

*Hillside Farms***15.5 Percent Fat Ice Cream, Creams Competitors**

BY BARBARA MILLER

Lycoming Co. Correspondent
SHAVERTOWN — Four generations of Conynghams have owned what is now Hillside Farms, Inc., Shavertown, for over 100 years. During this time many changes have occurred. The farm has grown from 100 to 500 acres, the herd has increased to 93 registered Holsteins, and the farm now features a dairy store that sells Hillside Farms milk and ice cream.

Throughout the years one factor has remained constant; the Conynghams of today are as farsighted and innovative as their predecessors.

William L. Conyngham, grandfather of the present owner, William L. Conyngham, and owner of a hardware company purchased the farm in 1881 as a summer home. Eventually, the farm was inherited by his sons, John and William H.

William H., father of the present William L., bought his brother's interest in the farm in 1932 wherein it became Hillside Farms, Inc.

Principal stockholders of the farm today are William L. and his two brothers and their families. William L., who lives near the farm, has always managed the farm while his brothers tend other family business. William L.'s sons, William H. who is known as Will, and Frank, manage the retail operation at the farm.

"We've been breeding Holsteins for 101 years and can trace our pedigree back to the first calf in 1885," says William L. proudly. "We used enough homebred bull that, that drop of original blood is still there."

Always progressive with his farming practices, William L. says they started on the DHIA testing program over 50 years ago and classifying over 30 years ago.

The Conynghams current herd average is 15,918 pounds of milk and 587 pounds of fat. Their most recent B.A.A. score is 103, according to William L. They raise their own replacement stock, and William L. notes they haven't bought a cow for five or six years.

Their milking herd is situated in a tie-stall barn located a short distance across the highway from the store. According to Ward Sutton, herdsman, the cows are fed 18 percent protein pellets, hay and pasture, and corn silage in the winter. Dry cows and bred heifers get a homemixed feed.

Cattle are pastured, William L. comments, because much of their land is composed of steep hills from which the farm takes its name. The herd is daily turned out on pasture for exercise.

Cal-Clark Board Chairman, Carlin M Ivanhoe Bell are two bulls they are currently using and they are milking a number of Jemini and Elevation daughters.

The Conyngham's farm 250

acres and will harvest 170 acres of alfalfa and 80 acres of corn this year.

Historically the Conynghams have taken an active interest in the dairy industry and William L. is no exception. When he was elected a director of the Holstein-Friesian Association of America in 1962, it was the first time in the history of the organization that two relatives had been elected to the 16-member board. John Conyngham, his uncle, had served a term as director in 1913.

During the 1986 Farm Show, at the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association Banquet, William L. received the Charles P. Cowan Award, presented in recognition of his leadership and concern in promoting the dairy industry. Currently a director of the Columbia-Luzerne County Holstein Club, William L. is a past-president of the Pennsylvania Holstein Association.

Although William L. enjoys talking about the past and other aspects of the farm, it is when he speaks of the retail store, built in 1977, that his eyes light up. It was something he'd always had in mind, he says, but never had the time or the energy to get done until his sons joined the management of the farm.

On the advice of a friend, they built the store considerably larger than they had need for at the time, he reports, but now they could use even more space.

In the rear of the store milk is processed and ice cream is manufactured. According to Will, federal law dictates that for a product to be sold as ice cream, it must contain at least 10 percent milkfat. Hillside Farms exceeds this lower limit in their ice cream, which contains 15.5 percent milkfat, giving it a much creamier texture than most ice creams.

"We started out hoping to sell ice cream to our milk customers," William L. observes, "but now it is the other way around."

Ice cream sales have taken a jump for several reasons. One contributing factor to increased sales is the fact that the dairy store is located just six miles from downtown Wilkes-Barre.

Another factor is an ice cream truck. A few years after the store was built, William L. recalls, they bought a truck and equipped it to sell their own hand-dipped ice cream. The truck makes regular trips on Thursdays to the public square in Wilkes-Barre and is available for company parties, fund raisers and other gatherings.

