

Zimmerman Retires From PDA

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budget cuts which have occurred in the past decade.

The Interview

When John first went in for a job at the Department of Agriculture, he said he interviewed with Dewey Foster, who was the head of crop reporting, now part of Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistical Service. The PDA was then headquartered in the south office in Harrisburg, rather than at its current location adjacent to the state Farm Show Complex.

Zimmerman recalled that Foster 'starting talking about statistics. We concluded that I was in the wrong office. He told that the livestock division had an opening. John Chaney was director at the time and I interviewed in the spring. In August, he heard from the PDA and Sept. 19 he began as an agricultural marketing specialist.

"I always had a feeling that's the way it was supposed to be and the good Lord had a hand in it. Over the years I enjoyed the work and the people," Zimmerman said.

"When I first started we would report market news, like the auction reports that are published (in *Lancaster Farming*), different sales, Dewart, Silver Springs on Thursday. In 1963, I helped open up Greencastle, Bellville, Chambersburg and Carlisle. I was the reporter who started on those sales. Then somewhere in 1963, I used to go in (to work) on Friday to put together the weekly summaries for some time," he said.

"Starting in the 1970s, we had an old rented drum machine from Bell that we used a number of years until we got upgraded equipment. We went through a few pieces of equipment. We had one where a reporter could call in and put a tape on it, but it proved not to be too trustworthy (a machine)," he said.

Later came toll-free lines, which were eliminated about three years ago by further operational budget cuts to the agriculture department. But with the toll-free lines, Zimmerman had two lines running. On one line, he would put the auction reports for the eastern part of the

state. On the other line, would be the reports for the western part of the state.

While those toll-free lines were operating, many radio stations would call in and tape Zimmerman's voice and rebroadcast it in the mornings, at lunchtime and in the evening. The system worked well for a time.

More recently, the reporting has been receiving less and less support. From January 1992 to July 1992, there were no representatives from the state Department of Agriculture working in the western part of the state.

For several months, Zimmerman or someone else would make a three-day trip to the western part of the state, picking up Indiana, Mercer, the sale at 84, and the New Wilmington sale on Friday morning.

In February 1993, with the employment of a part-time worker — which is something the state doesn't do very often, preferring instead to hire full-time employees to do the reporting jobs — the state was again providing the objective third-party role in grading animals for sale.

Zimmerman said he doesn't see it changing back to the way it was for a number of reasons.

In 1990, during an interview with *Lancaster Farming*, Zimmerman talked about the changing face of the grassroots livestock industry in Pennsylvania.

He remarked then on the correlation between the change in the use of livestock meat in domestic kitchens, the change in retailing from local butcher shops to mega-grocery giants which purchase boxed beef instead of doing their own slaughtering and butchering, the loss of the independent farm family producer, the decline in auction sales, and the surge in large food processing corporations offering contract production deals.

The same facilities are largely blamed for the push behind high-density livestock operations.

His prognosis hasn't changed. The highways, he said, provide easy access for livestock producers to travel to different auctions, even larger auctions in other states.

The types of contract farm pro-

duction that feed companies such as Pennfield has created with poultry, that Hatfield Quality Meats has created with hogs, Zimmerman said he eventually sees coming with cattle.

The local auction still has a place, but it's become more of a remnant of a past way of life that relatively few continue to practice, and with which the majority of the Pennsylvania population have no experience.

But there are those who know. And there are those who know Zimmerman.

Relationships

Even those who worked with Zimmerman just a short time before he retired, such as Richard Miller, 19, of New Holland, said they appreciated his personality.

Miller was working with Zimmerman on the floor of the older section of the New Holland Livestock Stables grading feeder pigs on Zimmerman's last day at that facility.

"I've worked with him five or six times," Miller said. "He's a very nice guy, what I know of him. He seems like the guy you can go up to and talk about anything."

Miller said that he was only starting out in life. "This is the first place that would take me, since high school," Miller said. "I love



From the left, state Secretary of Agriculture Boyd Wolff presents John Zimmerman with a proclamation from state Gov. Robert Casey stating that state's appreciation for Zimmerman's services to the commonwealth.

it. It's fun. The guys are fun to work with, but the work does get done. The boss, Dave, he's (easy to work for).

"John (Zimmerman), he's the kind of person who can make someone smile. To me, it's pretty important (being able to make someone smile), because if there's a job that you can't laugh at, it's pretty dull. He's the kind of guy you hate to see leave."

John said that he misses the people also.

When he retired, he was recognized by Secretary of Agriculture Boyd Wolff, and his department office had a lunchtime retirement party for him. They also held a dinner for him in Carlisle with current and previous employees of the department in attendance.

