

# Love For The Farm Brought Her Home

BY LINDA WILLIAMS  
Bedford Co. Correspondent

EVERETT (Bedford Co.) — Lori Sollenberger Knepp grew up loving Jersey cows, cats, and everything connected with the rolling farmlands around her home.

At an early age, she began showing Jersey cows and walking away with a hefty number of prizes at county fairs. She was never outranked by her older sister, Beth, now a minister in Dayton, Ohio, nor by her brother, Leon, who has also returned to the home farm.

"I was always active in 4-H," Lori remembers. "I sewed as well as showing cows and that's something I still like to do. The problem is I don't have enough hours to spend on sewing projects."

At 5'8", she finds it difficult to find store bought clothing that fit properly. The expertise she gained as a 4-H sewer has also made her rather particular in clothing construction.

After graduating from Everett High School, Lori went on to Penn State where she received her degree in Dairy Science in 1981.

"I always thought I would like to be in dairy research," this tall, slim, brunette says now, "but after giving it a try one summer at college, I knew I wanted to return to the farm. It's the animals. I've always loved animals and I just knew farming was what I wanted to do."

Returning to Everett and the Sollenbergers' 120-acre farm, which includes another 120 rented acres, Lori still wanted to spread her wings and try a few adventures.

"I spent one winter on a farm in Iowa just getting some experience," she remembers. "And, then I spent two more winters working in a United Church of Christ missions program in Sri Lanka."

An active Brethren all of her life, Lori chose the UCC program because her own church did not have any missionary programs in the parts of the world she wanted to explore.

Then, in 1987, Lori settled in as a full-time farm hand on her father's farm. By this time, brother Leon, was also able to join dad, Ray, in the farm work.

And, Lori got married to Rex Knepp, a computer analyst for New Enterprise Stone and Lime. The couple met while co-counseling a canoe trip for the youth of the Brethren Church.

While not a farm boy, Rex had grown up in nearby Morrison's Cove and was familiar with farm

life. "He seems to enjoy it," Lori smiles. "He's always willing to pitch in and help with the farm work when it's my weekend to work."

Lori's main responsibility on the farm is the milking and record keeping of the more than 75 cows.

It's always been my father's theory that one person should be primarily responsible for the milking," Lori explains.

"That way, in the summer, not everyone has to come in from the fields to do the milking."

Lori's work day begins at 4 a.m. when she dons her coveralls and boots and drives the short distance from the small farm she and Rex have bought to the Sollenberger farm.

"We've always had Jerseys," she says proudly. "A lot of prize-winning Jerseys. It's a family tradition. My grandfather had a big Jersey herd and there were four boys in the family. They have all specialized in Jerseys."

"Another reason we have specialized in Jerseys is because of their smaller size," Lori continues. "A smaller cow does not eat as much and a herd of Jersey cows do not take as much room as a herd of Holsteins."

Lori and Leon share the early morning milking. "On the mornings I don't have to milk, I feed. Then I don't have to go to work until 6 a.m.," she said with a smile.

If there is time for a few hours off, Lori takes them between the end of the morning milking around 7:30 a.m. and the beginning of the evening milking at 3 p.m. "We usually finish up around 6 or 6:30," she says.

Lori often prepares dinner before going to do the milking and husband, Rex, heats it up and has dinner on the table when she returns from the barn.

"The most challenging part of the dairy industry is the breeding," expresses Lori. "I do all of the record keeping and it's always a challenge to think that we can breed a better producer, a better cow. It's the part I enjoy the most."

Lori and Rex do find some time to get away together. "I have every other weekend off from milking," Lori says. "Every winter we try to take a long weekend. It's a lot more difficult to get away in the summer, so we usually try to work in a vacation during an off season."

Elaine Sollenberger, Lori's mother, held a high position in the Brethren Church for a number of years that caused the entire family to attend the Brethren conference last summer. Lori states. "We

paid someone to do the work and we all went together."

