

No Such Thing As 'A Day In The Life Of A DHIA Technician'

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the job.

Like many technicians, Brooks says testing clients often become as much friends as professional associates, because of the regular monthly visits. Technicians get to know newborn babies, watch families grow up and marry, children return home to help farm, and experience with their farmer clients both life's joys and tragedies - as well as the day-to-day routine, and sometimes not-so-routine, farm occurrences.

"I care about my families," emphatically says Brooks. "I've

gotten real close to some of them."

One Amish family in particular that Brooks learned to know well through her technician role has become especially close to her after a family tragedy. Their young son was hit by a car one morning while she was testing the herd. She later visited him frequently during his hospitalization, watched him improve from his injuries and was part of his first visit home during recuperation.

"I cried with that family," she relates. "And now I'm testing for their second generation."

A FAMILY EFFORT

Gerald Pratt tested his first dairy herd 35 years ago; except for a five-year stint of service with the military, he has been at it ever since.

When his Bradford County DHIA circuit reached its peak in herd numbers, Pratt was testing 47 herds. Although several were the alternating A.M./P.M. or owner-sampler types, Pratt still could expect to work "twenty-nine and a half" days a month.

"I hired some help to do all my herds and it was also a family effort. When our two sons were

younger, we worked on it as a family project, especially if we had plans to do something special. My wife also helped; she's done a lot of paperwork and reports for me," relates Pratt.

To schedule the important family time that technicians often find hard to arrange in their variable job schedules, Pratt always tried to set Saturdays aside for family activities, even if it was just to chop wood with their sons.

In earlier years, farmers did testing more just for their own information, Pratt believes. Now, official test information is an

absolute necessity for herds merchandising, especially through the export market, and for sire proof data. Forage testing, also once a much-utilized part of the DHIA testing program via kits that technicians had available, is now mostly handled by feed firms and nutrition consultants.

"Information is more precise now," figures Pratt. "Farmers seem more willing to ask for advice than they did in the past; but if farmers know you, they're usually willing to consult and ask your opinion."

"Most of our farmers are like family," he says, emphasizing that from a professional and official records standpoint, "we don't do favors to help them."

Through his long tenure with DHIA, Pratt has seen numerous changes. Technicians once ran all their own butterfat samples on home centrifuges; later, Bradford County had a central lab where the three technicians worked together to run samples. In 1973, all testing was centralized at Penn State.

The newest change, to computerization, has been a challenge for Pratt, who notes that he never had any typing background and he is still working on mastering computer skills.

Once, while he was testing for a herd, the son flew over the farm in an airplane and spotted his car outside the barn. Pratt laughs, remembering how the son called home that night, to his father's surprise, to ask how the cows had done on test. And, he once received a gift from a farmer - a live rooster.

From Pencil To Computer

Crawford County technician Jane Kashner began her employment with DHIA 17 years ago, when her husband's lung problems put an end to the couple's job as dairy herdspeople.

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TRI COUNTY

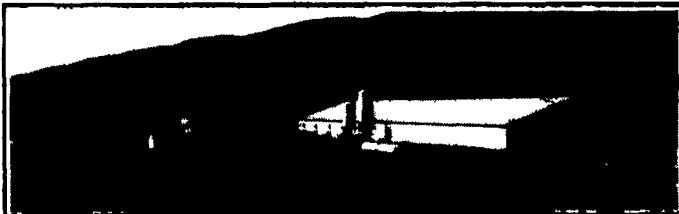
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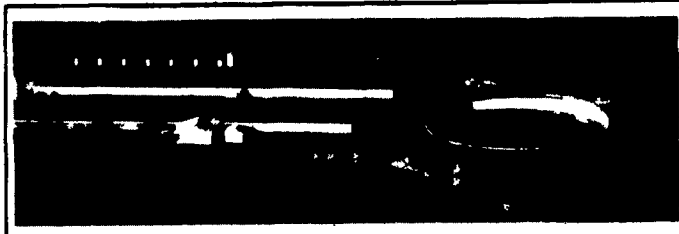


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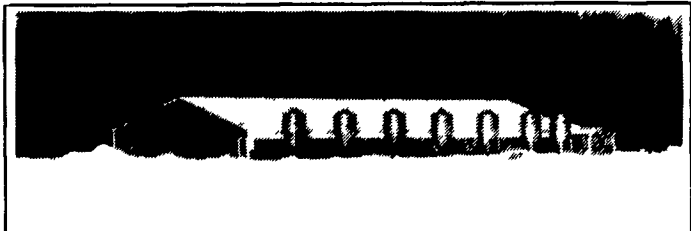


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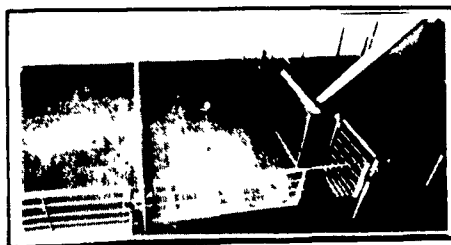
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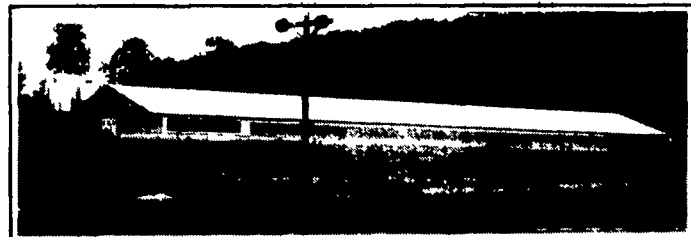
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