

(Continued from Page E14)

hot, then completely re-blended using a centrifuge.

"That's why our milk tastes so good," says Jeff Flora.

Blending creates whole chocolate or lowfat chocolate. Milk is then pumped through six filling lines to tanks, where it is held until packaging.

A water conservation program was implemented about five years ago, and has cut the amount of water used during these processes in half.

Milk is packaged in a completely automated environment in half-pints, gallons, or half-gallons. The only thing manpower is needed for is to feed the containers into the machines. Three hundred 1/2 pints a minute can be filled using this system, 110 gallons a minute, and about 140 half-gallons per minute. Milk is pumped into the containers in preset amounts, then the containers are sealed by machine. Letting machines do so much of the work is something the Vonas have achieved through an extensively computerized system.

From the filling lines, containers of milk go to a 65-foot high, eight-level storage building, from which they are loaded out. One hundred-fifty thousand gallons of produce can be stored at one time. Containers are stacked in groups of nine of a like kind in completely cleaned and sanitized cages.

All product is rotated on a first-in, first-out basis, monitored by computer. A philosophy of making everything easier for the technician pervades this and all parts

of the operation, according to Jimmy Vona.

"Everything is controlled by computer to within 1/2 an inch. The concept is to make the job easy for people. That also leads to a better product."

Levels 2-8 are devoted to storing the milk; the first level is where the trucks pick it up.

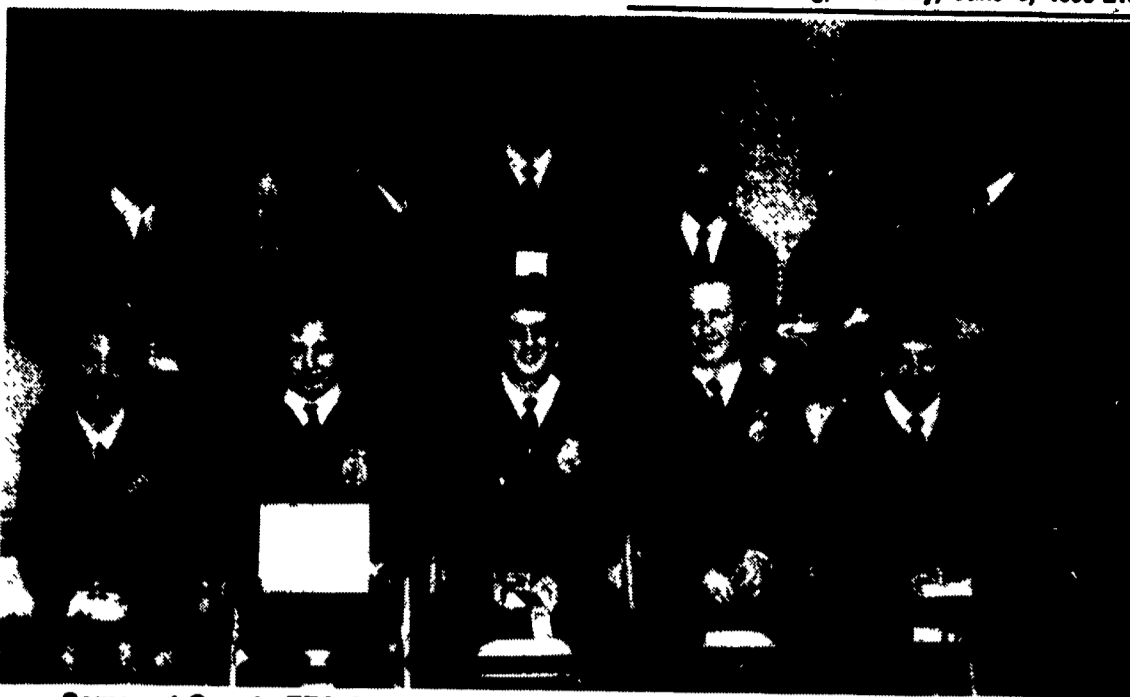
Dairy Maid maintains its own fleet of 55 of the familiar red and white trucks. Trucks are lifted to dock level for loading.

A whole floor of the plant is devoted to the engine room that keeps everything operating smoothly, and to other support systems. Dairy Maid maintains its own in-house maintenance staff, and keeps parts in stock should anything need fixed.

There is no backup generator; the plant is on a priority electrical line with the nearby hospital. They did lose their electric for a short period of time two years ago, but that was in December, so there were no problems. Should anything go wrong with the refrigeration, the product could be taken out and stored in refrigerated trucks.

Dairy Maid places a strong emphasis on quality throughout its whole operation. There is an on-site laboratory for quality control. Tests for butterfat analysis, standard plate count, coliform bacteria, freezing point, antibiotics, and many other tests are run on a regular basis.

Said Jimmy Vona, "We're in an industry that expects that everything is perfect."



Somerset County FFA Association winners in the 1995 Skills Judging Contests, seated from left, Rachel Wright, Jeremy Bartels, Jonathan Smiley, Don Spelcher Jr., and Joel Smiley. Standing, Steve Benford, Matt Brant, Dennis Stevanus, Jason Ickes, Jeremy Walters, Eric Lohr, and Josh Glessner.

## Somerset County FFA Honors Members

**GAY BROWNLEE**  
Somerset Co. Correspondent  
**BERLIN (Somerset Co.)** — The annual Somerset County FFA Parent and Member Banquet was held on May 25 at the community building here.

The FFA chapters represented were Brothersvalley, Meyersdale, Mount Davis, Somerset and the Somerset County Area Vocational Technical School (AVTS).

County officers for 1994-1995 conducted the program: Jonathan Smiley, Brothersvalley, president;

Allen Durst, AVTS, vice president; Ben Shipley, Meyersdale, secretary; Jeremy Bartels, Somerset, treasurer; Valerie St. Clair, Somerset, reporter; Dennis Stevanus, AVTS, parliamentarian; Matt Coleman, Brothersvalley, sentinel; Matt Hay, Meyersdale, chaplain; and county adviser, John Hartman, Meyersdale. Each was given a plaque for serving in the county association.

In addition to Hartman, other chapter advisers making presentations were Doyle Paul, Brothers-

valley; Andy Hipple, Somerset; James Harrold and Jay Bebin, AVTS. Douglas Baer from Mount Davis is also an adviser.

Jeremy Bartels received a \$50 savings bond for the county agricultural record book contest from Farm Credit. The award was presented by Jeff Moser.

Brothersvalley Chapter won first place in parliamentary procedure and received the G. Floyd Dye Memorial Trophy. The rotating memorial honors the late Mr.

(Turn to Page E16)

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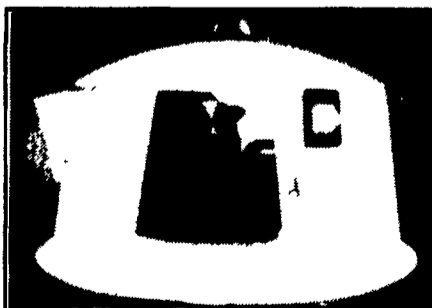
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