

Stephanie Singo To Crown Successor On June 25

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent
SOMERSET (Somerset Co.) —

For a young woman who seldom rubs shoulders with idleness, bustling Somerset County dairy princess, Stephanie Singo found her niche doing dairy promotions, but will surrender her crown — and her duties, to another industrious promoter on June 25.

It isn't that the energetic 17-year old doesn't have her weary moments, mind you, but she is simply endowed with an innate drive to achieve worthwhile purposes.

Stephanie says that among the first of her lessons as dairy princess was memorizing the local highway network.

"I learned my way around Somerset County real fast," she said.

Of course, her travels took her to area stores and malls, to the radio stations to record dairy promotion spots which ultimately revealed that she talks too fast and really needs to slow it down.

"Talking on the radio taught me to talk slower. Now my dad can understand me on the radio," she said, grinning.

Too, there were farm and non-farm appearances and special events, newspaper articles, and school promotions, which she says were so enjoyable because of the spontaneity of the youngsters.

"I liked going to the school and talking to the little kids because they always figured out the cow was a real person," she says about her bovine impersonating consort's identity being revealed.

Invariably, the responsibility of being an official dairy spokesperson for 12 successive months changes a girl.

"I took on a lot of responsibility," says Stephanie. "It taught me how to be flexible, independent and to be a communicator." She developed skills in talking with people she'd never met which boosted her confidence.

Despite her non-farm background, Stephanie's experience in the family feed business was a helpful preparation for dealing with a public generally uneducated about dairy farming and dairy products. Chatting with the farmers helped further.

"I knew about dairy when I tried out (for the dairy princess pageant), but I really learned more about dairy when I got out and talked to the farmers and heard their views," she said.

"High quality feed matters if a farmer wants high quality milk," says Stephanie, "and a farmer has to have good management or he won't get good milk production."

"I think the public should be more aware of the difference between real dairy products and the imitations," she says, explaining they should read a product's label to know what is in it. If the first ingredient listed isn't milk or skim milk, but rather oil or water, Stephanie says to beware because it's an imitation.

Persons in a local PTA were shocked, she says, when she demonstrated how easy it is to fake milk. Before them she combined water, a popular vegetable shortening and oil, then shook it. They were astonished when it looked exactly like the milk she had in a second jar.



Working at Singo Feeds, a family operated business in Somerset, helped Somerset County dairy princess, Stephanie Singo learn technical information about feeding dairy animals for top milk production. In turn, she passed the formation to the less-educated general public.

Mother, Brenda Singo, was equally surprised by the revelation. The powdered coffee creamers in the kitchen cupboards were dismissed into the garbage and replaced by a Half and Half dairy product for her aromatic cup of java.

Stephanie says her dairy promotion work has persuaded both friends and family to use real dairy products. Even little Andy, her three-year-old nephew now knows you look for that "Real Seal" in the supermarket before you buy it. And he says so immediately if it's missing.

At the Rockwood Area High School Stephanie is a cheerleader, majorette, band, and chorus member and in the Friends program. But membership in the Rockwood FFA Chapter gets the lion's share of her time.

Just named the Somerset County Outstanding FFA Student, Stephanie says she's running for state officer at the FFA state convention this month at Penn State.

Public Speaking competitions found her winning several times in her county and at regionals. Twice she was third at states.

Stephanie participated on the demonstration team, in parliamentary procedure, wildlife, interview, envirothon, and supervised agriculture experience.

Among the fond memories of the year just passed is the painfully-less fond one of a cracked tailbone, which curbed but didn't curtail, the active lifestyle of this tough little go-getter, the smallest girl on the cheering squad.

A new gymnasium was constructed at her high school, which had a super slippery floor. During a sports activity, Stephanie fell and the damage occurred. Two weeks later, she accompanied the cheering squad to a competition held at Busch Gardens. As the most petite cheerleader, she was necessary to cap some pyramid formation they were all counting

on to look good in competition.

"I took along my heating pad, my Ben-Gay and my ice pack." She laughs, then adds, "Three weeks later, I fell again." Her doctor was wondering if his patient was forming a lasting habit.

The summer of 1993 found Stephanie facing an unending whirl of dairy promotions that pretty well consumed her time. "I thought, 'dairy princess is my life,'" she recalls, "I didn't see any of my friends." Though difficult, it was but a few weeks until they were together again.

Stephanie says that when she attends to college in the fall of 1995, she wants to devote all her time to studies. Her reason for delayed entry to the Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, is the hope of holding a state FFA office during the next year.

Robert Singo, Jr., Stephanie's dad, took over Singo Feeds in Somerset about five years ago. The business was begun by his father, Robert Sr., in 1955. The Singo family including Stephanie's brothers, Robert III and Jamie all work in the business.

Here is one of Stephanie's favorite dairy recipes:

Hearty Bacon Potato Chowder
8 slices bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces

2 cups cubed 1/2 inch new red potatoes

1 cup chopped onions

1 cup dairy sour cream

1 1/4 cup milk

10 3/4 ounce can condensed cream of chicken soup

8 ounce can whole kernel corn, drained

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1/4 teaspoon thyme leaves

In 3-quart saucepan, cook bacon over medium heat for five minutes; add potatoes and onions. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender (15-20 min). Add remaining ingredients. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until heated through.

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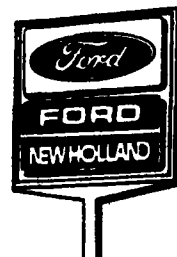
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