

# Fraktur Art Occupies New Berlin Dairy Wife

BY GAIL STROCK  
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"He's my best critic!", she says with a smile. "We compliment each other". We are sitting in the kitchen of the Spangler farm in New Berlin, PA. Donna Spangler speaks of her role as an artist and of her husband Dan's role as a dairy farmer. Each has their own business, but each also enhances the other.

Donna credits her present Fraktur Art business to hard work, the encouragement Dan gives her, and her background. She received an Associates Degree in Visual Communications at the Pittsburgh Art Institute in 1975. Degree in hand, she went to work for a retail chain in Lewistown, PA as Advertising Manager for their four stores. While there, Donna attended workshops on Copywriting, and Advertising and Production at New York University on Washington Square.

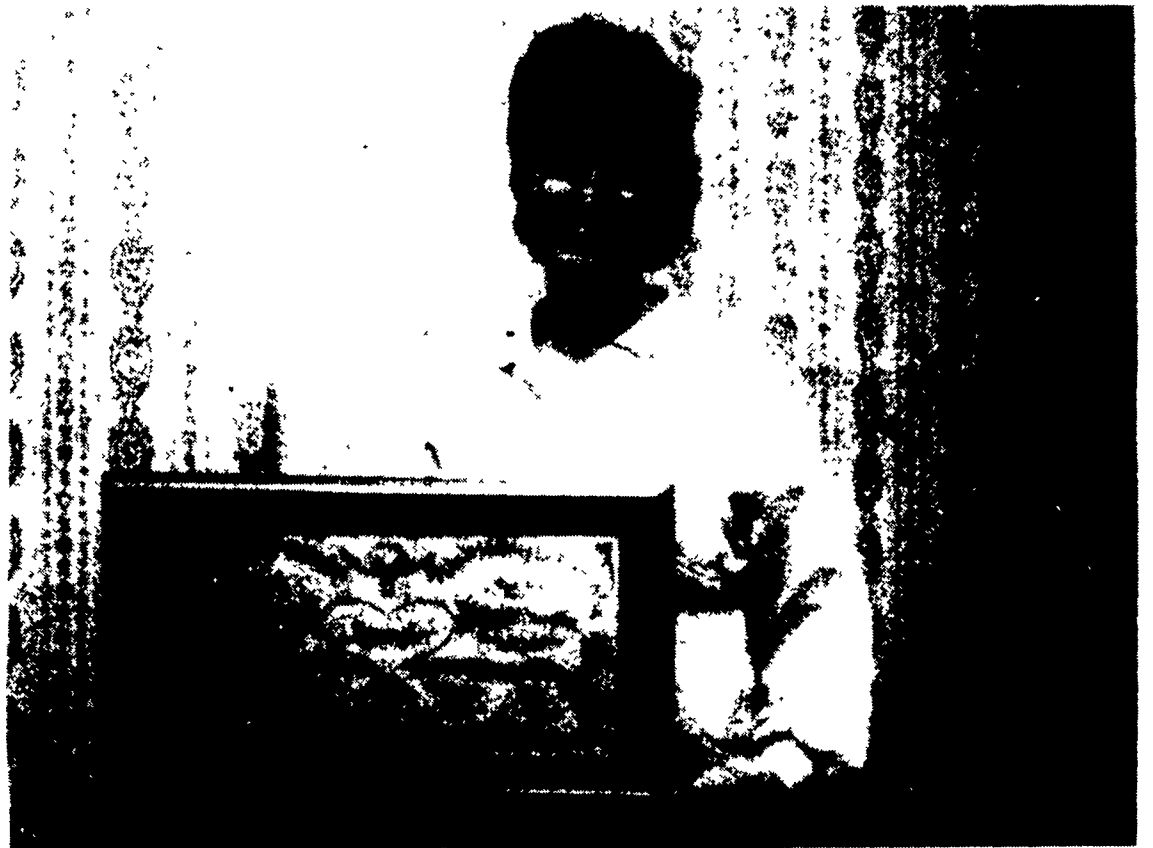
When Donna met Dan, he was District Representative for American Breeders Service. They married, and moved back to his home farm, a 70-cow dairy in Union County. While helping with the milking, Donna laid plans for her future, a way she could keep her identity as an artist while raising a family on the farm. She started free-lancing at local businesses and substituted for the Commercial Art and Printing classes at the Sun Area Technical School, a mile from their home. During their children's pre-school years, Donna also designed farm logos, including stationery. Now that the children, 8-year-old Justin and 5-year-old Kevin, are of school age, Donna has chosen to special-

ize and is turning her artistic talent into a business.

But why Fraktur Art? "I wanted to contribute something more permanent (than advertising) - an art form with a history that I could pass on - that people could cherish", she explains. "And Fraktur Art has that history". Brought to America by German immigrants, Fraktur Art is a Pennsylvania German Folk Art with its meaning deeply rooted in their religion. The symbols of Christ include the Dove, the stem of the vine, and the flower. The heart symbolizes agape, the Love of God, and the leaves are new-born believers. Donna explains that only primary colors are used because "they worked with what they had (dyes)". This folk art originated as a means of recording special events - to keep records such as wedding frakturs, birth announcements, and family trees.

After seeing a friend's family tree done in Fraktur, and because of her interest in genealogy, Donna turned her attention to Fraktur. By intertwining her personal artistic style with the Fraktur symbols, Donna creates original designs that are hand lettered. She keeps with tradition by creating family tree Frakturs, and wedding and birth announcements, but also provides verses from the Bible and sayings that people request. Donna's largest request came from a Philadelphia family - a 150-person family tree dating back to 1501.

Each completed Fraktur then gets matted and framed in Donna's studio on the second floor of their home. Having the tools to mat and frame at home enables



Donna Spangler

Dan to help Donna when his schedule allows.

Donna, speaking of Dan, states that although each is in charge of their own business, each helps the other out when needed. While Dan cuts frames for Donna occasionally, Donna feeds calves and milks when needed. "We know each other's business", she adds. And Dan's business is dairy farming at Harmony Springs Farm. When Dan moved back to his home farm, he became the fourth generation to farm there, at first in partnership with his father, now in

partnership with his brother.

Donna and Dan wanted to raise their children on a farm as they both had been. And now sons Justin and Kevin have the advantage of both parents at home and both parents involved in something that is important to them. They feel at home out at the barn or in the studio, and are involved in both. Justin will be showing a calf in the open class at the Union County Fair for the third year and, as for art, Donna smiles when she says that on the last day of school, Justin pulled his desk into her studio

and three days later Kevin pulled his in.

Although working at home has its disadvantages, such as keeping odd hours, Donna emphasizes the importance of full support from the family, a support that comes in many forms - from cutting frames to showing concern - from milking cows to making time.

Donna and Dan, along with their children, fill the roles of business owners, co-workers, family members, and partners - all individuals, yet all interrelated. And the partnership works well here at Harmony Springs Farm.

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