

# Life With A Dairy Princess

BY MARJORIE KEEN  
Chester Co. Correspondent  
LANDENBERG (CHESTER)

— Following her fiftieth public appearance as Chester County's Dairy Princess, Elisa Wilkinson took time out to show a visitor her family's dairy farm in Landenberg. Wilkinson Farm milks 650 Holsteins around the clock on a computerized carousel that takes eight cows at a time. Each cow rides the merry-go-round eight or nine minutes while she's milked.

"I used to do a lot of milking last year and the year before," said the 18-year-old Goldey Beacom College Freshman. "I would say it takes about a month for them to get used to it the first time." A spray of water from a garden hose directed behind her legs persuades a cow to board the carousel.

"There's no water involved with the cow," Wilkinson explained. "The milker strips out a little bit. To open the holes we put iodine on the udder and let it soak. About a year ago we went to wash cloths

for drying off instead of paper towels. We use one wash cloth per cow and have a washer and dryer in the barn." The rate of mastitis is very low, according to the Dairy Princess.

The cows are grouped according to how much they are milking, Wilkinson said. There are three regular groups and a smaller group with fresh cows. The pickup from one milking may run 17,000 pounds.

Wilkinson has helped on the family's 4,800-acre farms since she was 5. She began by helping with calf records. At 10, she drove the tractor and scraped out the barns. When she was 14, the princess was full-time calf manager. During the summer, the farm has as many as 120 calves in hutches up the hill from the milking parlor.

At the county pageant last May, the judges described the Dairy Princess as "self-assured and knowledgeable of the dairy industry." Wilkinson's presentation incorporates a purple cow, played

by her mother, Betsy, or 16-year-old sister, Chrissy.

The purple cow has traveled with the princess to promote dairy products at fairs and schools and at Independence Mall in Philadelphia, where the cow cavorted with the Phillie Phanatic to the delight of onlookers. Wilkinson has made a thick scrapbook and keeps a photo record of her promotional activities.

Her grandfather, Leon Wilkinson, serves as the farmer advocate on Pennsylvania's Milk Marketing Board, commuting to Harrisburg from his home on the Wilkinson Farm. He expressed pride in his granddaughter's reign. "I preached to many of the farmers to give their sons an opportunity and I have four sons," he said, explaining that he'd like to see the operation continued by his grandchildren.

Elisa Wilkinson is studying business administration, hoping someday to manager her own business. Perhaps it will be connected to the dairy industry. Meanwhile she works parttime as an insurance company secretary in Kennett Square.

In addition to farming, the princess' father, Charles, constructs luxury homes on a nearby wooded knoll. He also raises and boards investment bulls as tax shelters for show business personalities.

One of the blue-eyed Dairy Princess' special memories is the day President Reagan visited Wilkinson Farm in May, 1982. "We did a lot of preparation," she said. "We painted the barn and



Elisa Wilkinson has lots of experience in caring for calfs.

trimmed everything . . . I couldn't believe the extent (of preparation)."

Security was very tight, Wilkinson explained. "None of our family got to talk to him except my grandfather. We sat in the first row (in the hay shed) about 15 feet

away from him . . . He was only here about an hour." She concluded the reminiscence about the presidential visit, "It was nice to see him."

## ANSWERS

1. spur
2. beard
3. carundes
4. wattle
5. snood
6. beak
7. eye
8. ear
9. tail feathers
10. wing feathers



Chester County Dairy Princess Elisa Wilkinson with her mother dressed as the Purple Cow visit schools to promote dairy products.

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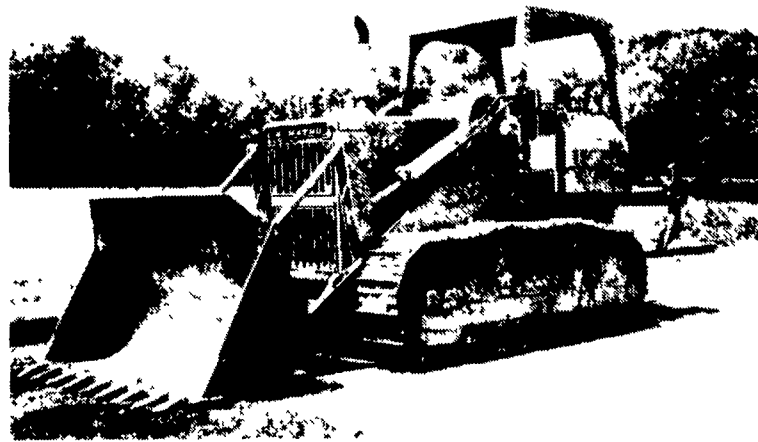
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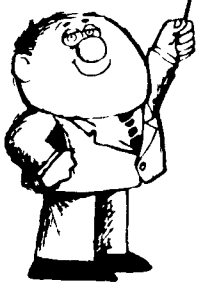
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