

Dairy Started With A Broken-Down Truck

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CATAWISSA — John Turofski, Roaring Creek Township, arrived at his present farm in 1968 with a pickup truck running on five cylinders and three calves on the back. He was 21.

Ten years later, he paid off his bank mortgage and had a herd of grade Holsteins which today is ranked with the top milk producers of Columbia County.

His farm is appropriately named Little Acres. He has 50 acres under cultivation.

How did he do it?

Turofski would tell you, "With difficulty and determination." The first two years he worked in industry. His working hours were such that he milked at 1 a.m. and 1 p.m., a schedule he doesn't recommend. He remembers it took two weeks pay to meet the monthly mortgage payments.

Tight finances required Turofski to make wise use of his cash outlay.

If it can be built rather than bought "ready-made," he makes it. For instance, the material for equipment in his four unit milking parlor cost him \$300. The pipeline was added a few years later. He says, "We do things in steps as we can afford it. I don't go to F.H.A."

In addition to all the hard work and thriftiness, Turofski says, I couldn't have done it without my wife Sandra, my stepfather and stepbrother, John and Frank Zarko, and many good friends and neighbors.

And — here-in lies a story that Turofski wants everyone to know.

When he took on the farm about 18 years ago, there were many repairs necessary to make it functional, outstanding of which was a barn roof. He had money for materials, but not labor.

One cold November Sunday, his neighbors, friends and relatives gathered to replace the roof. Working in snow most of the day, they succeeded in tearing off the old shingles and replacing them with new, for which they accepted only a hot meal.

A couple of years later, Turofski

and his wife were in a head-on collision. When he got home from the hospital after emergency treatment, there were neighbors all over the place.

One neighbor had the green chopper cutting green feed, another was feeding the cows and still another was tending the chickens. Turofski says, "Even my furnace, which needed repairs, was fixed."

His wife, hurt more severely, required more extensive hospital care. All the while she was in the hospital and during recuperation, the neighbors arranged for Turofski's meals.

"That's the kind of friends and relatives I have. I wouldn't be where I am today without them and I want to give them credit for it."

It's quite evident from an "outsiders" point of view that Turofski is equally ready to help his neighbors, a bilateral practice that has benefitted the whole farming community.

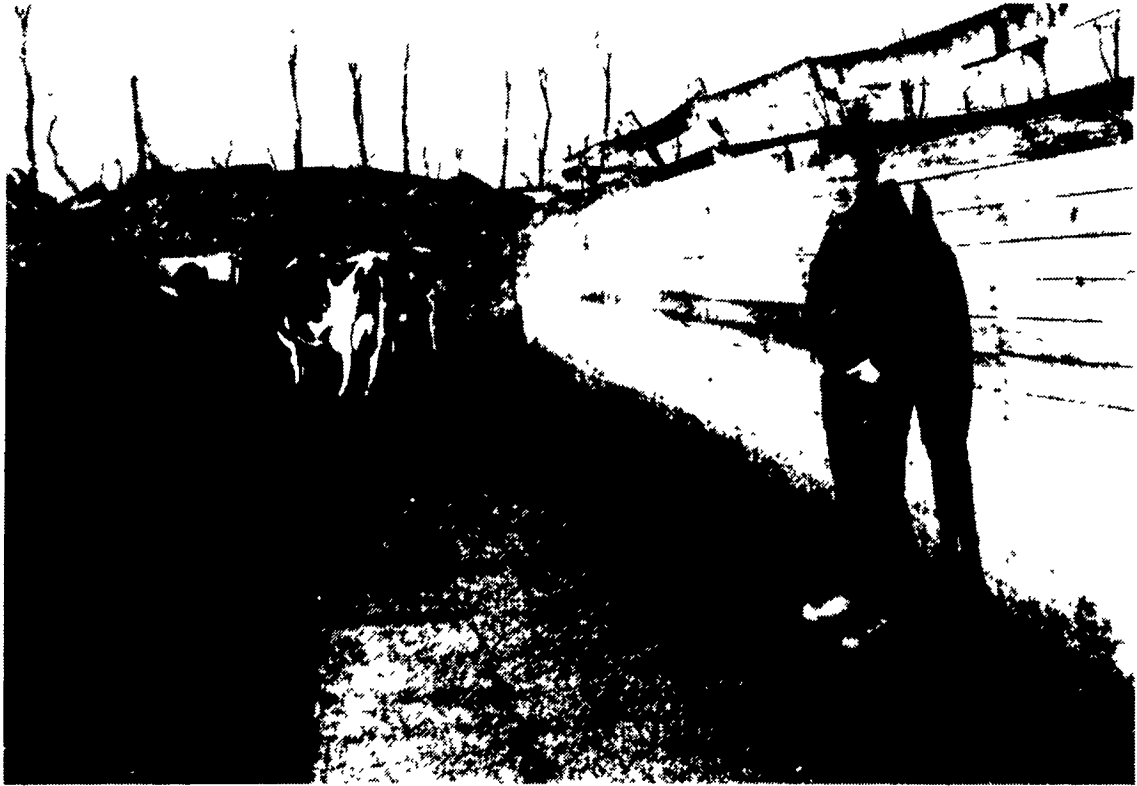
Turofski refers to his milking parlor as "John and Frank's Milking System." He says he and his stepfather and a stepbrother designed and constructed the parlor on weekends. John describes it as a series of welded pipes and sliding doors which compliment a Surge pipeline.

