



The Oberholtzer family is the eighth generation of Oberholtzers to live on the Elizabethtown farm since 1718. Shown are parents Clair and Lavern with children Jesslyn, Heather, Brent, Brian, and Delmar.

## On The Farm With Lancaster County's Dairy Princess

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ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Heather Oberholtzer is the eighth generation to live on her family's farm.

"I love it," said Heather, who is Lancaster County's recently crowned dairy princess.

The family's 150-acre Elizabethtown dairy farm is home for Heather, her parents, Clair and Lavern, and siblings, Jesslyn, 19, twins Brent and Brian, 14, and Delmar, 12.

It's also home for 75 pampered cows.

"I always say that I'm a Equal Opportunity Employer," Clair said of the herd that has about two-thirds of the Holsteins registered. "If a grade milks good, she stays. I have one grade family that is as good as any registered one."

Perhaps there is a bit of prejud-

iced shown between the grade and registered cows. The grades are duped numbers while the registered cows are thoughtfully christened such names as Nancy, Tonya, or Hillary. There is also a cow family with names that carry on banking terminology such as Cash Flow, Credit, Loan, Master Charge, Visa, and Vault. Then there's the soap family line with names such as Dove, Dial, and Zest.

The children insist that the bovines often live up to their names. For example, Nancy and Tonya were at one time both amicable cows, but after the Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan fiasco, Tonya the cow developed a nasty streak and consistently attempted to pin the siblings to the wall and buck them. Tonya the cow ended up as hamburger and beef jerky.

"She tastes as good as she looked," Brian said and the others agreed.

With a farm that dates back to 1718 and has several original buildings still standing, the Oberholtzers always have plenty of do-it-yourself projects.

Some of these projects have almost cost a life.

In 1981, Clair was jacking up the barn wall when a beam flew out and hit the side of his head.

"I technically died on the way to the hospital," Clair said.

The Life Support ambulance pulled to the side of the road to work on stabilizing his vital signs.

Clair was told that after all his body systems shut down, his body revitalized itself and started up again.

"They said that it only happens occasionally to young, athletic



As the recently-crowned Lancaster County Dairy Princess, Heather, right, relies upon her sister Jesslyn, who was a former county alternate, for hints on compiling a scrapbook of activities.

people," