

Berks County Dairyman Tackles Convention With Zeal

BY MARTHA J. GEHRINGER
MERTZTOWN — Chairing a convention is not for everyone, but it is a challenge William Zollers has always wanted to attempt. The other year he got his chance and is the chairman of this year's national Guernsey convention slated for Pittsburgh, May 22 to 25. "I always wanted to do

something for the breed. This is a way of contributing to the breed I have always had a love for," the amiable Berks County dairyman said. Zollers nurtured his love for the Guernsey cow when he was a teenager at a neighboring registered Guernsey farm in Ambler. While he was not from a

farm, he lived in a farm area and Zollers worked on David Kennedy's Guernsey farm. He worked with several other breeds but never lost his affection for the Guernsey cow. "It's something I can't explain," he confesses. He started farming in Berks County 12 years ago part time and devoted his life to it fulltime five years ago.

Previously, Zollers was employed for 17 years in veterinary sales. He traveled across the United States and Canada and sold to foreign markets. During this time he received the basic training for his current role as convention chairman.

As a sales representative Zollers attended national, state and local conventions. At these events, he noted, he would chair a committee or assist in some way. However, Zollers said, he never chaired an entire convention.

He calls his present chairman position very rewarding. Zollers credits his wife, Sandra, with suggesting he work with the convention because of his prior convention experience.

The national convention required about 20 hours of his time each week in January, February and the first half of March, Zollers estimates, to finalize the details. "My routine was to get the morning milking done, eat breakfast around 9, and work on the convention until noon." Some days he would be gone for 24 hours to meet with individuals in the other parts of the state.

Zollers explained his entire family has helped in the convention preparations in one form or another. Sandra has helped with secretarial work after teaching elementary school. Their daughter, Sherri, is president of the Pennsylvania youth group and has worked with the youth convention. Zollers adds that their two sons help with farm chores when possible to permit him to take trips to work on the convention.

The Zollers' three children were a motivating factor in acquiring a farm, he explained. "We wanted to raise our children in the country so they would have the opportunity to join 4-H and FFA." The herd grew from the original Guernsey calf 4-H projects, he explained.

Zollers thought that when the children started showing they would raise a heifer, breed it, sell it, and start with a new heifer. "We found it wasn't easy getting rid of cows and the kids wanted to show a string," he noted. Which led to the family's start in the milk business.



One of the cows to receive special treatment on the farm is Sherri's 4-H project "Karen." Zollers noted the cow went to the state show every year Sherri showed her.



Besides Guernseys, Zollers enjoys horse back riding at his Mertztown farm.

Then the children started going off to college and five years ago he quit his sales job and started farming fulltime.

"I was 41 at the time and I knew I wasn't going to get any younger," he commented.

Farming was always a dream for Zollers. But, it was a family decision to move from Montgomery County and establish Stone Mill Farms, located just outside of Mertztown.

Yet, Zollers relates, "I don't expect the kids to take over the farm. If they would want to, I'd look for a larger farm." He added, "I'm not out to be the biggest, I just want to do a good job." Maintaining a scaled-down dairy is different from the norm. However,

Zollers stated, "It's not right for everyone but it is right for me."

In his present location, Zollers notes he is limited in how big he can become. "It was a dream. I always wanted to farm. I just didn't dream big enough," he laughs. The farm was originally 17 acres. They purchased 13 additional acres several years ago. Some of his rented land is six miles away, limiting the feasibility of running equipment back and forth.

Zoller must buy some grain but is able to raise all the necessary forages. Due to a lack of silos, he feeds all of his forage as dried hay. In addition to hay, his herd's ration includes ground ear corn, a 34 percent topdressing of soybean meal and cooked soybeans.

Presently, he is milking 30 cows and farming close to 120 acres, 30 of which he owns.

"It is a day-to-day financial struggle," Zollers admits, "just like everyone else."

He reflected on how things might be if he had stayed in sales. "We could have more money, but not a better life," Zollers said. "I have never been sorry for making the change. It's a great life."