John said it meant a lot to him. "I appreciated that a great bit."

Members Can Enter National Jr. Holstein T-Shirt Logo Contest

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Hundreds of Junior Holstein members will be coming to Pittsburgh June 25 through June 28 to attend the 1995 National Junior Holstein Convention, and the T-Shirt they collect as part of their participation could be carrying a logo you designed.

The 1995 National Junior Holstein Convention Committee has announced it is sponsoring a "Design A T-Shirt Logo Contest," that is open to all Pennsylvania Junior Holstein Members, according to a news release this week from the Pennsylvania Holstein Association.

"If you submit the winning entry, your registration fees for the 1995 convention will be free. So pull out some paper and ink and start drawing," the news release stated.

Entries are due by June 30, 1994.

The specific contest rules are that:

- each entry must be limited to the use of three colors and be drawn in ink;
- entries can be drawn on any size of unlined white paper;
- entries do not have to be camera ready or professional;

• all designs submitted become the property of the 1995 National Junior Convention Committee and are subject to change;

• the contest is open to Pennsylvania Junior Holstein members;

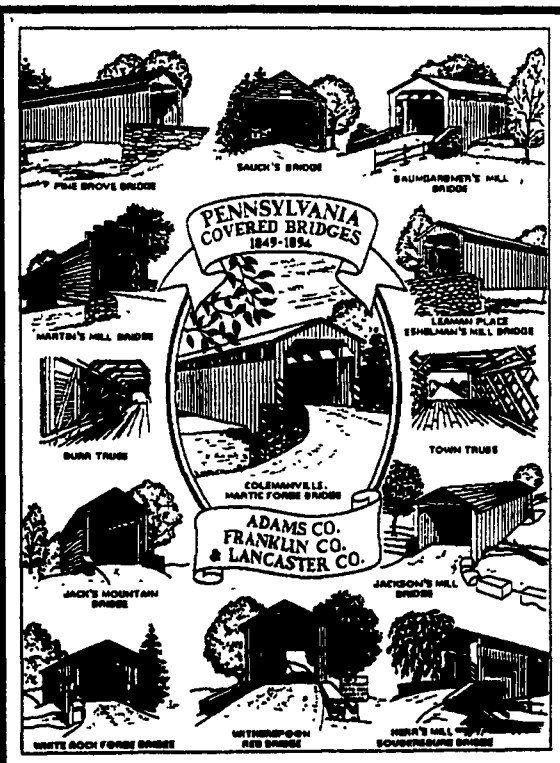
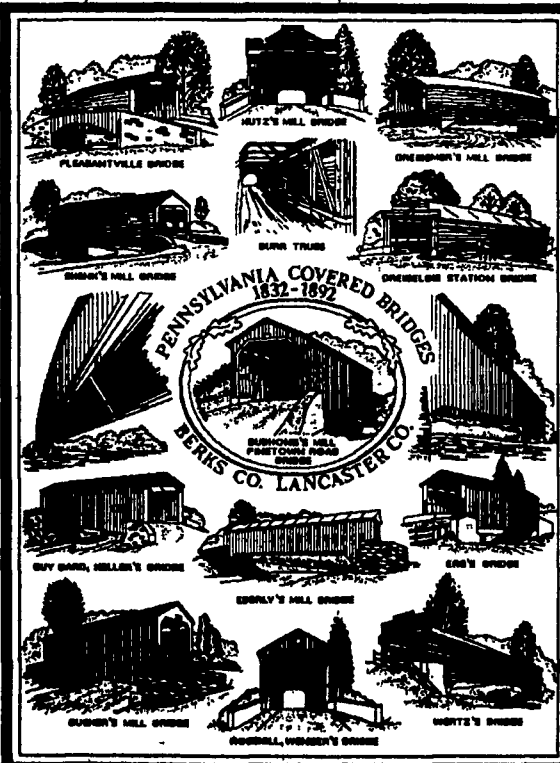
• the winning entry will be used on the T-shirt for the 1995 National Junior Convention;

• the winning entry designer will receive a free registration to the 1995 National Junior Holstein Convention Events;

Entries should be sent to Betsy Watson, 84 N. Dickinson School Road, Carlisle, Pa., 17013-9611. For more information, call Betsy Watson at (717) 243-8750.

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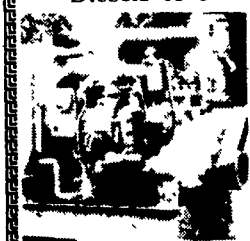
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