

# Frantz Family Prepares For Farm Show Competition

JOYCE BUPP

York Co. Correspondent

SEVEN VALLEYS (York Co.)

— Isabel, Jezebel, and Rose won't be attending the 1990 Pennsylvania Farm Show. But some of their distant offspring probably will.

The trio of Duroc gilts - Isabel, Jezebel and Rose - were born to a gilt made famous a few years ago at the Farm Show's annual hog breeding sale. Her purchase hit the headlines and helped put a York County family into the hog breeding business.

Tom and Karen Frantz, Seven Valleys R2, grew up in York County's 4-H programs. Karen raised project beef on her McCleary family's farm near Stewartstown. Tom's hogs were tended on his family's Stoverstown farm; the year that he decided to raise a steer for show, the farm - and the steer - were sold before the project was complete.

With farming in both their backgrounds, the Frantzes agreed they wanted to raise their children in an agriculture environment. In 1980, they purchased their 15-acre farm on Larue Road.

Rather than leave the barn on the property stand empty, Tom bought a few feeder pigs to raise. When the hogs were fattened, relatives gathered between Christmas and New Year for the first of what became a regular event for several years - an old-fashioned butchering.

Raising hogs soon became more than just something to do with a few empty pens and acres of corn.

"I saw what 4-H could do for youngsters," says Frantz. So, five market feeders were purchased for daughter Kim's first year in the swine club.

The one Hampshire and four red hogs were acquired from Dave Holloway, Glen Rock, who's earned recognition nationally as a Duroc breeder. Frantzes first contacted Holloway because they saw his name in the newspaper, with a local phone number. Kim's show

ring success with those first pigs sent them back to Holloway as return customers the next two years.

"Then we were getting interested enough that we wanted to start farrowing some of our own litters," Tom recalls.

A Duroc gilt of Holloway's took reserve champion at the 1988 Farm Show. Frantz wanted to bid on the hog in the sale, but had to work that day. His employer, the York-based Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates architectural firm, has a Harrisburg office, so Frantz asked his boss, Doug Rohrbaugh, to stop by the sale and bid on the gilt.

When the bidding ended, Crabtree Rohrbaugh & Associates owned a record-priced \$1,600 Duroc gilt. They donated a part of the cost toward 4-H foundation stock for Kim and her younger brother Jason.

A few weeks later, the gilt farrowed. Near-panic hit the Frantz family when the first piglet was born dead. But the next 13 were alive and healthy; the gilt raised nearly every one, proving her mothering abilities.

Frantzes opted to keep from that litter a barrow and four gilts - including Isabel, Jezebel and Rose. Littermates went to other buyers, among them one from Eastern Shore who had expressed interest the day the gilt had sold at Farm Show. That purchase later took a grand championship during showing in Somerset County, Maryland.

The four gilts kept by the Frantz family were all bred, and the one they felt was second best of the lot was entered the following year at the Farm Show. She took champion honors and was sold, leaving Frantzes with their trio of high-potential littermates.

"Those three gilts were our start," says Frantz. "All their offspring look pretty much the same."

Last year's Farm Show added another interesting chapter to the family's collection of hog tales.

A reserve champion Hampshire



Looking over 4-H hog project books are, from left, Kim, Karen, Tom and Jason Frantz.

gilt bred by Ken Winebarn, Myerstown, caught Tom's eye. With no real expectation of buying her, he made a couple of bids during the champion's sale, ultimately writing a \$700 check for the unplanned purchase. But just about the time he and Kim loaded her up for the 50-mile trailer trip home, a snow storm moved in across York County, in typical "Farm Show weather" fashion.

Five hours later, having crept through one of the winter's worst local traffic tie-ups, then barely reaching a service station with their nearly-empty gas tank, Tom finally hauled the rig through the snow up their driveway with the tractor. They were afraid to check the gilt.

"I was almost sure she'd be dead, or that the exhaust fumes from hours of waiting would have caused a problem," Tom remembers. "She was fine."

Actually, the gilt was probably the least stressed. Karen's car had slid into a ditch on her way home from her job at AMP, Inc., and she had repeatedly called the Farm Show trying to locate Tom and Kim.

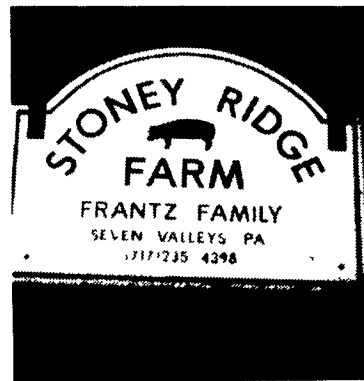
None the worse for the lengthy trailer ride, the gilt farrowed February 10 and raised 10 healthy piglets.

