

Hill Wins Lebanon Dairy Princess Pageant, Competes In National Dairy Bowl

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LEBANON (Lebanon Co) — There were no losers when Terry Hill, 17, was crowned Lebanon County Dairy Princess June 16 at the Lebanon County Vo-Tech School. All three contestants for the title were named dairy princesses.

It was the first time Lebanon dairy promotion officials chose two alternative dairy princesses. Alternates perform a number of promotional functions, filling in when commitments prevent the county princess from being present at an event.

Some other counties have already gone to a three-princess system, because of the number of concurrent events.

In addition to the crowning of princesses, 6-year-old Katie Lentz was selected as Little Miss Lebanon County Dairy Princess from a field of five contestants. Little miss dairy princesses assist dairy princesses during some promotions, especially at school activities.

The foursome — including alternates Dianne Dice, 20, and Stephanie Wagner, 15 — will spend about two-thirds of the next year serving dairy foods, buying dairy items for patrons of certain super markets, making speeches and attending banquets.

But for Hill, the schedule is even more complex. Not only is she scheduled to compete for the state dairy princess pageant this fall, but she is one of the four-member state dairy bowl team. They are to be competing in national competitions in North Carolina today through Thursday.

Hill accepted the crown during an emotional ceremony. It started with a farewell speech by outgoing princess Kynel Bomgardner.

After giving the goodbye speech, she fought back tears while she acknowledged those

who had helped her tackle 100 promotional events during the past year. Then Bomgardner played piano and sang a duet with her mother, "To God Be The Glory." Some in the audience, apparently touched by the song and the moment, began to sob slightly during the song.

Then, with the naming of Hill as the 1990 princess, Bomgardner turned over the reign of Lebanon dairy promotion.

Bomgardner's tears of sadness were mixed with Hill tears of joy.

Hill, daughter of James and Bernice Hill, Lebanon RD 6, has accomplished a number of feats in the three years since her family moved from a 95-acre Sussex County, New Jersey, dairy farm to their present 120-acre Holstein and Brown Swiss operation in the northern part of Lebanon County.

Newcomers to the Lebanon area frequently complain about always being considered an "outsider," even after they have lived in the area for more than 25 years.

However, the reception Hill has received does not reflect a closed community that shuns outsiders.

"It was hard getting used to not having my friends, but I adjusted quickly to Lebanon County, so I got over it. But I do miss the friends that I do have in New Jersey," she said.

A recent graduate from Northern Lebanon High School, Hill's almost immediate involvement with 4-H and FFA upon moving to Lebanon helped pave the way for her acceptance into the community.

A self-proclaimed lack of confidence caused her to turn down the opportunity to compete for the dairy princess title last year. Officials had asked her to be a contestant.

"Last year I didn't have the confidence in myself and this year, through public speaking class and various activities, I've learned to

promote the dairy industry, the life I love," she said during the pageant.

"Last year I wasn't really prepared to enter a contest. I was scared. I didn't think I'd be able to get up in front of a group and perform a skit," she said. "Also I wanted to wait until I was out of high school so I could devote more of my time to the promotions," Hill said.

During the pageant, her inhibitions were completely conquered until... "they were about to announce who won."

Hill said that's when she started to get excited and nervous.

But Hill's success in overcoming shyness of groups and fear of public speaking didn't just come from her straightforward attacking the problem through getting additional education. She did have friends with experience in the public arena.

1988 state Dairy Princess Rebecca Sonnen is a teammate of Hill's on the state dairy bowl team.

Through that activity, with the weekly practices and some other agricultural-based activities, Hill and Sonnen began talking.

"Knowing Becky has helped a lot because she is always positive about anything she does and she is someone to look up to," Hill said.

"Whenever I had any questions about promotions or preparing for the contest, I knew I could turn to her," she said. "We're becoming close friends through the dairy bowl. I've gotten to know her very well."

Part of the dairy princess competitions in Lebanon is giving a public response to a question. All contestants got the same question: "If you were president of the United States, what would be your first act and why?"

Elvin Gingrich was master of ceremonies and asked each contestant the question twice.

Hill said she would direct efforts toward feeding the nation's starving and homeless. She said that a country that attempts to help world starvation by donating food over-sees and can produce such large amounts of surplus food, purchased by the government, should not have starvation at home.

The other two girls' answers focused on the farm bill, education and the dairy industry. Hill said she didn't think that, as president, the current interest of one segment of the nation should override the needs of the whole nation.

"I felt that it would sort of be self-centered to just go with my occupation. I feel there are many occupations and problems in the world and we could feed the starving with what is our surplus."

Hill said she tries to stay aware of current affairs mainly through reading newspapers.

She said her focus on America's starving emanated from a high school class.

"We had a debate on it in our English speaking class. I was one of the two people who did a debate on homeless or starving."

Self-centeredness is apparently not part of Hill's makeup, nor her reason for getting involved in the dairy princess program. She said she did it for the opportunity to help the dairy industry and to better herself.

Some segments of society have criticized pageants such as the Miss America event.



1989 Lebanon County Dairy Princess Kynel Bomgardner places the 1990 crown on Terry Hill.

Hill said there is a big difference between those types of pageants and the type in which a representative is selected to promote an agricultural commodity or livestock breed.

"I think it's mostly judged on your personality and interests. It's not judged on beauty," she said, then laughed.

The competitors for the 1990 title were mutually supportive. They know each other outside of being involved in the pageant.

"I know Stephanie a little more, because she was in the dairy contests I was in. She is a member of the junior dairy bowl team and she would go to the same competitions," Hill said. "I know Dianne through our FFA chapter."

Hill works full time on the family farm doing the morning feeding and maintenance of the 55 milking cows and almost a like number of calves and heifers. She also keeps records of the breeding program.

With much of the next year being devoted to road trips and entire days and evenings promoting dairy products, Hill said someone will have to be found to fill in for her absence at the farm.

A National Honor Society member in high school, Hill said she is not stopping her education. She is scheduled to attend, as a parttime student, the Lebanon branch of Harrisburg Area Community College which is opening soon. She plans to study computer applications and speech communications this semester.

Her future is still undecided. She said that while she milks cows she often thinks about what she is going to do, where she is headed.

"I feel that the embryo transplant and the genetic field might be an area that I might like to enter," she said.

In the meantime, she said whatever she eventually decides, she's certain it will be in agriculture.



Stephanie Wagner, dressed as a heifer calf, tells a story of looking for her mother and describes her mother through dairy terms.



Kynel Bomgardner places the crown onto Katie Lentz, 1990 Little Miss Lebanon County Dairy Princess. Outgoing Little Miss, Alicia Mase, looks on.