

The Millers Keep Perspective In Their Lives

GAY N. BROWNLEE
Somerset Co. Correspondent

BOSWELL (Somerset Co.) — Dairy farmer Mark Miller of Boswell, RD1, in Somerset County is about as eager to discuss his farming accomplishments as a novice skydiver is to free-jump from an airplane three miles above an ocean.

Voted the Pennsylvania Outstanding Young Farm Couple in 1985, Mark and his wife, Martha, take the honor in their stride.

In 1975, when they were 20 and 21 years old, Mark and Clarence, his brother, bought the farm their father had purchased in 1961. Included were 30 head of Holstein cattle, not even half the amount the fellows thought they wanted. They bought 50 more head of cattle, "because the price was right," at the time.

Quantity was the overriding consideration rather than quality. In jest Mark says, "We just went out and bought junk." He says it to tease Martha who is an avid buyer at local auctions.

Whether the idea was good sense or not might be debatable, but it has apparently worked for the Millers.

About that same time, new-

lyweds, Mark and Martha moved into the farm house. Martha says she loves living on a farm but adds a qualifier of sorts by stating, "I'm glad I'm not a farmer. I like to see the cows in a pasture."

Martha's family, once neighbors of Mark's family, had moved to Ohio just before her birth. They returned one summer for a visit and called upon the Miller family. At his invitation, pretty, teen-aged Martha accompanied Mark for a ride on his motorcycle. They were stranded when the bike appeared to be out of fuel.

"Mark turned off the motor," Martha immediately challenges, giving him a sidelong glance.

"It ran out of gas," he grins.

They walked nearly a mile to reach Mark's home, which was ample time for the seeds of a budding romance to sprout. Mark continues to credit his mother, saying it was she who devised the scheme.

"It was a letter courtship," he says. He was doing volunteer service in an Omaha, Nebraska hospital at the time. Finally Martha's father let her go there for a while to teach Bible School.

Martha, who spends virtually no time doing farm work, is the person who will quote the facts and figures. Occasionally, Mark adds a



As with most families, the family kitchen is the hub of action for the Mark Miller family of Boswell, RD1, Somerset county.

rider to her comments. Personal publicity is something with which they are not comfortable.

Their four children are Ben, 14; Kirstin, 11; Julie, 8; and Alexia, 6.

Showing little of his dad's conversational reticence, young Ben talks eagerly about his show animals, freely admitting to his passion for being in a show ring. So far he has four years of experience in that area.

Ben had to address the Somerset County Holstein Association, of which the Miller's are members, at its annual spring banquet this year. It was the expected responsibility of Ben, since he'd been voted the most valuable player on his Dairy Bowl Team during the Penn State Junior Holstein Convention.

The family declares that Ben had the banquet crowd laughing during his address. "I only said what happened," he replies innocently, but his eyes sparkle with betraying mischief.

With his sister, Kirstin, Ben belongs to the Super-Milkers 4-H Club. He is her coach as they both prepare to enter 4-H projects in the Somerset County Fair next August. Mark and Martha are half of the club's advising team.

Doing handcrafts is a strong talent of Martha. She particularly enjoys painting and will use any material paintable for her ideas, even the barn slats. One such item is prominently displayed in her kitchen above a doorway. It reads, "Let All That You Do Be Done In Love." Letters in dark blue paint outlined in red are complimented by the dainty white and yellow daisies she has woven around the motto with her paintbrush.

At the mention of her mother's sewing ability, little Alexia, whom they call Lexi, slides off the bench she has been occupying with sister Julie, and disappears. In a flash, she returns with a beautiful new dress that Martha has constructed for Julie. Lexi's broad smile indicates how proud she is that her mother made the dress.

When everybody went outside, Lexi's favorite mode of transportation was to be carried in her daddy's arms.

The children attend Johnstown Christian School where Martha is a regular volunteer.

Mark wants a milking parlor. He and Clarence generally get the

morning and evening milking completed in two hours, but the 80 cows are in regular stalls.

The animals are computer fed. This requires herding the pastured cows back to the barn at noon for

their regulated feeding schedule. A number on each cow tells the computer how many pounds of feed she needs.

Having a modern dairy opera-
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The swing on the Miller's front porch is getting some use by the three sisters.

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Except for a short tenure in New Jersey, Ms. Brownlee has always lived in southern Somerset County, Pa., near the Maryland Pennsylvania border, or Mason-Dixon Line. The high mountainous plateau is often called the Tableland of Pennsylvania.

For the last ten years, Ms. Brownlee has been a single parent of six children, now grown, except for one son, a high school junior.

Besides *Lancaster Farming*, Ms. Brownlee is a correspondent of several other publications including the *Daily American*, Somerset, Pa. She has a diploma from her studies with The Institute of Children's Literature, Redding Ridge, Conn.

Currently, Ms. Brownlee is employed with a



promotional agency in Grantsville, Md.

Brownlee's philosophy is to love people and be happy. Because we are all so different, life is made much more savory.



Martha, Mark, and Ben Miller stand on the front porch steps at their home on Boswell, RD1.

Homestead Notes