

State FFA Officers Hold Western PA Media Tour

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.) - In a pre-arranged meeting, four distinguished gentlemen joined the news correspondent in a cold, upstairs room of an old, Main Street, school building, now a community center. Under a big window in the seldom-used, former classroom, an old-fashioned, silver radiator hissed steam out its side, but bestowed no heat on the gathered quintet. They sat without complaint, on chilly, drab-metal chairs at an oblong table.

The group of three officers from the Pennsylvania State Future Farmers Of America (FFA) looked impressive; clean-cut and dignified in their FFA, blue-corduroy jackets, on which was the identity of each young man in prominent, yellow lettering.

The fourth man was Doyle Paul of Berlin, a member of the state FFA advisory committee.

They were Wayne Hassinger II, state FFA president, 18, from Millersburg in Snyder County; Christopher Reichman, 19, the state FFA treasurer, from Chambersburg in Franklin County, and Tim Lehman, 18, from Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County. He is the vice-president of the south-central region of the state FFA. Each of the three says he works on his family-owned farm. Two say they plan to attend college.

In conjunction with National FFA Week, the nine Pennsylvania state officers, separated into three groups, were participating in a Western Pa. Media Tour, visiting newspaper offices, radio and television stations in Somerset and

two neighboring counties.

The officers say that although the itinerary was set up by the state executive secretary, Sheila Reiner, it was they who had to initiate media contacts to arrange possible visits.

Reichman says, "Originally, we tried to get into the Erie and Pittsburgh area." He adds that it was soon obvious that there existed a lack of familiarity between FFA chapters in those areas and the media. So the officers directed their efforts toward the Somerset-Cambria-Blair County region and got better results. But Reichman says the exercise of telephoning to the various media offices was, in itself, a very educational experience because they didn't know the name of the person with whom they should speak.

Later, Reichman found it frustrating, "When you ask for such a person, and you talk to everybody but that person."

Says Hassinger, "Basically, we're trying to reach out beyond the FFA. We want to help FFA because it has helped us," he says. "I feel I'm going to be more responsible (from this experience)," he says.

"Like he said," adds Lehman, "We want to give something back to FFA. We can help other members."

He says FFA chapters and individual members need to learn how to deal with the media. The knowledge the officers are now receiving, they will pass to local chapters by visiting area schools to speak with them.

The three officers agreed that it is necessary for the FFA and the



State FFA leaders visit on Western media tour. In photo are, left to right, Doyle Paul, advisor; Tim Lehman, vice-president, southcentral region; Christopher Reichman, state treasurer and Wayne Hassinger, state president.

media to each understand the function of the other.

"We need to understand the media from both the side of the organization and the side of the media," says Hassinger. "Later, that experience is going to help us out," he says.

"It's one of the things we can learn," says Lehman, "How to work with the media." Another recommendation the local chapters will hear from the officers is that they should send members to conferences and conventions, if possible. They praise a recent conference held in Bedford, titled, "Made For Excellence," which they say also helped them to understand themselves in a personal way. They (FFA chapters) will be encouraged by the officers to go to cities to reap cultural ben-

efits through exposure to unfamiliar surroundings and people.

Protests and demonstrations were seen at the National FFA convention despite the rare appearance of a United States president at the affair. It was an occurrence the officers feel was not a positive FFA/media experience.

Hassinger says he has seen demonstrations and protests happening on his occasional visits to the state capital. He says he has learned to simply brush them off and he gets on with his business.

Paul adds, "Agriculture is something that doesn't lend itself to demonstrations." He says that in agriculture you sit down together, face to face, and talk out your differences until you work out a solution.

"Ag-Leadership, Citizenship and Cooperation," says Hassinger, "prepare you for life." He says these are the things FFA wants to promote.

Asked what they felt could be the worst FFA/media scenario, the fellows agreed it would probably involve being drawn into a political issue.

"Maybe if the media turns to the FFA with agricultural/media questions, for instance, the Animal Rights issue," says Hassinger. "The FFA won't take a political stand," he states.

Reichman says another unpleasant circumstance would be that of being misquoted by the media or having a comment taken out of context.

Lehman says they are definitely

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Pennsylvania Farm Show -- Sharon Harnish (above) with her crossbred steer with Darvin Boyd, SVP, and Donald Cooper, Chairman and President, of Hamilton Bank. Jerry Bollinger (right) with his reserve champion lamb at the Ephrata Fair. Hamilton Bank purchased these animals and donated them to the Lancaster County Red Rose 4-H Baby Beef and Sheep Club Banquet at the Country Table Restaurant on February 6. The additional meat product was donated to the Lancaster County 4-H Swine Club. Sharon is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Rodney Harnish, 347 Dead End Road, Lititz. Jerry is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Bollinger, 110 Royer Road, Ephrata.



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