Despite a work day which can begin at 4 a.m. and not end until late in the evening, Lori is active in her church, the Everett Church of the Brethren. She currently has a part-time position which entails about six hours a week as a director of youth ministries. With nearly 400 members, there are more duties at the Church of the Brethren than the pastor can handle alone.

The Sollenbergers attend three county fairs and participate in the Pennsylvania All American Show at Harrisburg each year.

Last year they had the grand champion Jersey and the junior and reserve champion Jerseys at the Morrison's Cove Dairy Show at Martinsburg. They took reserve and two junior champion awards at the Bedford Fair and walked away with nearly all of the Jersey titles at the Huntingdon Fair.

"We don't do as well at the All American," Lori explains. "But, it's good exposure. We usually get a lot of inquiries that continue all year. We've sold quite a few cows by attending that event. And, last year, we were proud to have the calf that brought the most in the 'Pot of Gold Sale.'"

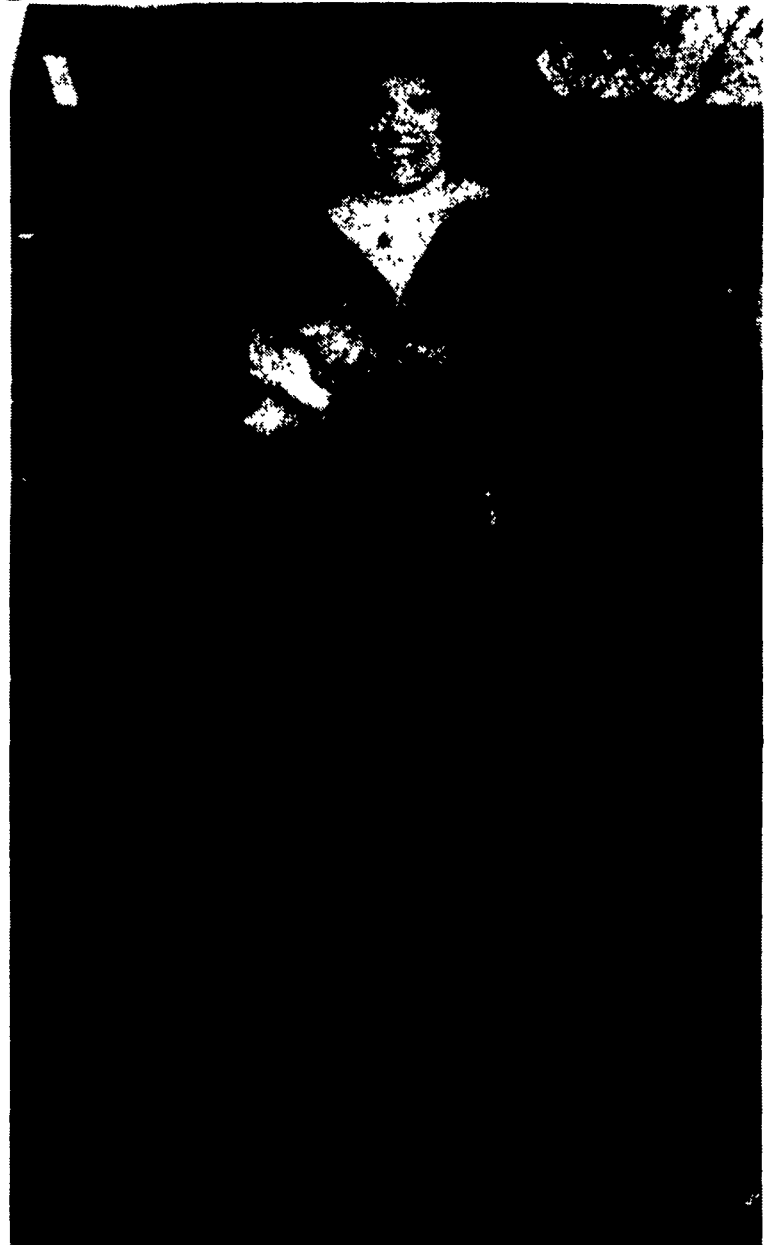
Helping to farm 240 acres and keeping records while milking 75 cows doesn't allow Lori a lot of free time. But, when she and Rex can find a few moments, they enjoy fixing up their old farmhouse.

