

# Busy Sisters Juggle School And Business

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**BOSWELL (Somerset Co.)** — They tried band. They tried tap dance. They tried baton. But it was discovering livestock that finally dispelled the fog for sisters, Rachael and Greta Mostoller, and revealed their agricultural niche. The discovery came a number of years ago, during their early teens, and after some learning experiences at the local county fair with early 4-H livestock projects.

The young women, who have no other siblings, began to build their own registered club calf herd. Registered lambs were added and the enterprise became Mostoller Club Calves and Lambs, a business in which Rachael and Greta share great pride. Quality is the priority.

Small wonder, too, since they sold the 1992 Somerset County bred steer which was owned and shown by Dan Ferko of Central City.

Even though both girls are in school during the week — Rachael to the West Virginia University at Morgantown and Greta pursuing a career in nursing — their mother, Peggy Mostoller, leaps into the breach in the interim. Mostoller Club Calves and Lambs is playing a major role in financing the girls college education.

Their business stock includes registered Angus and crossbred club calves and breeding stock, and registered Suffolk club lambs and breeding sheep.

These very liberated business-women know their profession and if there's one thing that can cause them to grit their teeth, it's when a potential customer arrives to talk about a sale, but directs the comments and eye contact to Butch Mostoller, the sisters dad.

"When some people come to buy," said Greta, "they won't talk to us, they look at Dad ... and Dad's a salesman! He's had a long career selling heavy equipment.

"Our cows are used to women, so are the lambs," said Greta. "They are not used to men."

The sisters do everything themselves, when possible, for economic reasons, even some veterinary work and the sheep shearing.

And Rachael, a senior majoring in agriculture, with some prestigious honors in her field, does the

breeding after making the selections herself — a big bonus to their business.

Rachael and Greta talk freely about their unfamiliarity of show animal qualities when first starting to show animals. Those were the first painful steps to future success for their profited speedily from their mistakes.

"Our first two years showing, ours were the worst animals there," said Greta.

In fact, one time the judge was overheard commenting that her steer needed roller skates under its back, she said.

Rachael said she began showing pigs and horses before getting interested in steers. Not knowing any better, she started with a Hereford Charolais that was short and fat.

Greta said her first steer project caused her so much anxiety that she sold it a few months before the fair.

But both girls got blue ribbons for showmanship during the early days and said they were so proud.

"In 4-H everybody wants everybody else to be good and and they helped us," recalls Greta, now a 4-H leader herself, in the Steaks and Chops 4-H club.

"4-H is like one big family," she said.

The following year, having learned the importance of proper feeding and exercise, Greta then 13, showed Herschel, a superb steer that became the grand champion, and sold for \$9,000, to set and retain the Somerset County Fair Steer sale record.

"It was a family champion," says Greta. She said the whole family was involved in exercising him and pampering him. In fact, it was he, Herschel, who was memorialized with a highway in his honor. The Herschel highway is the mile-long, farm field track where all the Mostoller steers are exercised, beginning with the first beautiful champion.

Shortly thereafter, the girls joined the county junior livestock judging team. The knowledge they gained is one of their best assets, when purchasing livestock.

Additionally, it laid the foundation for Rachael's burgeoning success as an up-and-coming professional livestock judge. Her college junior year was financed through a full scholarship she and another person won in the West Virginia



Greta, left, and sister, Rachael Mostoller, hold two bottle baby, black lambs.

Collegiate Livestock Judging competition.

Rachael showed pigs and steers, but unlike her sister, who liked black, she had a decided preference for red steers. Often a class winner, Rachael could never pull a grand champion title. Until her steer won the 1987 Bedford County Jackpot Show. In 1989 she had the reserve grand champion in the Kingwood, W.Va. Jackpot Show. Her pigs also won class titles.

Greta was to have two more grand champion steers at the Somerset Co. Fair, in 1989 and 1991. Each had its own personality. She says one steer developed a bogus limp for attention. The last one, she said, had behaved with perfect show manners and had the heart of a real champion.

"Our steers were always spoiled," says Greta. "We babied them. When they needed shots we made Dad give them so the steers wouldn't think we were mean," she grinned.

The partners said they always used their money together for bettering their stock, to buy needed equipment, and also to save a portion for their college education.

Five years ago they had built a fine enough herd to start selling market calves. While the sisters were in high school and the business wasn't yet a real business,

their mother would watch over the animals during school hours.

If an emergency arose leaving Peggy perplexed for a solution, she would telephone the girls at school. Occasionally, it meant requesting permission to leave school.

In small districts there are few secrets and it wasn't long before the Mostollers became known amongst the student body as the "Ingalls Sisters," as in "Little House On The Prairie," a former, homespun television show. Occasionally, Peggy's telephone S.O.S. to her daughters was announced over the school's P.A. system, unnecessarily alerting all and sundry that, perhaps a ewe was ready to deliver.

The Mostollers feel a sense of commitment to the 4-H program. And helping current young 4-Hers, they believe, is merely a return on what 4-H invested in them.

Rachael says that after the county fair they select the best of their stock to sell to a 4-H or FFA member. They sell only what they, themselves, would want to buy.

"We help people at the fair to fit their calves," she said. With each sale of stock they follow-up with year-round contact, giving tips about feed and exercise.

Disagreements do arise between the business partners, they said, but never last long, because their senses of humor quickly dispel the static of a charged atmosphere.

Both were ten-year members of the Steaks and Chops 4-H Club of which Greta, and their parents, are now leaders. Both women attended the 4-H Club Congress in Chicago and the 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C. Each was once named Somerset County Outstanding 4-Her and Farm Credit Outstanding 4-H club member.

Rachael assists in teaching livestock judging at WVU and is anticipating the opportunity of judging a horse show later this summer in West Virginia. Landing a job in a county extension office is her desire. If not that, then she wants other work in the livestock industry.

When she one-day marries and has children, Greta says she wants them to learn the livestock business. It isn't merely an idle thought. Her goal is to build a solid business — quality and quantity — that can be passed to a new generation of her own. And Mother Peggy couldn't be more delighted with her daughter's train of thought.

## Homestead Notes



The first pond on the Mostoller Farm, makes a pretty background scene as Greta and Rachael Mostoller, encourage the family dogs to behave. The dogs, from left are Katie, Beatrix and Clementine.

## Refinancing Info

**CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.)** — Penn State Cooperative Extension is offering a seminar "Refinancing your Home Mortgage" Wednesday, May 19 at 7:00 PM. It will be held at the Montgomery County 4-H Center, 1015 Rt. 113 in Creamery.

For several months, interest rates have been low, and there is some indication that they may be going even lower. What factors do

you need to consider if you are thinking about refinancing? Should you refinance to get a lower monthly payment or to pay the mortgage off sooner? What are the tax consequences? How long will it take before you see a benefit from refinancing? These and other questions will be discussed.

For registration information, please call Penn State Cooperative Extension at 489-4315.