

# Jill Harnish Says

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and have not been ones to give me dairy animals this was a great opportunity for me to get my herd started with only a little of my own money invested. At this time, I continued to have regular chores in the barn and helped with the milking on Sunday and occasionally during the week.

I always loved the farm and the work, but it was not until I was in high school that I developed a real interest in good quality cows. In 1990 my brother went to Oklahoma to harvest wheat. During that summer my sister and I took my brother's full-time spot. This was a good experience for me, having been given more responsibility, I really began to love the work involved on a dairy.

In high school, I was enrolled in the ag program where I became friends with many other farm kids and became a member of FFA. FFA soon had me involved in many new activities. In 1991 I practiced with the FFA judging team. After a series of practices the top three individuals, of which I was one, comprised the team. Our team won the Penn State Spring Judging Contest and in June we went on to the FFA Week Contest where I placed sixth individually and our team won the contest. Winning this contest sent us on to Kansas City, Missouri in November. We did not fair nearly as well at the National Contest, but the experience was unforgettable. The two other team members and I became very close friends and continue to keep in contact. The closeness that we shared as a team meant a lot to all of us. I believe much of the reason we were successful was because we wanted to win for one another.

In 1992 I became more closely involved in our home operation. My brother who worked full time on the farm was becoming less and less interested in our dairy operation, and more interested in custom field work. His knees were bothering him and milking in a stall barn was uncomfortable. He told me that whenever I wanted to milk I was more than welcome to. My brother now operates a successful silo filling and combining operation.

In June I had started working as a cashier at a hardware store. By November I left that job to work at home with more frequency. I started doing the evening work with my dad at this time, and a neighbor helped in the mornings. I offered to help in the morning too, but my parents did not feel that was a good idea. They were right, because my mornings were spent doing homework. This was a very busy year for me, as I was a senior in high school, and also the reigning Lancaster County Dairy Princess.

Being dairy princess was a very valuable and worthwhile experience. I realize that one dairy princess' schedule is not like another's, but believe me I was busy. I had more than 120 presentations and traveled over 4,000 miles that year. Everything I did was enjoyable because it was all very different.

Although the position became very frustrating at times, I am very glad I was able to serve the dairy industry in this way. Being dairy princess taught me a lot of things. One of those was, that although promotion is just as important as production, my heart is still in the production end.

As 1993 rolled around that meant graduation time, which meant I needed to decide what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Although I took academic courses in school, I was not interested in attending college. The idea of studying dairy science did not appeal to me because I felt I could learn just as much working on a dairy and at the same time be making money, rather than spending it.

I wanted to stay at my home farm full time, but I was not sure if my father could supply me with full time work. He did, and in June of 1993, I started full time as herdsman. I thoroughly enjoy working for my dad. My responsibilities in addition to milking with my Dad, include calves from newborn until five months, breeding and mating decisions, semen purchasing, bag feed purchasing, and registry. I also help with other general farm work.

In December of 1993, I started working with Belmont Breeders doing relief artificial inseminating. Ron and Kay Hall, a couple from my church, are the owners of Belmont Breeders. Belmont Breeders are authorized independent distributors of Semex, Landmark, Tri-State, Network, NOBA, and Taurus. We also work at proving young sires. In August of 1994, they offered me a job as a subcontractor under their name. I became the third technician and I also worked in semen sales. For the other technicians and me, our direct herd customers were not getting the attention that they needed because of our busy breeding schedules. We decided to make some changes, and I now work with all of the direct herd customers and do relief breeding when needed. This is much more compatible with my schedule at home. The main thing I miss with working on my parents' farm is not getting out and talking with people. This is a big reason why I enjoy selling semen and breeding cows.

Dairying has changed greatly since 1975 and so has my parents' Spruce-Edge Farm. We have added 14 stalls and currently milk 54 cows. We have tried rubber mats in our stalls, but we have more recently installed mattresses in some of our stalls and bedding keepers in others. We built a loose housing dry cow barn with a manure pack and locking head gates. We have expanded our calf housing and switched from calf hutches to calf kennels. We have also built a gravity-flow manure pit and just finished a grain bin to store dry corn in.

Although we have a rather traditional feeding program, it too has changed. We used to feed a lot of corn silage and a little hay, now we feed a total mixed ration of corn silage, haylage, hay, and protein mix. New ideas in feeding have brought about the use of methionine hydroxylanalog, niacin, iso plus, and BST. Modern feeding practices have greatly reduced metabolic disorders like milk fever and acetonemia. Our heifer program has stayed the same. Although there are now products on the market such as Bovatec, we feel that many of the new philosophies about heifer raising have not been beneficial to the dairymen.

Our dry cow program is by far our greatest feeding change.

