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contour strips, and have installed a waterway and a limited access area. Because of extensive spring development, both pastures offer watering troughs.

Bill and Helen Ammon's 325 acre Dairy of Distinction includes two farms with 175 tillable acres and the rest pasture and woodland. Bill estimates they plow only about 20 percent of their corn acres and no till the rest.

In 1948, Bill's father bought a neighborhood farm. The "home" farm, where the Ammons live with son Mike, 22, and daughters Ellen, 20, and Christine, 19, remains a short drive around the flat fields to their second farm.

The second farm houses their 70-cow herd of registered Holsteins in a stanchion setting in a picturesque landscape — the historic Pennsylvania Canal, with three old locks, runs the complete length of the second farm.

The 20,000 pounds of milk herd average provides a respectable start for the fifth generation — Mike Ammon.

"Mike's really into pedigrees," Helen exclaimed. Mike said that concentrating on the numbers seems to be the best way to make a herd profitable while maintaining the current herd size. He said the choices of pedigree promise to improve quality and ultimately make more money per cow.

"Our main focus is to develop a herd of registered cows that are in demand. We'd like to become more aggressive with our embryo transfer program," Mike added.

Mike said he shies away from showing animals who may not necessarily be bred for production. He said he breeds for production, sound functional type, and popular pedigrees — high indexes.

Mike stepped into the role as herdsman with full approval from his father. "They really work well



The home farm of the Ammons sits along the bottom lands of the Juniata River and has good soil and moisture.

together," Helen said. Bill manages the crops and machinery and "loves to watch the corn come up!" his wife laughed.

Helen helps finish up the morn-

GAIL STROCK Mifflin Co. Correspondent

Gail Strock, Mifflin County's news correspondent, has been writing for *Lancaster Farming* for 2½ years.

Living in Belleville on their 27-acre farm with husband Dennis and sons Evan, 8, and Aaron, 4, Gail keeps busy juggling writing (including a newsletter for the Mifflin County Farmers' Association), kids' activities, church

commitments, household chores, gardening and other outdoor activities.

After graduating from Penn State University with a degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Gail traveled throughout the United States and Canada (Alberta) with her husband while he tested prototype combines for Sperry-New Holland.



Bill Ammon and son Mike check yearling calves in a pen, one of which was the first embryo transfer heifer born on the farm.

ing milking. The men start milking around 3:30 a.m. or 4 a.m., going in for breakfast around 6:30 a.m. In the afternoon, they milk from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

When not at college, Christine prepares supper for the family and Ellen helps at the barn. Ellen is enrolled in the secretarial program at Lancaster Bible College. Christine attends Harrisburg Area Community College studying Food Service Management.

Mike earned his way to districts a couple of times through the 4-H dairy club. Ellen and Christine both entered cooking projects in 4-H. Mike finds time for church league softball and both father and

son are avid hunters.

While raising their children, Bill and Helen said they held firm to two beliefs — always attend church together and always eat supper together.

"That should be a goal for everybody — get your family together at suppertime. I think that's real important," Helen said. "Even if you're arguing or fighting," Bill chimed in.

"We're always in church together," Helen said. They are members at the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church in Strodes Mills.

Helen echoed what farm wives have known for generations — the farm is a great life for raising children. "Even farm kids have a lot of struggles and temptations. It takes a lot of prayer. But I think farm kids have a tremendous advantage over other kids because maybe they're busier (working at home) and have less temptations. That doesn't mean they can't get into trouble."

Bill said, "We do a lot of work. Even though we're working, we have more hours together (than other fathers and their children)."

The Ammons joined the Fellowship of Christian farmers after seeing the organization's Farm Show display booth.

"They get groups of farmers together and go to different countries to build churches. It's really a good organization. We'd like to do that some day," Helen said.

Each generation of Ammon's seems to follow the next as stewards of the soil just as one season follows the next, each enduring an occasional wind of change.

Last year's wind of uncertainty came in the form of a drought.

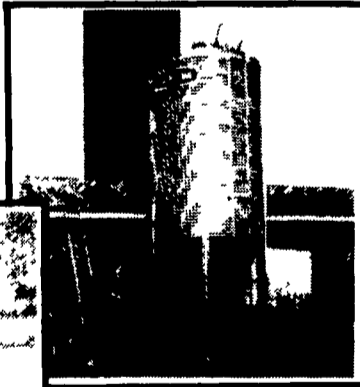
Helen reflected, "I shouldn't have worried because there hasn't been a season yet where there wasn't a harvest. The Lord's always provided the harvest. And you gotta believe He always will."

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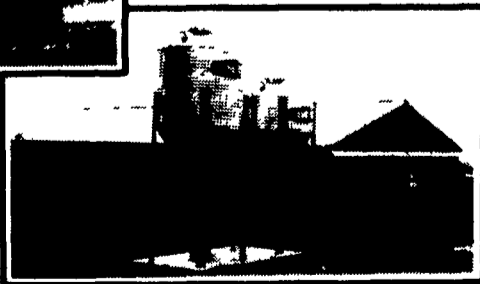


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