

FOCUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & CUSTOMERS

dhia
Pennsylvania Dairy Herd
Improvement Association

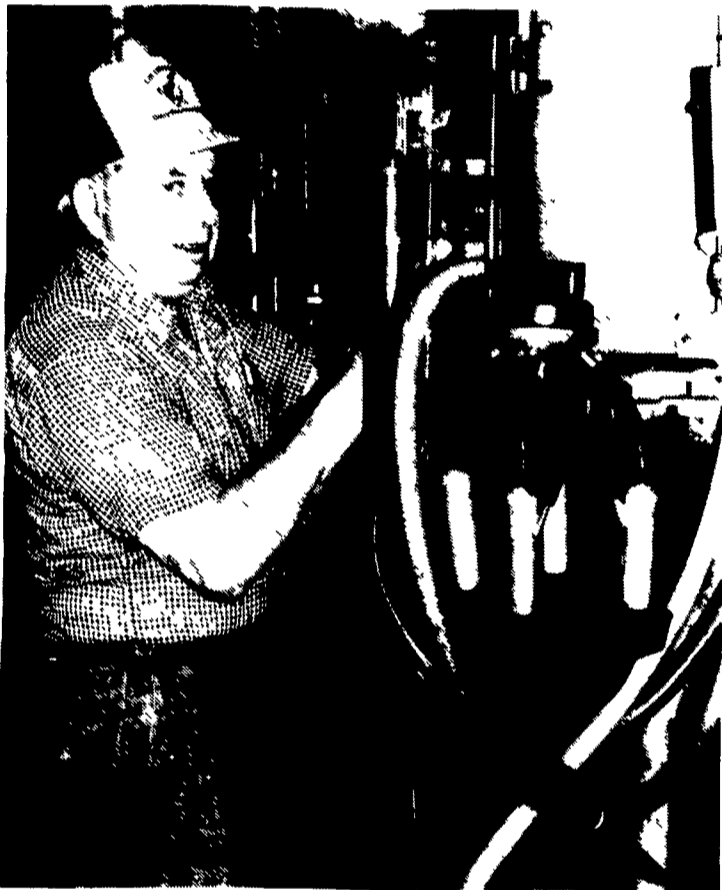
Dixie L. Burris, Membership Development
Call 1-800-DHI-TEST For Information
Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association
DHIA Service Center
Orchard Road, University Park, PA 16802

Lancaster Farming, Pages E-6 to E-9

June 3, 1995 Issue

Vol. 10 No. 1

Miller, Pa.DHIA Together For 50 Years



Gerald Miller, 77, of Cochranville, still drives the backroads and highways of Chester County traveling from one dairy barn to the next to collect milk samples and perform calculations for dairymen.

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
UNIONVILLE (Chester Co.) — A self-described "gypsy," after more than 50 years and six cars, Gerald Miller, 77, of Cochranville, still drives the backroads and highways of Chester County traveling from one dairy barn to the next to attend milkings.

He is familiar with many of the parlors and stanchion setups in Chester County, a lot of the cows, and every dairy farmer on his circuit.

Miller is the most senior technician on the staff of the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association (Pa.DHIA). It is a distinction that brings mixed emotions, he said.

On one hand working any job more than 50 years is an achievement. On the other, it means there are fewer peers left.

"I feel good," he said recently, while testing milk at Brooklawn Farms Dairy in Unionville. "Except for this knee," he added, pointing to his right knee. "It's worn down, otherwise I'd move around faster."

While he installed testing devices on the double-six milking parlor machines, and checked

them, he talked about the possibility of having his knee repaired and how fast recovery is these days with such surgery.

Meticulously, but also routinely, he positioned a white plastic foam insulated base loaded with pre-numbered milk test containers, and a checklist.

As the cows came into the parlor, he marked down their number and as they finished being milked, he took the appropriate container and filled it with milk from the testing apparatus.

He talked about the merger between Chester DHIA and Pa.DHIA, the changes in national DHIA, the dairy industry and, in a sense, current living conditions.

He smiled and cajoled with the assistant herdsman, Ben Bartlett. They talked about the fox hunts that are held in the area, with Brooklawn Farms serving as host for a fox hunt every year.

