

Harris Wins National Young Jersey Dairyman Award

BY GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Adams Co. Correspondent

MILAN — Brian E. Harris, Sunset Ridge Jerseys, was recently named as a recipient of the Young Jersey Dairyman Award from the American Jersey Cattle Club for 1986. This award will be presented at a special breakfast on June 28 at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tenn., site of the 118th Annual Meeting of the Jersey Cattle Club.

A third generation Jersey breeder, Harris credits his success to the support he has received from his parents, Eugene and Alice Harris, and his desire to achieve a sense of accomplishment in his chosen field.

These two factors have resulted in a 1985 DHIR average on 60 cows of 13,712 pounds of milk and 628 pounds of fat. This is the same herd that was recognized as the high Jersey herd in the state in 1978 and 1980.

Presently the Harris family makes their home on the farm purchased by his father, Eugene. Brian and his wife, Karen, see their children Sasha, 7, and Seth, 4, growing up under the same influences that Brian did. As a youth Brian was always active in 4-H and the Junior Program of the Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club, winning the Club's R.H. Olmstead Award in 1967.

One thing Eugene and Alice insisted on was that Brian attend college. Penn State was a natural choice for him after his numerous visits there in connection with state 4-H activities.

Harris does not credit his college courses with a direct influence on his present management practices, but these courses did provide the basics on which to build. He feels the most important thing he gained from his days at University Park was the willingness to search for and try new things in his operation.

While at Penn State, Harris developed as a leader on Ag Hill. He was president of the Dairy Science Club and in 1972 was named Outstanding Senior in Dairy Science. In the same year he finished in the top five of the Dairy Shrine Student Recognition Contest.

A summer intern salesman position with a feed company, during Harris' junior and senior

year, confirmed his conviction that what he really wanted to do was return to the home farm.

Following graduation he returned to Sunset Ridge Jerseys and entered into a 50 — 50 partnership with his father. Although the relationship grew and prospered, three years ago the operation underwent a radical change when Eugene had a heart attack. More recently Eugene has required back surgery, leaving Brian with almost complete management responsibility.

The loss of such a capable partner, Harris admits, left him with a sense of confusion. However, he has picked up the management reins and is determined to challenge the herd to even higher, more efficient production.

In January the dairy herd's ration was changed to include a mixture of steamed rolled soybeans, a 22.9 percent pelleted supplement, and more buffers and minerals. Concerns by Harris that

the new ration might have an energy problem have been dispelled as the herd continues to near the 14,000 pound mark.

To save on energy costs and help maintain milk quality, Harris recently installed a new pre-cooler. They presently use tap water in the cooler, but hope to switch to spring water. Harris then plans to recapture the heated spring water to fill their hot water needs.

Meticulous about details in management, the Harris family is even more aggressive about continually upgrading the genetics in the herd. Duncan, Royal and Legend are presently listed on the breeding charts, while the recent fresheners have added Top Brass and Soldier Boy daughters to the milking string.

Harris has expanded his genetic base by sampling two Danish Jersey Bulls offered through the AJCC's semen exchange program. Also active in young sire sampling, Brian belongs to four bull syn-



Brian and his son, Seth, check on the new pre-cooler he installed to save energy and improve milk quality.

dicates as well as using young sires available from the A.I. organizations.

While Harris is dedicated to farming, he feels that it isn't necessary to sacrifice everything to farm. He finds time for a variety of family and community activities. He served as the PJCC Sale Chairman for four years and was the chairman of the Bradford County Dairy Princess Pageant from 1978 to 1982.

In addition to these activities he has served as a 4-H leader for the past 10 years and is the assistant-fire chief of the Smithfield Township Volunteer Fire Company. He is also a director-at-large

with the ADA Dairy Council.

Looking down the road to his future with Jerseys, the enthusiastic young dairyman relates, "It really looks good for Jersey's. They haven't suffered the inflated prices that the other breeds did."

"I had more buyers here at the farm last fall than ever before," he continues. "The management of the AJCC has been strong with programs ahead of their time, like Genetic Recovery and the Linear Evaluation system," Harris noted.

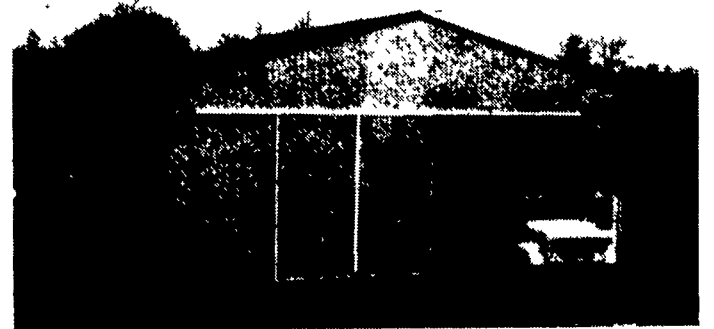
"I've always had the attitude that I like Jerseys, milking and working outdoors. Farming is a commitment to a lifestyle that I enjoy," he explained.



The Brian Harris family includes (clockwise from bottom) Sasha, his wife, Karen, Seth and Brian.

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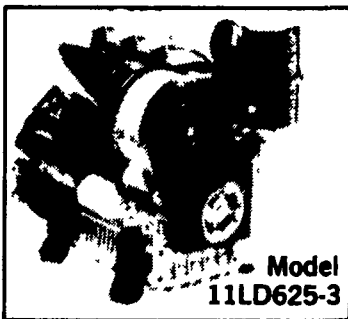
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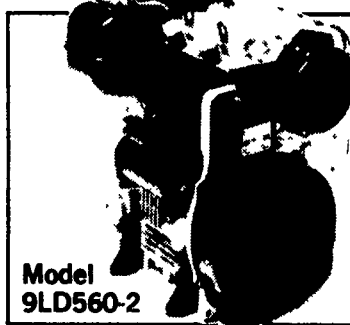
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