

York Farm Woman

(Continued from Page B16)
 culture, and the chance to visit personally with so many women from other states," she smiles, quickly naming women from California, Oregon, Illinois, Ohio and Texas.

When Ethel missed the 1989 convention in South Dakota, she received a "miss you" card signed by about 100 attendees, at least half of them personal acquaintances. Some 200 to 300 members regularly attend the conventions, which include special farm tours for husbands accompanying their wives.

Since it's organization, AAW has been instrumental in working with issues and legislation that affect farmers in all parts of the country. Committees reflect the diversity of AAW, from the major commodity interests such as livestock, grains and dairy to ag chemicals, farm labor, energy and estate

taxes.
 "AAW helps point out the things happening in agriculture," Ethel cites as a major reason for her involvement. "It helps us see the issues we'll have to deal with in the future. We've especially been informed on problems that started primarily on the West Coast - animal rights and labor for instance - and gives us a 'heads up' to what we can expect in emerging issues."

The Gross family, including husband Harold, son Steve's family, and grandson Steve, Jr., and his wife, raise cattle, hogs, and field crops just outside the borough of Manchester. A family operation of more than a century, grandson Steve, says Ethel, is at least the seventh generation on the farm.

Ethel grew up on a Kralltown area farm, the oldest of 11 children, "all of whom still enjoy getting together and being with one

another," she adds with pride. Her childhood years during the Depression included helping with field work and milking the family's cows. At 17, she began doing domestic work for area families.

When she was 24, Ethel entered nurses training at the La Junta, Colorado, Mennonite Hospital. At the end of the three-year course, she returned home to begin nurs-

ing at the West Side Hospital, later taking a position at York Hospital. It was there, as head nurse on her floor, that she met Harold Gross, a widower with five sons.

"He was only there for a weekend; if I'd been off that weekend I'd never have met him," she grins. Two years later, a sixth son was born.

Community service has always been important to the Gross fami-

ly, and Ethel has been active with various agriculture and church organizations. Over the years she has worked closely with the Society of Farm Women, York Hospital Fete and Christ Lutheran Church in Manchester, where she has taught Sunday School for many years. She is on the board and has served several terms as treasurer of the York Christian Women's Club.

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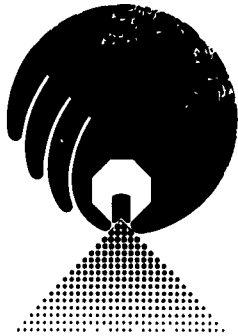
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