

The Patches Family With Two Dummies

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
LEBANON (Lebanon Co.)

— Chris and Cindy Patches have two adorable daughters and two dummies who live on their farm.

The dummies names are Tony and Kenny. But they aren't the brothers of Ashley, 4, and Alissa, 1. Instead the dummies are stuffed in suitcases, ready for Cindy, a ventriloquist, who entertains crowds with her ability to carry on conversations with the dummies in a way that seems as if the words are spoken by them instead of by her.

Ventriloquism takes a lot of practice of which Cindy has had plenty. She got her start 25 years ago, when she was nine years old and her parents gave her a dummy for a present. Cindy practiced talking without moving her lips by looking in a mirror.

At this time, Cindy sang with her family, The Boshnaugle Family. In the middle of the program, Cindy came on stage to do what she calls "my own thing."

It was good experience for her. As Cindy got older she developed more voices in higher and lower pitches to use in her ventriloquist act.

Her expertise has gained in popularity and Cindy now is kept busy entertaining both adults and children. This is an especially busy time for her as she performs for Christmas programs, banquets, parties, and at church functions.

She estimates that she has at least 18 different themes and will gear her entertainment to fit the occasion and the ages of the audience.

Her husband gets in the act by lugging the suitcases, and he thinks up jokes to incorporate in her acts. Cindy gathers materials "here and there" and puts it all together.

Cindy grew up on a Lancaster County steer and tobacco farm. She met Chris at a roller skating rink.

"My sister dragged me there, but I guess it was worthwhile even though it took Chris forever to ask me out," Cindy said.

Chris considers himself a more cautious individual who doesn't like to rush into things unless he is confident it is the right decision.

When the couple married, they moved on the Lebanon farm, which had been in Chris's side of the family for three generations. On the 130-acre farm, Chris raises 100 head of steers and finishes 4,000 hogs annually. Wheat, corn, alfalfa, and soybeans are raised, but his biggest crop is quality hay that he raises for the horse market.

Since the couple's children have been born, Cindy's time is limited in helping with the farm work but she continues to find some time helping with the pigs, unloading hay, and driving tractor.

Her main area of interest and expertise is decorating the 200-year-old stone farmhouse. The 14-room house at one time was a double house, but the Patches have had the whole house for their use since the beginning.

Each year they choose one room to remodel. So far they finished eight rooms and are working on another one. One room that they finished had not been in use for 40

years. They add electric and heat to each room as they complete it. The couple do most of the finish work themselves. Cindy enjoys choosing the wallpaper, paints, and country accessories for the house.

Chris, who focused on the horticultural side of FFA while in school, now puts his knowledge to work by landscaping focal points around the farm. Both Cindy and Chris consider "keeping the outside looking nice" as their hobby.

Chris limits his outside involvements so that he can devote as much time as possible to Cindy and his daughters.

Cindy considers herself a full-time mother who fills the role of church secretary and ventriloquist on the side.

For those interested in scheduling a ventriloquist program, Cindy may be reached at (717) 949-3261.



Above, Chris and Cindy with daughters, Ashley, 4, and Alissa, 1. In addition to farming, performing ventriloquist's acts with the dummies, and doing all the other things families do, the Patches find time to remodel one room a year in their 14-room farmhouse.

On the right, Cindy uses dummies, Tony and Kenny, for her ventriloquist's acts, which she has been performing for 25 years. According to Cindy, the monkey is more difficult to manipulate than the boy. Cindy has developed different voices to use as she swiftly and smoothly carries on conversations among them.



Ashley gives a kiss to her favorite dummy, while her mother performs a ventriloquist act and Alissa watches.



Ashley and Alissa spend lots of time in their play room. A favorite toy is their kitchen setup.



Chris and Cindy Patches and daughters, Ashley and Alissa, live in this 200-year-old farmhouse that was first purchased by Chris' grandparents.

Homestead Notes