It certainly met all requirements of state inspection for John was issued a 100 percent U.S. Public Health rating by Eastern Milk Producers for "maintenance and outstanding quality milk practices and conditions."

Glenn Vance, inspector, noted that the 100 percent score was only the second issued in his tenure. This isn't surprising because it's quite evident that one of John's priorities is cleanliness.

Ninety percent of the herd traces back to King Pin and Elevation with Spirit used quite frequently. Turofski has 35 milking head, 13 bred heifers and 10 young stock.

Turofski has received a number of awards for outstanding dairy performance. Among others, in 1982 he received an award for most improved butterfat. In 1985 he



Turofski credits his high milk production to the free choice silage stored in this open pit. He fills the pit with 700 ton per season, a cost of about \$16 per ton. He built the pit for about \$2000, and it has cresote plank sides and cement bottom.

received an award for high production with 680,000 pounds sold from 34 head. His mature cows are all milking more than 20,000 pounds. The herd average is 20,643 pounds of milk, with a 3.6 test and 734 pounds of milkfat which figures out to be \$1,457 over feed cost. A four year old has a high production of 24,757 pounds of milk.

Turofski credits his high production to his free choice corn silage stored in an open pit. By way of a series of gates, the milk cows have an almost constant access to the silage with the dry cows channeled into the bunker storage at certain times during the day.

The milking herd receives a DHIA recommended ration from Agway for about 10 minutes during milking and while in the parlor. Feed boxes are attached to the sliding doors of the milking parlor. Once a day the cows get 8 pounds of alfalfa.

He produces corn silage at a cost of about \$16 a ton. He fills his open pit with 700 tons a season. With the help of John and Frank Zarko, he built this storage bunker for less than \$2,000. It has cresote plank sides and a cement bottom.

Lloyd George, a neighbor who does custom harvesting, cuts the

corn and fills the pit. It takes about two days and costs about \$30 (plus) an hour.

For the balance of his feed he favors custom hiring to eliminate the costly investment of machinery, and, he doesn't need storage or maintenance. The only equipment he owns is for making hay. Of the 50 plus acres under cultivation, 30 is in corn silage and 25 alfalfa. A trout stream runs through the farm and a wooded area for hunting.

The Turofskis' have a coal fed stoker for heat and hot water in the house. John replaced all his windows with double panes and storm windows. He added styrofoam insulation and siding on the back. A front porch was glassed in, all of which amounted to a one third saving on his fuel bill.

John and Sandra have two children, Kim, 15 and Eric, 10. Both help with farm work, but Kim favors cleaning house to barn work. This preference is more than evident in the leadership she provides in the Roaring Creek Valley 4-H Club. She is the youngest assistant team leader in cooking, sewing, needlework, photography, flower and vegetable gardening.

Kim also played saxophone in

the Southern Columbia School band for five years. She is in track with shotput being her choice and has been studying piano for five years.

Both children are active in their church, Our Lady of Mercy in Slabtown. Kim teaches Sunday School and Eric is an altar boy.

Eric is also active in elementary basketball.

Last year John was assistant wrestling coach for Southern Columbia elementary school. He said he was once a wrestler and enjoys the sport. Three nights a week Sandra did the milking while John attended wrestling practice.

Turofski warns salesmen that he is very hostile to those who come uninvited. He doesn't feel a salesman has a right to take his time if he hasn't first been contacted.

The Turofski dairy farm is a blend of a happy family and good community relations resulting in a good deal of success. Although John and Sandra (like most farmers) cannot make a return to compensate for the long, hard hours they put into their farm business, they have refined good management and wise planning into a success that would make any farmer proud.



John Turofski, Catawissa, stands beside a few of the awards he has received in recent years. In 1982 he had most improved butter fat; in 1985 he was Columbia County's high producer. He received a 100% U.S. Public Health rating for his milk handling.



SUDIA Provides Milk, Posters for Mini-Walk

"Molly Moo" looks on as Baltimore Blast soccer player Jay McCutcheon signs an autograph for a young walker at the recent March-of-Dimes Mini-Walk at the Baltimore Zoo. Southeast United Dairy Industry Association provided a "Milk America's Health Kick" -- Blast Team Photo Poster and a sample of chocolate UHT milk. Over 100 youngsters participated in the fund-raising activity.