The Frantzes credit some good fortune and the assistance of friend Dave Holloway with much of their success in the hog breeding business. When they first started farrowing on their own, Holloway was quick to lend a hand as needed.

Now veterans who take turns getting up during the night to check on close gilts and sows, they've also learned that they can save valuable baby pigs by keeping close tabs on farrowing mothers. One crossbred sow which farrowed ahead of schedule last winter on a cold night came close to losing her entire litter of 17. As it was, a barn check alerted the Frantzes to her problem and they saved most of the newborns.

"We could just as easily lost them all," Tom says of the family's commitment to regular barn visits - even late on frosty winter nights.

"If they can do it themselves, we let them. But, we like to stay with them; it might help save a few more, especially with gilts," says Kim, a 17-year-old Dallastown High School junior who



Frantz family's farm sign.

takes her turn with the overnight maternity watches. "Sometimes we have to help open the sac or help to get them breathing."

"And, if we don't, and there are problems, then you always wonder if we could have done this or that to help," adds Karen, who says she vowed as a teen-ager never to marry a farmer - especially a hog farmer.

After a dozen litters born last winter, their hog population numbered well beyond their breeding needs. An equipment sale was already planned after switching to custom planting, then expanded to include the sale of 40 market pigs for 4-H and FFA projects. Top pig brought \$199, with buyers both local and as distant as Wayne and Centre counties.

Most of the pigs did very well for their buyers and customers have been asking about this year's sale, planned tentatively for late April. Some 16 farrowings over the next few months should provide the 50 to 60 young pigs expected to sell.

A few pigs are always kept to finish out and, of course, Kim and Jason select their project animals for the year's shows and sales. Each will show a market hog at Farm Show, and the family has two gilts entered. In addition to Farm Show, their annual exhibit schedule includes county round-ups, York Fair, and KILE. This past summer they added a trip to the Indiana State Fair, doing well with their Hamp entries at the nation's major Hampshire hog competition.

Early darkness and school schedules limit the time Kim and Jason have to work with their Farm Show animals. Though they do exercise their market pigs somewhat for muscle development, Kim believes that overworking project pigs makes them so tame they are difficult to handle in the

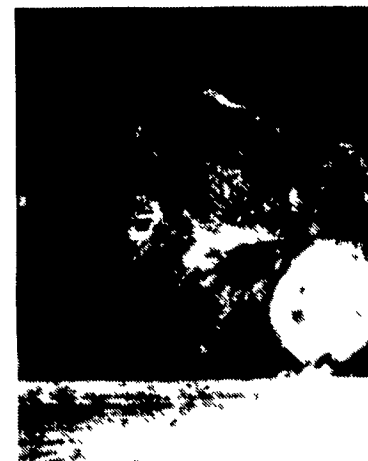
showing. This year she has added an Angus-Simmental steer and Angus heifer to her livestock projects.

Kim's involvement with 4-H goes well beyond just raising and showing her animals. She is a member of the York County Pork Bowl team, which won the state contest held last year at the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Congress. Kim is also part of the county's 4-H meats judging team, which recently represented Pennsylvania, placing fourth, at national competition in Kansas City.

Jason, 12, is in seventh grade at Dallastown Middle School. He credits 4-H with having helped him make lots of new friends, and like Kim, has won a share of hog exhibit honors.

The Frantz family's enthusiasm for the swine business is evident in the stories they relate of the various pig "personalities" they have bred and raised. A favorite, Elsie, just recently left the herd, leaving fond memories of a "super pig" pet. A spunky crossbred, Elsie earned the family's amusement and admiration when she learned to put herself in the same pen with the boar - and latch the gate behind her. The cats also enjoyed Elsie, and often crawled into her pen to sleep with her. Passing drivers stopped to watch as Elsie trotted through the fields behind the manure spreader when her pen was being cleaned.

"It is never boring; something interesting is always happening," Tom Frantz figures. "We do this because we have the desire, not because there's any great financial returns. It's just something we enjoy."



Herd sire Bruno, a family favorite, eyes a passing scoop of feed from behind the pen gate.

## Homestead

### Notes



Regular companions for Kim and Jason as they do chores are dog Sparky and their friendly barn cats.