

'Mystique' Of Dairy Farm Provides Family Fun, Education

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LANSDALE (Montgomery Co.) — Fred Seipt, partner with Freddy-Hill Dairy Farms, makes one observation about the thousands of people who visit his dairy farm and entertainment complex every year.

"Ice cream is entertainment," he said. "Ice cream is not food."

Seipt, who operates the 135-acre Freddy-Hill Family Fun Center and dairy complex, has dealt with the public long enough to know.

When it comes to selecting food to purchase, consumers are picky. They'll fuss over how much they'll spend on a gallon of milk. But on entertainment items — such as ice cream or pumpkins or 18 holes of miniature golf — "it makes all the difference in the world," he said.

Consumers have a completely different outlook on what they spend and how much they'll spend for the things they need.

"I've always said, if you can't eat it, you can charge anything."

"That's a fact. If they have to eat it, they have to price shop and get all carried away about what it costs and so forth."

"For some pumpkin, they'll pay anything for it. That's entertainment. It's a whole different psyche."

Seipt, who built his Freddy-Hill Family Fun dairy parlor in 1988, said, "We're not price-gouging people. I think you'll find our prices are very reasonable, but I'm telling you, it's easier as far as price-setting is concerned, and easier to eke out a profit when it's entertainment than it is with food. Food is extremely competitive and extremely price-conscious."

Together with his three sons and

one son-in-law, Seipt manages not only to manage a full-time dairy farm but also a milk and ice cream processing operation and farm store. He also helps manage two 18-hole golf courses, a batting cage, and a petting zoo.

And by the way — he finds time to grow crops to continue the operation.

Nancy Seipt, who helps manage the store, said there are about 30 part-time and five full-time workers. The store, open all year-round, said that dealing with lots of people "always presents a big challenge."

Fred Seipt operates his farm right off Exit 31 of the Pa. Turnpike, on 63 south in Towamencin Township. The township is home to many commuters, because the area is within 35 minutes of Philadelphia's International Airport and provides access to many locations in Philadelphia and Allentown.

Seipt farms a total of 500 acres with sons Vernon, Matthew, Bill, and son-in-law Matthew, in addition to helping operate the entertainment complex. They milk a total of 100 registered Holsteins with about the same number of replacement stock. They also finish another 50 head of Holstein steers. Latest DHIA averages are 20,784 pounds milk, 702f, and 642p.

While the dairy aspect remains profitable, Seipt indicated there was far more profit in the entertainment aspects of the farm.

"We realize how entertainment works," he said. "People want to be entertained. It's kind of amazing."

Two of the 18-hole deluxe miniature golf courses follow a complex southern-type design. One



Fred Seipt and family manage not only a dairy farm, but the two 18-hole miniature golf courses, a batting cage, and other "entertainment" aspects of Freddy-Hill Farms.

has a theme of national park locations.

The milking parlor is host to thousands of school students every year, who learn about farming, take in the miniature golf, and enjoy ice cream in the parlor.

"Ice cream is far more profitable for us than milk," said Seipt. "It shouldn't be that way, but it is."

Seipt, who said he would much rather be out chopping hay than taking care of the entertainment

management aspects (built in 1991 at a cost of \$1.2 million) said the ice cream parlor, built in 1988, was added to the milk processing center, which was constructed in 1972.

Seipt, a Penn State graduate, purchased the farm from his father Wilbur in 1967. The original farm milked 45 Guernsey cows on 98 acres. At this time, Seipt milks 100 head and farms about 500 acres, mostly on rented ground, some of which he travels to about 6-7 miles

away. The decision to build the entertainment center was a result of seeing how much business the ice cream parlor was attracting. Almost immediately, the miniature golf and batting boxes were successful.

Now, Seipt is trying to implement a deli sandwich counter.

Seipt admitted that is impossible to compete with the large processors near Philadelphia. As a result,

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Seipt farms a total of 500 acres with sons Vernon, Matthew, Bill, and son-in-law Matthew, in addition to helping operate the entertainment complex. Here, Fred, left, discusses planting strategies with son Matt.



Ice cream is not food, it's entertainment, according to Fred Seipt, who also helps load milk crates to the truck.