

Penn Gate Owners Hit Bull's Eye

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LITTLESTOWN — If imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, then having one of your children chose to follow in your career footsteps must be extra complimentary to a parent. At Penn Gate Holstein Farm, just such a transition is taking place. Bob Gitt has, in the past year, passed the management reigns of his herd over to his daughter Chrissy and son-in-law Steve Wood. Steve and Chrissy are the fifth generation of the family to farm the red-clay soil of the homestead located just north of the Mason-Dixon line.

Bob relates that the name Penn Gate was derived from the farm's location. It is just minutes into Pennsylvania from Maryland, hence it is at the gateway into the Keystone State. But the name Penn Gate, which strikes a chord of recognition with Holstein breeders across the country, almost faded from the registry records in 1973.

That was the year of the Allen Dairy Dispersal. Bob put a picture of his Penn Gate Duchess Abbey cow in the catalog, offering her for sale at private treaty. After the dispersal sale was over, representatives of London Dairy in Michigan came to Penn State to see that cow. They purchased Abbey that day and with her, 110 head from the rest of the herd.

What remained of the Penn Gate herd were 45 head that included blemished cows, late breeders, stale cows, and a few heifers. Still, they all carried the Dunloggin, Rag Apple, and Ivanhoe blood that Bob had crossed so successfully in the Abbey, Alice, and Betty families in this herd. These rejected cattle served as the genetic foundation for the 70 head of milking cows housed in their tie-stall barn today. Chrissy added, "Except for the cows that Steve brought with him, everything here is homebred today. We bought two real good cows from Harold Crider's sale several years ago, but I can count on two hands all the cows we've bought since 1974."

In 1986 Chrissy's husband Steve Wood joined the partnership and both Bob and Chrissy credit him with the herd's improvements in production and calving interval. Their rolling herd average is currently at 19,000 pounds of milk and 695 pounds of butterfat. The number of cows producing 1000 pound butterfat records in the past year has almost doubled.

His feeding program includes 25-30 pounds of corn silage per cow per day, an 18% flaked feed

fed three times a day at a ratio of 2:1, and all the good alfalfa-grass mixed hay the cows will clean up.

Steve and Chrissy met at a cow show in Virginia. An accomplished dairyman in his own right, Steve was co-manager at Bayville Farm at that time and also campaigned several of his own cattle as well. Hailing from a dairy family with a commercial set-up, Steve describes himself as a tie stall, registered cow man who is misplaced when milking cows in a parlor.

He brought several of his own cattle to the Penn Gate operation including a VG 87 point Glendell daughter with 30,000 pounds of milk out in her last lactation. She is currently springing to a service by Starbuck.

While managing the dairy and caring for their new son Clayton keeps them busy, Steve and Chrissy still make time for the tanbark circuit. Recently they swept the classes at the South Central PA Championship Show. They captured both the Premier Breeder and Premier Exhibitor banners.

Looking over their show winners, the string included some young Valiants and Enhanser daughters, but the bulk of the breeding is Elevation, Astronaut, and Chief.

Lamented Bob, "There are no bloodlines in our breeding today. There's no more Dunloggin or Rag Apple. It's whatever makes a quick buck. We still breed for strength and longevity here." There are sixteen cows in the herd with over 100,000 pounds of lifetime milk production.

Steve explained their breeding philosophy further, "We don't have many index cows here. We realize there is a place for indexes. We try to breed to correct a cow's faults. I won't intentionally try to lower a cow's index, but I won't mate her to what I think is the wrong bull just to raise her index. We've started using more Canadian bulls here to help keep the strength in our cattle. We try to use index bulls in the right places."

Chrissy added, "The best tools Steve and I have are our eyes. We get out to shows and visit farms and look at the daughters of the bulls. Two years ago we saw some Enhanser daughters and really liked their dairy character. We started using him right away and now some of our best young cows are by that bull."

