

## Foreign Visitors Come To Somerset County

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent  
BERLIN (Somerset Co.) — Jozefa Wilczak and Jozef Flaga from Rzeszow, Poland, spent Wednesday, May 6 visiting Somerset Co. with Penn State ag economists Tom Brewer and Lou Moore.

The purpose of their journey was to see several potato farms and the modern Snyder Potato Chip factory situated at the town's east end.

With duties equal to their United States counterparts in cooperative extension service offices, Wilczak is an economics specialist and Flaga is a director. Last year they were hosts of Brewer and Moore, who were in Poland to observe, among other things, that country's production of its number one crop — potatoes.

Wilczak spoke the English language well. She said of her country's potato industry, "The people look for new processing lines, but we don't have the experience. We

make french fries and potato pancakes."

As she spoke, Wilczak, like the others congregated on the upper level of Jim Ringler's barn, she shivered under her raspberry-colored all-weather coat. The culprit was a damp east wind that sliced menacingly through the parted sliding doors. If she failed to understand a question, she simply called, "Tom! Tom!" and Brewer came to her aid.

While Flaga toured the farm buildings with Ringler, she talked.

"I would like to receive more knowledge about cooperative," she said. "It is very difficult to talk to farmers (in her country). I would like to know who is responsible in cooperative."

She said potatoes are a big crop of Poland's many farmers but they are looking for a good market. In fact, Poland is said to rank second in world production of the tuber vegetable.

The other challenge to Poland's potato industry deals with the need for clean water during pro-



Standing in front of Jim Ringler's barn are, front, left to right, Jozef Flaga, Bonnie Ringler, Jozefa Wilczak, Mildred Ringler, and John Blough. In back are Dan Sharrett, Jim Ringler, Tom Brewer, William Ringler, and Lou Moore.

cessing prior to marketing the various potato forms.

Jim and Bonnie Ringler, even with three hired men, are pretty much tied down to the family farm — the posterity of countless Ringler generations inhabiting the 174 original bicentennial acres. Besides operating a Holstein dairy, they raise hay, corn, small grains, and about 95 acres of potatoes on their three farms, now totaling 500 acres. Another hundred areas are rented.

Theirs was one of the two farms visited by Flaga and Wilczak. Besides Brewer and Moore, two representatives from Snyder of Berlin — John Blough and Dan Sharrett — joined the company of the visiting couple.

Ringler values the potential of his land. "There's no intensive grazing (of livestock)," he said.

"Our potato ground is too valuable to pasture, that's all there is to it."

Bonnie said that in the summer the cows are put out only at night.

"It's too hot in the summer," said Jim, a Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Board member, "and we have plenty of fans in the barn to keep them cool. We can keep a peak (milk) production."

While she knows everything about the business because she's the bookkeeper, Bonnie said that farming is "a pain in the neck."

She says she stays clear of the barn unless there's an emergency situation requiring her to help with chores.

"My little niche is in the check-book, paperwork, and the desk." As long as it keeps me out of the barn," she said, laughing. Learning the use of her computer was by

trial, and error and reading the instruction book.

Despite her sentiments about farming, Bonnie is active on the Somerset County Dairy Promotion Board. She and Jim, with their four children, have always been a farm family, as were Jim's Ringler ancestors.

The offspring, however, aren't showing much promise as next-generation farmers. In fact, the only one coming close right now is daughter, Joyce, who has her own livestock artificial breeding business.

Son Douglas is perfectly happy working in computer programming analysis for the U.S. state department in Washington, D.C. Another son, Richard, is currently a tractor-trailer operator, while daughter Jennifer is a high school senior ready for her graduation

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Bonnie Ringler, shown at her computer, says she will do anything to stay away from the barn.



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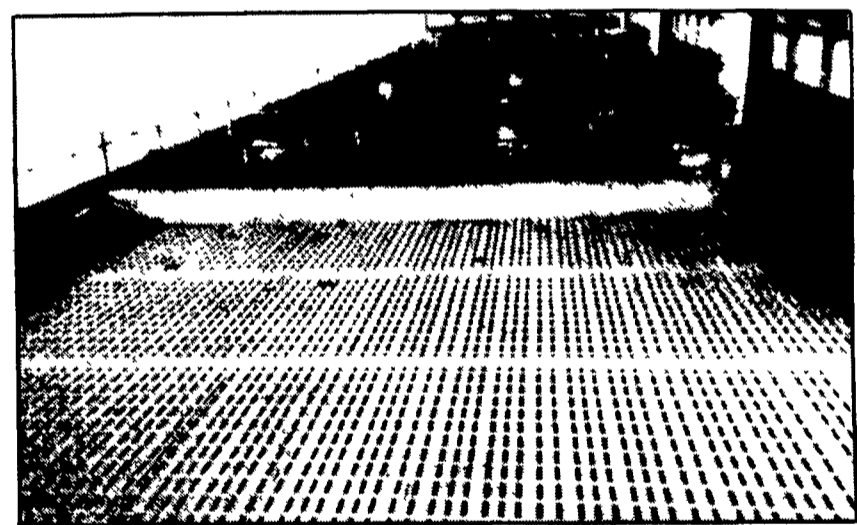
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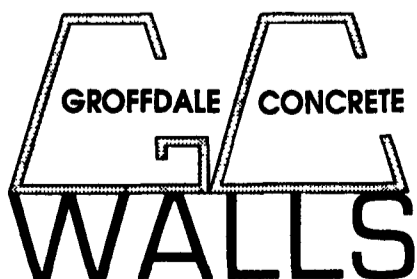
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