The two men said the hunts are filled with lots of people talking, their cars, horses, dogs, the sounds, the smells and the sheer entertainment of watching these people and their horses thunder through woods and pastures and leap over rail fences.

Bartlett said he came to the farm recently and watched the crowds and commotion from the parlor-barn area.

Miller said he's seen them and said they were impressive. It is one of the more unusual sights he's seen, being a DHIA technician.

While Miller was single when he started working for DHIA, he has not been on the road alone for all those years. His wife Freida Luella is also a DHIA technician, though since she started later, she doesn't quite have in as many years.

Together, they have been serving Chester County DHIA members for 30 years, doing things from taking milk samples, doing reports, checking charts for conversions, to entering data into a portable computer and sending the

information over the telephone to the records processing center.

The accuracy required of the job is, and always has been taken seriously by Gerald and by the people he works with.

These are records which need to be used to track a dairy herd in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons — to catch drops in milk production, trends in butterfat or protein production, the health of the udder, monitor reproduction times, etc. — in order to make money.

Dairy farmers who can't make money selling milk or cattle have to sell something else.

It's a fact of life that having good records and being able to use them gives a dairy farmer an edge — knowing as much as possible about the herd's performance is the first step in being able to detect and correct problems. It's an ongoing process.

And Miller has been almost as ongoing.

On April Fool's Day, 1943, Miller joined the team at Pa.DHIA as a technician, traveling from his coal mining hometown of Westport, Md. to State College where he spent a couple of weeks learning testing techniques and living in a boarding house.

He said he had worked on farms for a number of years growing up, and had been working for the Carnation Milk Company as an assistant manager in receiving for the plant in western Maryland when his cousin started talking to him about being a Pa.DHIA technician, or a milk tester, as they were more commonly referred.

Miller said that while the two were going to try to get jobs at the same time, his cousin backed out. Alone, Miller hit the road for State College.

After completing his initial couple of weeks training, staying in a boarding house, Miller said there were two jobs from which to

(Turn to Page E9)

Accomplishments Last 15 Months

DAVID SLUSSER
General Manager

PA DHIA has made major accomplishments over the last 15 months. Our quality standards has held or improved. 78% of our records are usable for genetic evaluation. Our lab quality control score was 99%, and our field service staff is the best trained in the nation. We have three in-depth training sessions a year. All of our 150 technicians are using laptop computers and electronically transmitting data. PA DHIA is the only stand alone full service DHIA Cooperative in America. The PA DHIA Board of Directors govern and control, a full field service, a modern up-to-date milk testing lab, and a Dairy Records Processing Center. We offer more innovative programs than anyone else and we have a higher percentage of cows on A/P testing than anyone. Our Herd Summary I and II reports are first class and are a result of member input through

our District Delegate meetings and DRPC Committee. Our turnaround time is second to none.

If the truth was known, or could be told we could probably boast of the highest percent of useable records, and the highest percent of identified cattle. Most likely we are the best all around DHIA provider in America.

As we improved and developed our service, we made great strides in our efficiency, and continue to do so. We have thirty less employees than we did 15 months ago. The downtown office was closed, the lab employees became DHIA employees, we have gone to a one day annual meeting, the Laboratory Director and the Membership Relations Director have been combined. Because of the large number of herds switching to A/P testing, our overall gross income has dropped considerably. In other words, our members as a whole with the fee adjustments are spending less money for testing

this year than they did last year. We lowered DHIA testing cost to our members.

As a result of our top service and our new efficiency, cow numbers on PA DHIA test has stabilized. Cash flow has improved, opportunity for improved field technicians income has occurred, we are repaying our loans, and membership confidence in our cooperative has improved.

As your General Manager, I have spent more than half my time on the road meeting with members, and making farm visits. I am trying to attend every county committee meeting at least once a year, and I want to attend as many local annual meetings as possible. Last fall I attended over 30 annual meetings and more county committee meetings.

The staff and employees of PA DHIA cares. They work hard for you and they want you to succeed in farming, we work hard at our motto "PA DHIA Cares."

Schedule of Events
Technicians Summer Conference, Indiana PA June 16-17
Board Meeting June 27-28
Board Meeting August 29-30
Board Meeting October 24-25
Board Meeting December 19-20
Annual Meeting, State College February 16, 1996