

Open House Features New Free Stall Barn

GRATZ — When a new dairy barn is built these days, that's news especially a 160 by 76 foot free stall barn. Earl and Tamie Campbell of Gratz had four good reasons to build — their sons.

The northern Dauphin County couple pondered all winter, then talked financing with their first banker in late March while still drawing plans. Agway put the shell up by mid-June, and the cows moved Aug. 28.

Everybody's invited to see the new barn Saturday, Nov. 15 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. It'll be a gala event with refreshments, the state dairy princess and county dairy ambassadors and a personal tour by the Campbells.

From Gratz, drive east on Route 25 about a half mile and turn left on Picnic Road. It's the first dairy barn on the right.

Farm Credit, Penn Jersey Harvestore, Telemark Leasing,

Kreider Manufacturing Company, Agway, Hershey and the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program co-sponsor the open house.

To keep costs down, Campbells did most of the work on the barn themselves...design, all interior work and 160 yards of concrete.

"We shaved costs about one-third," Earl says, "but we couldn't have done it without the boys." Glen, 15, was named temporary herdsman for the 95 cows during construction. With the help of Garth, 14, Grant, 12, and Garrett, 10, he handled milking, feeding and clean up. Earl only milked Sunday mornings.

An early okay by Farm Credit moved up the construction schedule. So did the quick turnaround by Agway on the building.

But the decision to build wasn't easy. Earl and Tamie about had it by the end of February. Cows are

lined up two deep for feed in the converted steer barn they rented. And it was even more crowded around the one water fountain.

"We were feeding eight times a day to make sure all the cows got enough," Tamie recalls.

They were discouraged, and dairying didn't look that promising.

"It came down to three choices — build, buyout or sellout," Earl says.

The Campbells were at the crossroads. They'd been farming full-time since 1977. Earl, a Hershey shipper, is a progressive dairyman shipping 50 pounds of milk per cow.

What to do? One look at their four sons made the decision easy. The building would give them a stake in farming. "Let's go for it," Earl and Tamie agreed.

Cool and Airy

Designed for 100 cows, the barn features maintenance-free steel sides, an open ridge and aluminum roof. The latter to reflect more sunlight in the summer.

Triple side vents on both sides of the free stall area keep air moving. They are adjusted manually.

A 100-foot feed bunk and belt feeder splits the barn down the center. That's twice the bunk space of the old barn.

Four water fountains meanwhile relieve traffic for thirsty cows.

Milkers will be divided into two groups once corn is harvested. The feed bunk on the high-producer side is lined with headlocks to catch cows for AI or vet care.

Actual breeding or treatment is done in a nearby cattle chute with the standard headhold. No more examining or treating cows in the parlor.

Free stalls are 3 foot 10 inches by 7 foot. Campbells use suspended dividers with oak plank platforms over a dirt base.

"Warmer than concrete in winter and cooler in the summer, and cheaper than rubber mats," Earl reports.

Alleys and holding areas were grooved in a diamond pattern when concrete was finished. A specially adapted "floater" did the trick.

Cleanup is cheap and easy. The boys scrap alleys with a skidloader, pushing the manure directly into a pit behind the barn.

The Campbells stayed with side opening stalls in their new parlor but expanded from a double-three to double-four.

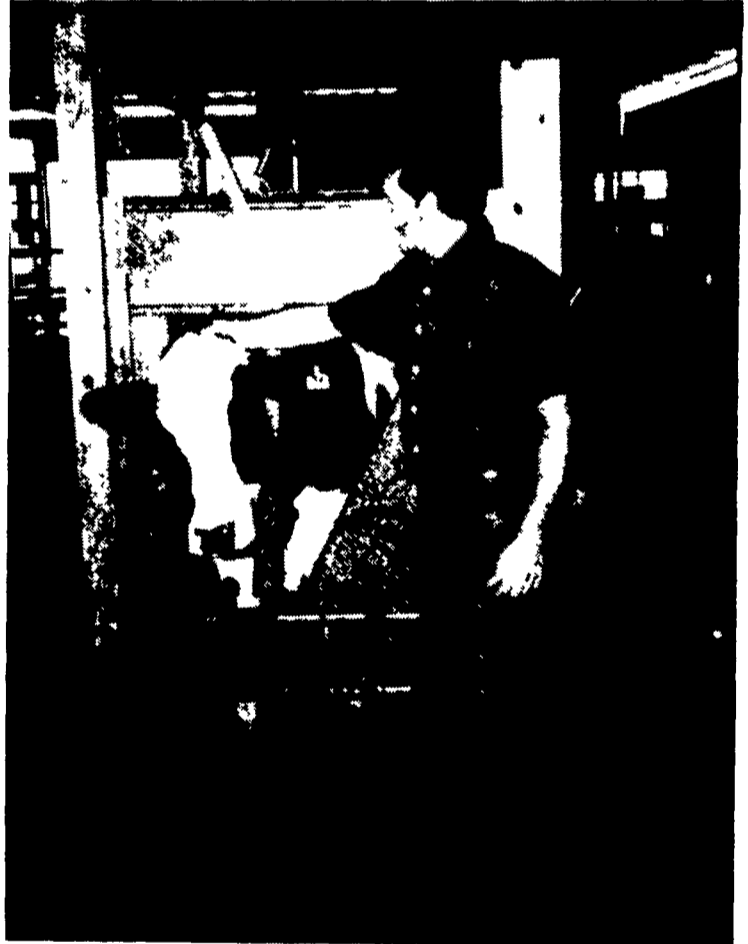
Much of the equipment was transferred from the old parlor on



His new milking parlor features double-four side-opening stalls. Earl held down costs by installing 9-year-old Universal milkers, weight jars and much of hardware from old parlor.



Ventilation is no problem in the new Campbell barn, thanks to three tiers of adjustable vents along both sides of barn. Agway design called for two vents. Earl insisted on three.



In his old rented set up, Earl Campbell bred and treated cows in parlor. New working chute, and headhold, will make it easier for AI and vet care.

moving day, including weight jars and nine-year-old Universal milkers. A used 1500-gallon tank was purchased to replace their 800-gallon tank.

"We got help moving day from the equipment people," Tamie says. "We milked at 4:30 in the morning, moving the equipment and cattle to the new barn up the road, and were milking that night at 8:30 p.m."

Has production increased? Not really, says Earl, but it hasn't decreased either. And that could be expected in a new barn. But fat test went up. Four points the first month.

Everything is fed in the bunk. And it's all home grown. Only trace minerals are purchased. The daily ration includes alfalfa haylage, high moisture corn, corn silage and raw soybeans. Earl grinds beans daily, feeds five to six pound per head.

Earl doesn't like to purchase

labor, either. With the built in efficiencies of the new barn and a growing family that possibility looks remote.

What about milk quality? Can the Campbells expect an improvement? "We carry a low bacteria and somatic cell count," says Tamie, "Always have."

"Quality's important if we hope to increase milk sales," Earl adds.

The Campbells are big on dairy advertising and promotion. Tamie is active with the county dairy princess group. Their local advertising and promotion contributions go to the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program.

"If you don't see it, you don't buy it," Earl says about dairy advertising.

The Campbells see their open house Nov. 15 as still another way to reach consumers as well as fellow dairymen.

No buyout or sellout here. They're ready for the 21st century.



Earl and Tamie Campbell of Gratz in northern Dauphin county host open house Nov. 15 for those interested in seeing their new 76 by 160 foot free stall barn. Refreshments will be served. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.