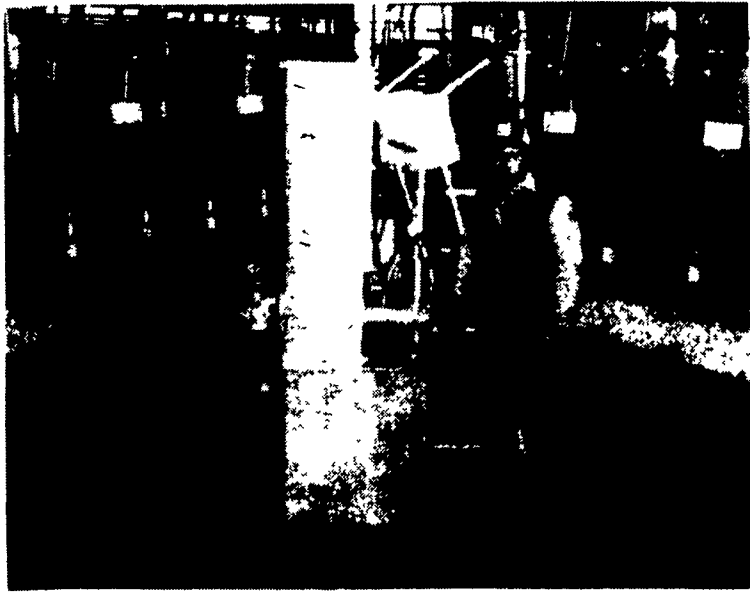


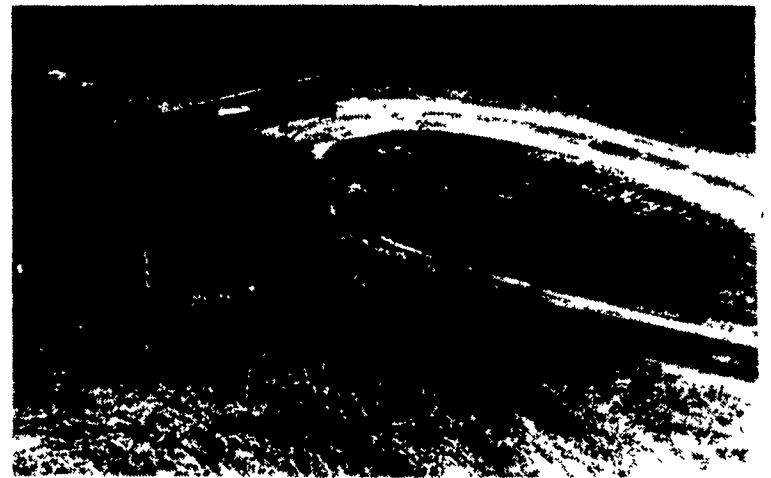
# by Ingenious Robbins Family



Andy Robbins stands in the diamond-shaped milking parlor with its Boumatic-Polygon system that accomodates 24 cows.

Fred Strausser, who has worked for the Robbins since 1963, helps Andy with milking and does the feeding. One other hand is needed and is usually the person which is at free at milking time. It takes two hours to milk the 270-head milking herd. Andy projects a future milking herd of 300 by a gradual buildup of both heifers and purchased stock.

The milking herd consists of 110 first calf heifers. Although Randy is working to increase his herd average of 16,000 with 600 lb. butterfat. The Robbins have several good producers: a 4-year-old has 27,800M with 890F; a seven-year-old is projected at 25,800M with 800F; and three other four-year-olds are at 24,000M or higher and butterfat ranging from 700 to 900 pounds. Milk is sold to Durling Farms. Randy says their milk has been



The manure pit showing the levee and the pipe extended out through the levee at the base of the pit. A tractor-pulled spreader can pull up on the road at the bottom of the drop off, position under the pipe and get loaded in three seconds. The gravity flow can be activated from the tractor.

## Helen Kelchner — Columbia County Correspondent

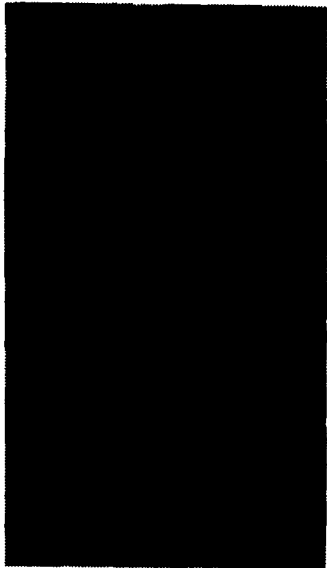
Lancaster Farming's Columbia County correspondent is Helen Kelchner of Berwick.

Helen says her freelance writing and photography grew out of a need to keep busy at "something other than house-keeping." When her four children were through high school she began to take her writing and photography seriously.

Helen was born on a farm in Lewisburg and lived there for 16 years. In 1940 her family moved to Berwick, where she finished school, married and raised a family.

"My husband's business did not lend itself to rural living, so my farming background lay dormant until several years ago," Helen said.

Although her first sales were nature photography and feature stories for the Harrisburg Pat-



riot, Helen says she found her favorite subjects in a farm setting.

"Having lived in what I call the 'dark ages' of farming, I had

much to learn in the computer age where some dairy operations are automated from the silo to the emptying of the manure pit and all points in between," said Helen.

Draft horses are one of Helen's pet subjects, especially the few owners and breeders who continue to use horses as cultivation power.

Helen is 62 years old and plans to continue writing as long as she has a story to write.

Her work has appeared in the Harrisburg Patriot, the Reading Eagle, Baltimore Sun, the Ewener, Draft Horse Journal (Iowa), Small Farmers Journal (Oregon), Horse Illustrated, and Dog Illustrated (California), various church publications and local papers in Berwick, Sunbury, Williamsport and Wilkes Barre.



Andy explains the purpose of the sawdust burning furnace which heats the milking parlor and water for clean-up. The furnace was designed and built by Dean Robbins and his sons. Wood has also been used as fuel.

showing a regular low bacteria count. A B S Genetic Mating Service is used for the mostly grade Holstein herd.

The milking parlor has a time saving feature in which a cow or cows that may require treatment or observation are channeled into a catch-pen. This area can accommodate six head and eliminates the singling out and corralling of these animals from among the free-stall herd. A separate enclosure contains fresh cows and those needing veterinarian care. An adjoining drive-in for the vet's vehicle is incorporated into the barn design.

Any improvements that have been made on the farm are designed to save labor. The new barn was planned to handle a greater herd with less help. Andy says probably the greatest labor saver in the whole operation is the continuous automatic alley scraper which dumps into the gravity-fill/gravity-empty manure pit. The 1.5 million -gallon pit has a six-month storage with an expansion in the planning. Just to give an idea of how many loads are in 1.5 million gallons, Andy says 450 loads of 3300 gallons each brings the level down almost to the bottom.

Tammy, Andy's wife, does the bookkeeping. They have just introduced an IBM computer into the business and are in the process of learning and programming. Sire

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