

# Bitlers Prepare To Represent Pennsylvania Holstein

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skills learned then.

The kids run about her yard at the end of the tour, enjoying the spacious yard beneath a canopy of old nut trees that almost hide the old stone farmhouse and Phoebe's herb garden and water garden that is a converted old cast iron watering trough.

Split rail fencing around the house and along the road next to the house give the farm an older look. As well does the architecture of the barn, with its arched stone doorways.

But it is a working, modern family dairy farm.

There are side businesses. A manure pumping and hauling business developed over the years. Phoebe, a former extension economist, teaches country craft classes out of her house, "Classes in the Country." As a decorative sign in the yard states.

On Wednesday the couple was busy trying to take care of business and also get some work out of the way. Especially cutting hay.

The reason they were working so especially hard, is that the two are headed for Seattle, Washington, for a week as Pennsylvania's Young Holstein Breeders. They represent the state at the nationals.

With a 93-milking string of registered Holsteins, the two have earned a BAA of 106.1, a Progressive Breeder Registry Award in 1993, and the herd has been averaging about 21,468 pounds of milk, 737 pounds of fat and 682 pounds of protein.

So this past week has been one of getting some of the chores done which can't wait until they get back, such as getting the hay silage cut and blown into the silos. As things seem to happen when trying to get a lot of work done in a short time, problems arose.

But then, it wouldn't be a challenge if there weren't any problems.

The solutions are more important. And they must be tied into what David said is his basic operating theory: "We're just caretakers, or stewards of what's been entrusted to us by God," he said.

"And at the same time share with others our abilities," Phoebe added.

Their philosophy is reflected in some other activities in which the two are involved — David is also

a deacon at Hope Community Church and Phoebe teaches Sunday school.

In fact, the Bitlers said that those interested should be aware of a "Fellowship of Christian Farmers" picnic scheduled for August 20 at Sam Lewis State Park, in Wrightsville.

The Bitlers are well known.

They live in the original farm house where Phoebe was born. Her parents, Alpheus and Ruth, ran the place as a registered Holstein farm since 1937.

They both have been publicized in the past for accomplishments and involvements.

And while they have their hands busy with farming, the involvement with the Holstein Association and other activities is part of their nature, they said.

"We enjoy people and we enjoy things like" currently serving as the co-chairs for 1995 national junior Holstein convention to be held in Pittsburgh; like serving as national Holstein delegates and on the state program development, youth and milk promotion committees.

If anything, it's everything they do.

They have won recognition and awards for their work, but they said that being involved has more personal meaning than winning awards.

Working with youth is their payback to the community that provided them with leadership and opportunity.

They are big supporters of 4-H and the leadership opportunities it provides for youth, opportunities for hands-on leadership skills development; business skills development and the development of self-discipline and responsibility.

They said they like having a goal and getting something accomplished. It's their pursuit of happiness and it's a wholesome and rewarding kind of happiness that continues to build upon itself.

Phoebe said that 4-H teaches that the more you do, the more you get to try, and the better you get at doing things, like farming, because, "You get all that exposure (among other people and operations) of what's out there and it gives ideas of what you might want to do. There are educational opportunities.



Phoebe takes her calf-feeding equipment in the cart from the milkhouse and gets some help from one of the two farm dogs. The farm house visible under the canopy of nut trees in the background is where Phoebe was born and raised and now lives.

"How many people use Roberts Rules of Order?" she asked, referring to one of the main lessons associated with 4-H. She said that exposure to the Roberts system of organization is an advantage 4-H youth have other youth who don't participated in the program.

"(4-H members) practice it even if we don't continue it," she said, adding that basically the lessons are even more significant culturally.

"If we don't continue to educate about our culture, we'll lose that culture."

The couple has been involved with the Holstein Association and dairy promotion and education for years, adult activities which stemmed from earlier involvements.

They also use some of the association's computer programming to help manage farm records and to access registration information and to help make breeding decisions. The Cow Search program gets and "excellent" rating from the two and comes in handy for use with the milk tester and during a herd health check.

The computer get used pretty frequently and they said that a

young woman, Sue Weidner, who works for Mark Hershey Feeds, and who had worked for Vista-Grande Farm for five years, helped them get started when she was at the farm.

"She was a town girl who wanted to be a vet," Phoebe said. "She came here to work and went to the University of Delaware, University of Nebraska and worked on ruminant nutrition.

Now Phoebe registers her calves through cow search.

The couple also use the ARIS program through Pa. Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

But it's the daily setting of goals and then achieving those goals — both short- and long-term goals — that really keeps them going at farming with the intensity they do.

