

Former Rural Youth Bring Back Good Times

BY LOU ANN GOOD

LANCASTER — "Let's forget we're getting older, turn back time to 40 and 50 years ago and enjoy the evening," Richard Lefever, Quarryville, said to the 178 people who gathered to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The Rural Youth of Lancaster County last Saturday evening. The audience did exactly that as they renewed acquaintances and reflected on good times at Willow Valley Convention Center.

The Rural Youth of Lancaster County was organized in 1937 by former 4-H and FFA students to provide social and educational activities for young adults.

"We had good times," Bob Groff, Quarryville, recalled at the Saturday night celebration.

"That we did," another member at his table chimed in. "Kids today don't know how much fun they can have without TV and expensive gadgets."

The others agreed that the fun they had at Rural Youth outshines the fun they believe kids have today. From 1937 until 1951, the organization provided most of the social activities for rural singles.

But membership was not limited to farm youth. Audrey Vane, Leola, recalls that she was a city girl who was invited to join the club. "It was one of the best things that ever happened to me," she said. As a member, she took an active role in the drama club which produced 22 three-act plays and 16 one-act plays during the club's history.

During the war years, travel was limited, and few activities besides Rural Youth existed. The club tried to meet everybody's interests by offering a variety of activities. During the club's prime, they offered more than 30 activities

such as drama, debating, roller skating and discussion groups. Members learned of events not via the telephone, but rather received information through a monthly publication, "Newzette", which was packed with club news, coming events and essays.

The club practiced cooperative leadership. They sold 15-cent shares to buy refreshments, and if they showed a profit, the board of directors held a meeting to decide whether or not to pay dividends.

Roy Brubaker, Lititz, who helped organize the fiftieth anniversary, said members grew through the Rural Youth activities because it taught them to think, form opinions and express their thoughts.

After the war, interest remained high until the 1950's at which point, Brubaker said, there were many other organizations and activities that competed with RYLC. The club dissolved in 1952.

The Saturday celebration brought back memories as Bettie Kile Buckwalter, Lititz, led the group in songs such as "A Bicycle Built for Two" and "Tell Me Why." She called, "Now the boys sing this stanza, and the girls sing the chorus."

Square dancing was a club specialty. Anna Shreiner Rentschler recalled, "We were so good we were invited to put on an exhibition at the Harrisburg Farm Show." This past Saturday night was no exception. Four couples square danced to remind that audience "how young we used to be." The couples who danced, Ida and Allen Risser, Millie and Paul Grube, Ruth and Robert Hood, and Anna and Steward Rentschler,

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These happy couples say they met their spouses through Rural Youth activities. Cupid apparently was busy for thirty couples attribute Rural Youth to their union.



These are the past presidents of Rural Youth of Lancaster County: left, front row, Paul Huber, Lancaster; John Weicksel, Christiana; Roy Brubaker, Lititz; Robert Groff, Quarryville; Jacob Reapsome, Lancaster; Donald Winters, Marletta; Sam Shenk, Lancaster; Allen Risser, Leola; Mark Hess, Lancaster; Richard B. Lefever, Quarryville; and Milton Brubaker, Lititz.



"Do you recognize that couple?" was a familiar question asked by many attendants at the anniversary gathering. Here John and Pat Risser, Dillsburg, try putting names to faces they haven't seen for almost 25 years.



Smiles and laughter spread across the audience as they reminisced about the social events of the organization.



A quartet made up of Roy Brubaker, Mark Hess, Wilbur Houser and Paul Huber brought back memories of former quartets.



The audience exploded with laughter and clapping as they watched the square dance demonstration that was just like old times. In the center is Ida Risser, columnist for "Ida's Notebook" that appears weekly in "Lancaster Farming." Her husband Allen, center back, was a square dance caller for Rural Youth. Ida says she met Allen through the organization and they have been dancing for almost fifty years.