We have changed from the days where dry cows were kept with the

milking cows or heifers, to understanding the importance of a sound dry cow program. We feed grass or timothy hay, a little corn silage, and about four pounds of grain specially formulated for dry cows.

The breeding philosophy we use on our farm is also rather traditional. Our goal is to breed good, old, long-lasting, profitable cows. We use 100 percent artificial insemination and stick to mainly proven sires. Breeding cows artificially is much easier now than in 1975 with new products like prostaglandin and GNRH. We have changed from breeding for fat, and being one of the top herds in the county, to a time where consumers do not want high fat milk. Breeding for high type cattle has remained one of our goals. In 1982, 21st Century Genetics purchased Spruce-Edge Majesty from Dad. In his time, Spruce has one of the highest type proofs in the breed at 3.28. Much of the information that we use for mating cows we obtain from the Red Book and from Bull Search. You will read more about

our breeding program in My Personal Breeding Program. Our herd is classified and our present BAA is 102.9.

Like many farm wives, my mother is the main record keeper. She keeps the books in order and pays the bills. DHIA is something that continues making record keeping much easier. We continue to be on official test but we have changed from two times a day testing to testing once a day with an Am-PM timer. Our county has also changed from being with Pennsylvania DHIA, to now being our own association.

Everyone does their part in the farm management. My brother helps my dad with the 190 acres of ground that we crop. They work together at all of the many things that are involved with raising productive crops. Making top quality forages is very difficult, but they have been successful in doing so, which is extremely beneficial for our herd. I work with my dad taking care of the cattle and my mom takes care of the bookwork, lawn

work, and housework.

Fortunately, along with all of these changes over the past 19 years our milk production has also changed. In 1977 my father had the high herd in the county with 17,000 pounds of milk and 715 pounds of fat. Our herd average has steadily risen to 20,461 pounds of milk, 773 pounds of fat, and 676 pounds of protein. With continued research and new ideas on feeding, breeding and management, I expect our milk production will continue to rise.

My involvement with the dairy industry and the Holstein Association is very exciting and yet still very uncertain. My immediate plans are to stay directly involved with the Association and continue to work for my parents, slowly building up my base herd. Hopefully someday I will become a dairy farmer's wife and raise my own children the way my parents raised me: with a clear understanding of hard work and responsibility and a deep love for the land, family, and the Lord.

## FFA HAPPENINGS



Manor FFA's major fundraiser is the annual fruit sale, where the chapter sells a variety of fruit and fruit baskets. This year, the chapter sold about 1,500 cases of fruit and 150 fruit baskets. Some of the members who made the baskets include, from left, Stephanie Graham, Janee Reihl, Tina Henry, Jessica Althouse, and Melissa McCardell.

MILLERSVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Manor FFA, of Penn Manor High School, recently participated in a variety of contests. Several members were recognized.

Manor FFA had two teams compete at Eastern States. The dairy products team, consisting of Jim Best, Joe Best, and Jason Reifsnnyder, placed third. The ag mechanics team, which consists of Barry Graver, Dwane Graver, and Neil Ebersole, also placed high.

At this year's Farm show, Barry Graver, a senior at Penn Manor, received the Star Keystone in ag production and competed against other Star students at the state level. Matt Charles, also a senior, received the Star Keystone in sales and service and competed against other Star students at the state level.

The highest honor that an ag student can receive in Pennsylvania is the Keystone Degree. Keystone degree recipients were honored at the Farm Show. Recipients include Kyle P. Harnish, Stephanie Graham, David Parker, Jeremy Murry, Greg Hess, Matt Charles, Barry Graver, and Neil Ebersole.

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### Berks Co. Creed & Interview Contest

Eight members of the Twin Valley FFA Chapter recently traveled to Oley Valley High School for the Berks County FFA interview and creed speaking contest. Tulpehocken, Conrad-Weiser, and Oley Valley High schools also participated in the contest.

Creed speaking, which is a contest for first-year FFA members to recite the national FFA creed, had the largest group of Twin Valley members competing. The creed contest is judged on the student's ability to recite the national FFA creed as well as answer questions on the meaning of it.

The judges gave the students a score on knowledge and understanding of the creed as well as speaking ability and poise. Kristin Leisey and Erica Kenney will both move on to the regional contest with 5th and 6th place finishes, respectively. Amanda Freeman, Rebecca Gardner, Joel Stoltzfus, and Richard Glaser all did a commendable job.

The interview contest helps high school students to prepare for

the world of work by participating in a mock interview. In addition to conducting a job interview, the student must submit a letter of application and a job application.

The students are asked questions about the job they have selected, such as experience and reasons why he/she is the best person for the job. Lynn Hepner and Matt Perini represented Twin Valley in this contest. Lynn finished first in the county contest and will move on to regional.

The regional contest will be held April 25 at Manheim.



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