

# National Grassland Visitors Talk About Their Visits With Farm Families

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff  
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— Garry Lacefield is an extension professor at the University of Kentucky. Forages are his specialty. Every year he looks forward to attending the American Forage and Grassland Council conference. This year was no exception.

The four-day conference held in Lancaster March 6 to 9, was packed with information taught by forage leaders throughout the U.S. and Canada.

But for Lacefield, the highlight of the whole conference did not take place in the scheduled seminars but in the home of Melvin and Joyce Eby of Gordonville.

Lacefield was one of several conferees who took advantage of the offer to arrive a day early and stay in the home of a local farm family.

Lacefield, who travels across the U.S., prefers to stay with people who live in the area.

"You can always learn more that way than otherwise," he said. "I'm going back with fond memories of not just the conference but also what I experienced in their home."

The Ebys milk 56 cows on their 80-acre farm that has been in the family for five generations.

"It's very evident that the Ebys are very knowledgeable about the dairy industry and take a lot of pride in doing a good job," Lacefield said.

Although Lacefield accompanied Mel during the milking duties and took a great interest in examining the alfalfa and hay, it was the Ebys' family life that most impressed Lacefield.

"The spirit of love and sharing for family, land, and fellowman was so refreshing," Lacefield said. "Although I had only known the Ebys for 12 hours, when I left, it was the type of family I just needed to hug."

Lacefield said that he was impressed that the Ebys often open their home to families and even groups. According to Joyce, they sometimes host 20 people overnight.

"We have a 16-room farmhouse with an efficiency apartment — called a granddaddy house — so its



State forage extension specialist from the University of Kentucky Garry Lacefield shows off the prize-winning hay from his state. Lacefield said that the highlight of the convention was his stay with Mel and Joyce Eby. "I'm leaving Pennsylvania a better person because of them," he said.

ideal for sharing farm life with non-farming families," she said.

Lacefield enjoyed spending time with the Ebys' 9-year-old son Matt who showed him the Laborador puppies the family raises.

Lacefield said, "I inspected the farm and was impressed but the real inspection was what I saw in the family. Their daughter Melody is in a wheelchair and another child died from a rare enzyme deficiency. The spirit of love and sharing and the gracefulness with which the Ebys carry this burden with their children is so refreshing."

"I'm leaving Pennsylvania — a better person — because of my stay with the Ebys and anything else I learned here is just bones," Lacefield said.

The closeness this professor from Kentucky felt was not just a one-way street. Joyce said of Lacefield's visit, "It's advantageous for farm-related people to get together and we would eagerly do it again if we had the opportunity."

She and her husband enjoyed a

book Lacefield had written and presented to them. "From the Heart" is Lacefield's humorous and inspirational account of his five-bypass heart surgery that happened when he was 42 years old.

Lacefield plans to bring his wife to visit with the Ebys later this year.

Neil and Mary Ann Martin of St. Paul, Minn., are another couple who stayed in an area home.

Neil, an extension agronomist, was eager to compare farming operations in the Midwest with those in this area. The couple stayed at the home of Harold and Lois Nissley, Elizabethtown.

The Nissleys crop farm about 100 acres on their 175-acre farm. They sold their cows seven years ago and now put about 28 steers and 60 sheep to pasture.

Although this was the first visit to the county, Martin travels a lot with his job and has visited Harrisburg and other areas.

In his work with forage and grassland in Minnesota, Martin said that he has copied lots of Pennsylvania ideas.

"You have a longer growing season here and the farms appear to be smaller but there is more of them," he said.

While there are many excellent farming operations in Minnesota, Martin said that overall Midwestern farmers seem to be experiencing more serious financial problems because of over capitalized equipment and older facilities.

Nine persons came from Minnesota to attend the conference.

Of the stay in the home, Martin said, "It gives you more of a feel of the attitudes of the people and how they deal with problems."

"One of most outstanding values of this conference is the opportunity not only to talk to scientists and educators but with the professionals — the farmers," Martin said.

Of his visit with the Nissleys, Martin said, he sensed a strong stewardship of the land. Although they want to make money in farming, they don't want to take off the



Neil and Mary Ann Martin of St. Paul, Minnesota, did not miss television when Harold and Lois Nissley opened their home for an overnight stay.

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