One such young cow is Penn Gate Enhanser Fashion. Although she started out her lactation with a D.A., she is predicted to make 17,763 pounds of milk and 664



A herd favorite at Penn Gate Farm is Penn Gate Elevation Flashie (2E-91). Her best record was made at 7-1 365D 32,412 4.3% 1382 pounds of butterfat. Flashie has four consecutive records over 1000 pounds of butterfat and averages a 4.0% protein test.



Surrounded by banners, trophies and remembrances of past achievements, three generations of Penn Gate breeders pause for a photo in the farm's office (L to R), Steve and Chrissy Wood, their two-month-old son Clayton and Bob Gitt.

pounds of butterfat. Her dam is a herd favorite that is currently attracting export interest. She is Penn Gate Elevation Flashie (2E-91) by Elevation with her best effort at 7-1 in 365 days of 32,412 pounds of milk 4.3% and 1382 pounds of butterfat.

Steve and Chrissy both see showing as an integral part of their merchandising program. With help from Bob, who now does most of the farming, Robin Thompson as their relief milker, and Richard "Pepper" Lehman as their help at shows, the Woods take out a string that sets the standard for the rest of the competition.

Steve notes that if you aren't merchandising your cattle to supplement your milkcheck, then why maintain your registration papers? Chrissy summarized, "It's much easier these days to sell them to make money, than it is to buy expensive cows to make you money."

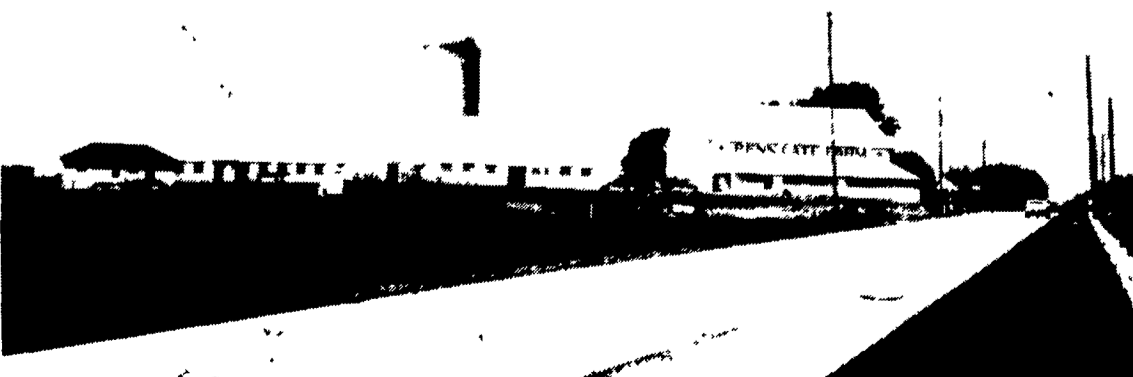
With their reputation for quality cattle, their merchandising program on schedule, their contacts with the export market opening up, and a real enthusiasm for their occupation, this young couple seems to have drawn the bead on the bull's-eye for their success.

Pennsylvania DHIA Holds Director's Conference

The Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association's Annual Statewide Directors' Conference was held at the Sheraton Penn State on September 2 & 3. The conference is conducted to give directors from local (county) boards an opportunity to visit with state DHIA staff members, and to learn more about the activities of state DHIA as well as direction for the future.

Over one-hundred local directors from around the state attended the conference and discussed issues such as National DHIA

rules and changes in due process study reports from the reorganization task force, information from the National DHIA 'new generation' committee and new service options and programs which are becoming available through Pennsylvania DHIA. Dr. William Heald gave a report on the state Cooperative Extension Service and Dr. Joseph Hlubick discussed the progress made on the new nutrition system being developed for DHIA. District directors' meetings and discussion periods were also a part of the 2 day-conference.



Penn Gate Farm sets along Route 97 just north of Littlestown. The farm, which is just minutes into the Keystone State from Maryland, houses one of the state's best known Holstein herds.

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