"We like to look for antiques," she admits. "When we buy a piece of furniture, we always look at public sales. We've found some real treasures doing that."

One of her favorite pieces is a glass front display cabinet that an uncle was going to throw away.

"Don't do that," Lori said, filling it with collectible items, she turned it into a usable and attractive piece of furniture.

She also enjoys haunting



Ready to head out for the afternoon milking, Lori says "goodbye" to one of her two housecats.

unusual gift shops where she looks for unique collectible items or music boxes.

One of her favorite parts of farm life will always be the cats. Lori and Rex have two house cats. In addition, Lori has made more than 15 farm cats her personal pets.

"I've always loved them," she says, snuggling up to a well-fed

tiger female. "They have individual personalities, they are self-sufficient, I just love them."

Ask Lori's dad if he was surprised when his pretty daughter wanted to return to work on the farm, he grins broadly.

"Not at all," he says, "I knew she could never stay away from the cats."

## Nancy Herring's Racing Pigs Hog The Attention

LOU ANN GOOD  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
CHALK HILL (Fayette Co.) — Two years ago Nancy Herring recalls thinking, "I'm over 60 and I can't do anything."

Today the 64-year-old jumps over hay bales while cheering pigs to victory.

Pig racing is a relatively new sport that has rejuvenated Nancy and brought her some fame and a whole lot of enthusiasm.

She recalls that her debut into pig racing just sort of happen. She and her husband Rolland, president of the state fair convention, wanted to get a professional pig racing team to come to the Fayette County Fair.

But the team was booked and commanded a fee of several thousand dollars.

"I decided I'd do it myself," Nancy said. "Of course I don't have the pot belly pigs that the professionals use, but mine are just as much fun to watch."

For her first race, she purchased ordinary Duroc piglets and since then has used a variety of breeds. Some of her favorites were named Miss Piggy, Eeenie, Meanie, Minnie and Mo.

"Pigs are smart and easy to train," Nancy said.



Nancy Herring

And because pigs love sweets, Nancy capitalizes on their sweet tooth by rewarding the pigs with Oreo cookies after they run around the track.

Although she leads her four piglets through the paces once a day for 15 days before racing them, she said, "It only takes one time around the track for them to figure out there is a cookie at the end. Pigs are smart."

Crowds gather to watch the oinkers compete. Each pig is introduced to the crowd. Each pig has a number on a silk and on a corresponding pendant. Nancy picks four children from the crowd and

has them hold a pennant. Each child and his surrounding group cheer their pig on to victory. T-shirts commemorating the race are given as awards to the child who holds the winning pennant.

With grunts, squeels and a few shoves, the winning pig crosses the finish line to the wild cheers of the crowd. Pigs run about 200 feet in 11 or 15 seconds.

It's a real crowd pleaser." Nancy claims, "And the pigs have as much fun as everyone else."

Her shows usually last 15 to 20 minutes. She said at the Fayette County Fair, Rick Allen, a well-known Holstein breeder, acts as the announcer and encourages an enthusiastic crowd. Several children help with the races.

As a curtain call, Nancy asks the crowd if they'd like to see a pig drink a soda. With obvious piggish manners, the pig slurps a soda from a bottle.

Some secrets on the behind-the-scenes pig racing that Nancy has uncovered are that pigs have a pecking order. One pig is always the leader and the other pigs follow.

For exciting racing, pigs should be between 15 to 20 pounds and



Lori has been milking Jerseys since she was a little girl. It's one of her favorite parts of the dairying business.