

# Pigs, Pork, Family Keep Life Exciting At Schick Farm

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KUTZTOWN (Berks Co.)** — Pigs are everywhere at the Schick farm in rural Kutztown.

Visitors to the farm expect the pigs to be in the pig houses. Which they are — 230 sows with hundreds of offspring in various growing stages.

But what is unexpected is a prolific conglomeration of pigs in all sizes and shapes scattered throughout the yard and the Schicks' home. There's a large copper weather vane sporting a pig and a hefty pottery pig in the front yard. Inside the home in every shape and size imaginable are part of Anna Marie's pig collection.

"I have no idea how many I have. I lost count, but many are packed away in boxes," said Anna Marie.

It's no surprise to hear her say, "I love pigs."

That applies to real ones and fake ones.

Another thing she loves is pork. "It's always been my favorite meat," she said.

Anna Marie is such an expert on cooking pork that she teaches classes as a representative for the National Pork Producers Council and Hatfield Meats.

"I like to cook and I like to promote the product," Anna Marie said of the dual combination.

Producing and promoting pork are not traits passed down through the generations.

"My husband and I are first-generation Americans," Anna Marie said. "We got into farming by default."

Her husband Herbert's family and Anna Marie's family settled in Philadelphia when they first arrived from their home country Germany.

When the two were teen-agers, they met and later married. In 1960, the Schicks and an older couple purchased the Berks County farm where the Schicks continue to live. They started with 98 acres and have increased it to 250 acres over the years.

Anna Marie said when they first moved on the farm, they had heard that Pennsylvania imported much of its pork. They decided to raise pork. The other couple in partnership with them decided to drop out.

"They were older and were not interested in expansion, but we needed to think of the future because we had three children to support," Anna Marie said.

Those beginning years were a bit stringent financially. But the close-knit extended families of the Schicks helped them build a farrowing house and get the farm in shape.

The Schicks' raise hogs from birth to market as independent producers and have never raised hogs under contract.

"It's always been a roller coaster with prices. When you have a good year, you put a little aside for a bad year," Anna Marie said.

While surviving the recent seige of low prices for hogs and still not seeing a break-even price, Anna Marie said that she has learned along the way that "there's not too much in this life worth getting upset about."

"My favorite saying is, 'This too shall pass,'" she said.

It's a philosophy that has seen enabled the family to work harmoniously together.

The Schicks' three children are now married and live near the family farm. The two sons, Otto and Paul, continue to work on the farm. Both are good mechanics and fix the equipment. Paul also sells livestock equipment and buildings under the business name, Schick Enterprises.

Herb is the secretary-treasurer for the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council.

Anna Marie does the office work for both the farm and Schick Enterprises.

The Schick's daughter's husband manages Agway Store in Kutztown. Herbert does some part-time hauling for Agway and hauls his own corn and soybean meal.

The Schicks devised a cooling system in the hog houses to keep inside temperatures constant during summer and winter months. A heat exchanger allows incoming and outgoing air to pass and temper it. The GEO thermal system is set up to close or open it during the summer and winter months. Air is drawn from the attic and run underground. PVC pipe also runs under the flooring to take out gases and fumes.

Several different houses are erected on the property to hold the pigs during different growing stages.

The manure is emptied into a lagoon. The neighbor who farms the Schicks' acreage spreads the manure.

Anna Marie said the family has never farmed the ground but concentrated strictly on raising pigs.

In addition to helping with the pigs and teaching pork cookery, Anna Marie likes to sew. She prefers tailoring and is a member of the Sewing Guild of Berks County.

"I seldom sit and watch TV," Anna Marie said. "There are so many other things to do."

Gardening, canning, and mow-



Anna Marie helps with the piglets on the family's hog operation, which is from birth to marketing.

ing acres of grass occupy much of the warmer months of the year. The Schicks dug out a large pond on the property that the family uses for swimming, boating, and fishing.

"My kids bring me the most satisfaction," Anna Marie said.

"The kids" refers to her own three children plus six grandchildren.

Family tradition is to maintain close family ties. Anna Marie's mother, who is 92 years old, lives on an adjoining property. Although her mind continues to be

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The Schicks' daughter Cindy and husband Tom Fenstermacher.



The Schicks' home is in Berks County, but most of the 250 acres surrounding it is in Lehigh County. The Schicks installed this pond and built the bridge that bridged a swamp before the family cleared the land.

## HOMESTEAD NOTES



The Schicks' youngest son Paul and his wife Susie.



The Schicks' oldest son Otto with his wife Renee and daughter Kelly.