Parkton, Md., 1978; Carol Druck Tipton, Windsor, 1979; Tina L. Neufeld, Elkton, Md., 1980; Candy Neufeld, York, 1981; and Nancy Eisenhart, West Chester, 1982.

Emcee for the pageant was Berks County dairy farmer Ernest Miller. Judges were Phoebe Bitler, former extension home economist and Berks County dairy princess coordinator, Vernetta Meyers, former Berks County princess pageant chairman, and John Blyholder, secretary of the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association.

Coordinator for the 1985-86 York Dairy Princess program is Kathy King, Delta R2. Individuals or groups wishing to schedule appearances by the York County Dairy Princess should contact Mrs. King at 717-862-3607.



Joyce Ruppert is York County's newly-crowned dairy princess. Alternate princess is Kelly Kilgore.

Grange sewing winners named

HARRISBURG — Rebecca Michalka, women's activities director for the Pennsylvania State Grange, recently announced state winners in the National Grange Sewing Contest, the nation's largest general sewing competition.

Jane Reppert of Hamburg, Berks County, was judged the top state winner, taking best of show, first place in the children's clothing category and the Offray Ribbon Company's award for her use of the sponsor's product in the garment. Reppert belongs to Virginville Grange in Berks County. Her winning garment was a hand-embroidered dress sewn for her infant daughter.

Melinda Shaffer, age 15, of Georgetown, Beaver County, won first place in the youth sewing

category. The South Side High School sophomore belongs to Hookstown Junior Grange and has previously won 4-H, Sewing with Wool, and State Farm Show sewing awards. She lives on a small farm.

Laura Boak, a retired teacher from Cannonsburg, Washington County, placed first in the adult clothing category. She belongs to Millers Run Grange.

Charles Day, age 10, of Honesdale, Wayne County, was the first place winner in the category for elementary age children. The fourth grader won with a three-piece jogging outfit. He is a member of Beach Grove Grange.

Wanda Mae Lehner of Bald Eagle Grange, Blair County, won the B. Blumenthal and Company

award, and June Boak of Millers Run Grange, Washington County, was selected the Pellon Company prize winner.

The state winners in the four categories will receive monetary awards from the State Grange in addition to prizes awarded by Simplicity Pattern Company and other contest sponsors. All first place garments will be entered in national competition to be held at the Simplicity Pattern Company headquarters in New York City in June.

The National Grange Sewing Contest is conducted from Dec. 1 to April 15 and is open to any professional sewer, regardless of membership in the Grange. For further information on entering next year's contest, contact the local Grange in your area.