In the Luzerne County area, Will says, selling hard ice cream from a truck is a novel idea. The truck not only boosted ice cream sales by direct selling, but it also served as a promotion tool.

"It's nice that in promoting we can make money," observes Will.

Noticing the truck in the square in Wilkes-Barre, Al Boscov, owner of Boscov's, a chain of department stores, promptly negotiated with Hillside Farms to install an ice cream parlor in his downtown Wilkes-Barre store. This ice cream parlor scoops only Hillside Farms ice cream.

"The parlor has grown slowly but steadily," William L. notes.

About a year ago, the Conynghams turned a section of their store into an ice cream parlor. The idea has been a success.

"You should see them in here on Sundays," says William L.

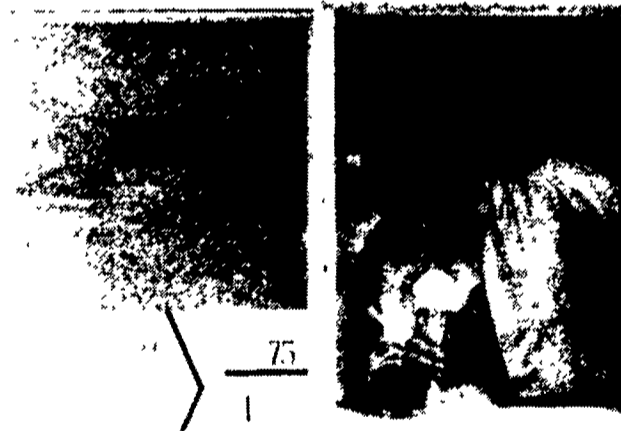
Not only do ice cream lovers find Hillside Farm's parlor on Sundays, but their tasty ice cream is noted in a book. Bon Appetite magazine refers to the book as the "ultimate directory for all ice cream lovers."

The book entitled, "The Very Best Ice Cream and Where to Find It," by Carol T. Robbins and Herbert Wolff may never make the best seller list, but it is one of



John Shorts packages the ice cream in half gallon and 2½ gallon containers for Hillside Farm.

HILLSIDE ICE CREAM



Frank Conyngham displays a sample of his wares on the ice cream truck. Selling hard ice cream from the truck is a fairly novel idea in the area. The truck goes to company parties and to Wilkes-Barre to the square to sell ice cream on a weekly basis.

William L.'s favorite books.

On page 244 of this book is a short history of Hillside Farms and a recommendation for their 15.5 percent milkfat ice cream. The listing has helped ice cream sales immensely.

"Anyway," William L. notes happily, "it put us on the map."

Will chalks up their increased ice cream sales to good marketing and the fact that they "buy only top-of-the-line flavors." They recently installed a computer to keep up with inventory and to aid in calculating the exact ingredients necessary to mix ice cream formulas, he explained. If the milkfat level in the milk or creams varies, he says, then adjustments must be made in the formulas.

Hillside Farms produces 800 gallons of ice cream per week and sells 360 gallons of milk per day. Of

the 40 flavors they manufacture, Will reports, their most popular flavors in half gallon containers are French vanilla, butter pecan, and chocolate.

Near the end of the interview, William L.'s son, Frank and two employees headed for the ice cream truck. According to Frank, they were headed for a gathering of 450 headstart children, all under 6-years-old.

One could get a bit seasick looking down upon a sea of waving hands in front of the truck window, each demanding a different flavor. It is a safe assumption that the 105 year history of the Conynghams, they have produced no other innovation that equals the widespread gut level delight than that created by their truck and ice cream parlors.



Will (left), William L. and Warren Sutton relax in the new ice cream parlor at Hillside Farms. Will manages the dairy store, which includes the ice cream parlor; Warren Sutton manages the actual farming and dairy operation for the Conynghams. William L. is the general manager of the entire operation.



Will Conyngham stacks gallons of Hillside Farms milk for sale to customers in the dairy store.