"We can't just go out and buy a brand new piece of machinery because the other one is starting to wear out. You got to think, 'Well. Can we rebuild this?'" David said. "Or, 'What can we do to make this a better machine or something so we can get the trash through a little

better and leave more residue on top, but still make this work.

"Stuff like that, we really enjoy those kind of challenges," he said.

They both said they like to make things work.

"The same challenges are with the cows," Phoebe said. "They are to breed a better cow that's going to milk more economically or last longer. We want to have a cow that milk more, looks good and lasts longer," she said. "To put that together and develop that. It means something to us."

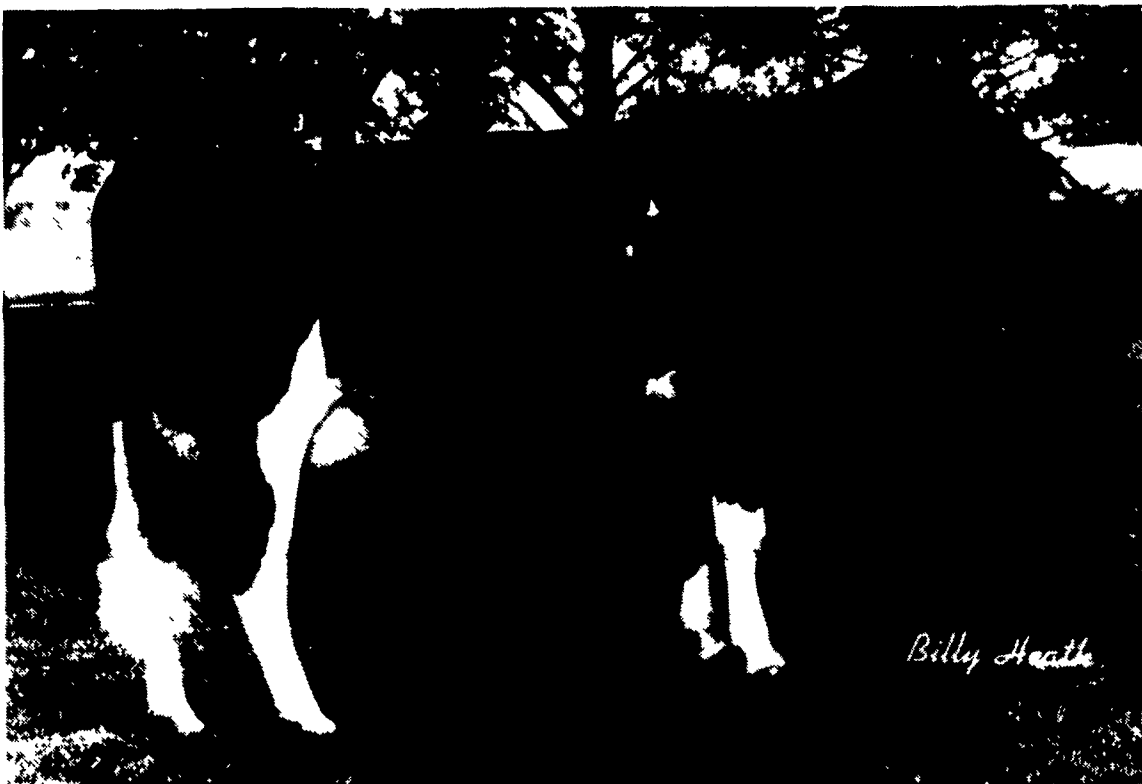
"We don't put a lot of emphasis on index," David said, though Phoebe is quick to add, "We have a cow that has some."

"We don't bury our head in the sand," David explained. "We do the best to maintain what we have and make progress, but we don't do a lot of ET work and we haven't bought any cattle for a while now."

They said the herd has been closed for about eight years.

"We try to breed for type and manage for production. We try to provide an animal that somebody

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Vista Grande SW Liz-Twin, daughter of Soutweind Bell of Bar Lee, is a Very Good 87, 3-year-old registered Holstein at Vista Grande Farm. She recorded a 365-day production of 31,263 pounds of milk, 1,050 pounds of fat and 1,034 pounds of protein without BST. Her dam, Vista Grande Lullaby, also a homebred Holstein, made a 365-day record of 28,437 pounds of milk as a 4-year-old. Bred to Vallent, Liz is part of the regular milking string for David and Phoebe Bitler.



David Bitler sits at the wheel of his tractor while getting the hay in before heading to Seattle for the national Holstein convention.