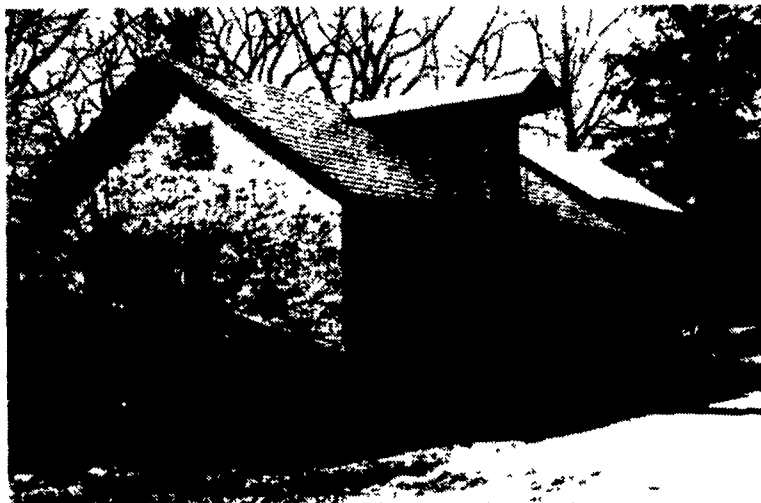
Zollers served as a 4-H leader until last year, resigning as leader when Sherri graduated from the program. Zollers called his experience as 4-H leader "one of the greatest times. I was sorry to see it end." However, he jokes "I'm looking forward to grandchildren and starting over again in 4-H."

In the future, he explains, "I'd like to perfect what I have. I don't want to get larger." Zollers commented, "I'd like to be an asset to the dairy industry."

One of the ways he noted he can be an asset is chairing committees when asked. As chairman of the national Guernsey convention, Zollers say with characteristic zeal that he is anticipating a great convention. "I'm real excited and I can't wait until it gets here." However, he grins and admits he'll be glad when its over.



Zollers checks on one of the young calves at his Mertztown farm. He presently milks 30 cows averaging between 11,000 and 12,000 pounds of milk.



Stone Mill Farm received its name from this building located near the end of Zollers farm lane.

Last Call For Guernsey Convention

**American Guernsey Cattle Club
 Convention Pre-Registration**

May 22-25, 1987 • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Name _____

Farm/Company _____

Address _____ Phone (____) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Other members of family attending _____

Please make the following reservations:

Event	Number	Individual Price	Early Registration Price	Total
Friday Luncheon	_____	@ \$12		_____
Friday Cruise/Bufferet	_____	@ \$30		_____
			Friday @ \$32	_____
Saturday Luncheon	_____	@ \$20		_____
Saturday Wine/Cheese	_____	@ \$ 7		_____
			Saturday @ \$21	_____
Sunday Tours/BBQ	_____	@ \$24		_____
Sunday Banquet	_____	@ \$20		_____
			Sunday @ \$35	_____
Monday Luncheon	_____	@ \$12 50		_____
			Monday @ \$9 50	_____

If you plan to attend all the events, this four-day package sells for \$97.50

_____ @ \$97 50

TOTAL \$ _____

Junior Convention Pre-Registration

Please make the following reservations:

Event	Number	Individual Prices	Early Registration Price	Total
Friday Luncheon	_____	@ \$12		_____
Friday Cruise/Bufferet	_____	@ \$30		_____
			Friday @ \$27	_____
Saturday Kennywood Park	_____	@ \$15		_____
Saturday Pizza Party	_____	@ \$ 5		_____
			Saturday @ \$20	_____
Sunday Tours/BBQ	_____	@ \$24		_____
Sunday Banquet	_____	@ \$20		_____
			Sunday @ \$35	_____
Monday Breakfast	_____	@ \$5 50		_____
Monday Luncheon	_____	@ \$12 50		_____
			Monday @ \$15	_____

If you plan to attend all the events, this four-day package sells for \$90 a savings of \$7 50.

_____ @ \$90

TOTAL \$ _____

YES I would like to share housing with other junior members for \$15 per night Check nights needing room _____ Friday _____ Saturday _____ Sunday _____

Please return this form by Friday, May 7, 1987 making checks payable to the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders' Association Send to Jean Celestine RD 2 Box 125 Scenery Hill Pennsylvania 15360 After May 7 all tickets will be sold at the individual prices

To receive a 35 percent discount on full coach air fare or five percent off any applicable discount fare contact US Air at 1 800 428 4322 This discount offer is effective for flights from May 19 through May 25 originating on US Air's domestic system with Pittsburgh as the destination city Must use designator code AC510E when placing reservation