

Pa. Association of County Fairs convention draws record crowd

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — County fairs are in full swing during the summer and early fall, but for organizers the work continues year 'round.

Last week 657 people representing 83 different county fairs attended the 74th annual convention of the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs held in Lancaster. According to President Clyde S. Robison, Washington County Fair, this was the largest representation ever.

One reason for the large attendance may have been interest in a by-laws change which delegates voted on during the business meeting. The change will allow six members from each of the four zones to be elected to the Executive Committee, prior to the annual meeting.

Until now executive committee members were chosen from the entire delegate body. Robison said the change will ensure that the group is more representative of the entire state. Many are hoping the change will give smaller fairs a stronger representation.

Robison noted that there are 104 county fairs throughout Pennsylvania, representing fairs

sponsored by 4-H, FFA, and Grange.

It was the first time ever for a communication luncheon whose purpose was to showcase winners of awards for promotional materials, slide sets, videotapes, scrapbooks and premium books.

Speaking at the luncheon Secretary of Agriculture Richard Grubb reiterated this support of county fairs, saying, "County fairs are an integral part of agriculture and are really a showplace for the best of what takes place on our farms." Grubb said the fairs offer good competition, and an education of non-farm people. He said the fairs showcase things urban people take for granted and show what's being done in their backyards.

Grubb also called the new farm bill "a step in the right direction," saying that although it will pinch, it is designed to move supply and demand back into balance. He said he believes the Gramm-Rudman bill will help to reduce deficits, adding, "The deficits are really putting American agriculture out of business in foreign markets."

He pointed out that although Pennsylvania farmers are having economic problems, they are

better off than their counterparts in other states because of their diversity and because of their continuing large markets.

Grubb said, "Although agriculture is in a terribly difficult period, I am optimistic about the future."

Delegates were treated to a wide variety of special workshops designed to help them run their fairs better. Topics ranged from the latest information on insurance to the best use of computers at fairs.

But according to Robison, the best reason to have the convention is for fair directors to share ideas. He said, "It offers them an opportunity to exchange ideas and to recognize some leadership." He added that county fairs are important as a "showplace for agriculture in Pennsylvania."

Another big attraction of the convention is a trade show featuring all the supporting "acts" which make a county fair successful. There were representatives of trailer manufacturers, showing the latest in ways to sell your food, to fireworks presenters. Throughout the trade show entertainers or their agents provided lots of color, either live or by



Secretary of Agriculture Richard Grubb congratulates general chairman Beverly Snyder for a successful county fairs convention. Looking on is Donald Lanus, first vice president and member of the board of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions.

videotape, to convince fairs to book them.

Ribbon manufacturers were next to sound companies. Magicians strolled next to clowns. The trade show was itself a kind of fair, featuring the best of entertainment. There were 45 commercial displays, a record for the convention.

Winners in the communications awards programs included:

Premium Books - 1. Clearfield Fair; 2. McKean County Fair; 3. Green-Dreher-Sterling Fair.

Scrapbooks - 1. Hookstown Grange Fair; 2. Indiana County Fair; 3. Venango County Fair.

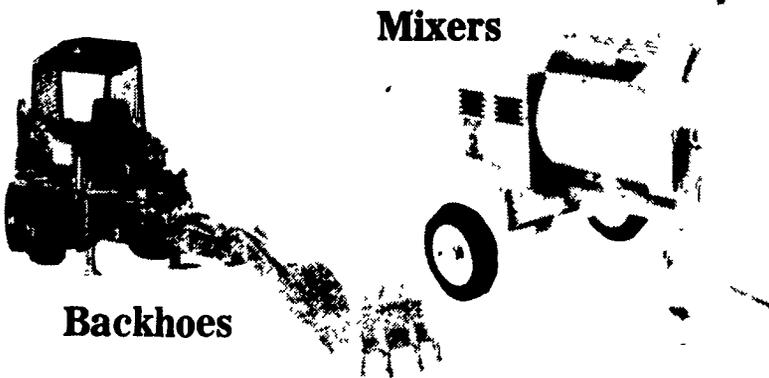
Promotional Materials - 1. Harford Fair; 2. McKean County Fair; 3. West End Fair.

Slide Sets - 1. Sinking Valley Community Fair; 2. Plainfield Farmers Fair; 3. Hookstown Grange Fair.

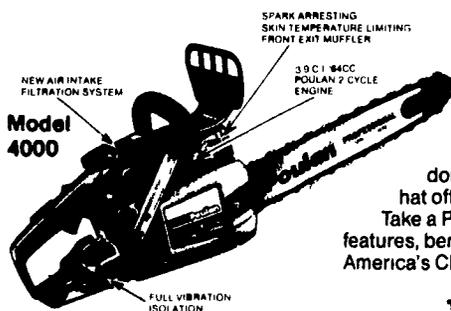
Videotapes - 1. Indiana County Fair; 2. Fayette County Fair; 3. Kimberton Fair.

Special Best of Show award was given to Hookstown Grange Fair.

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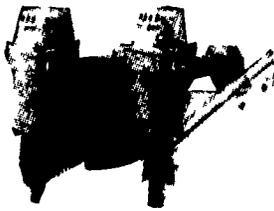
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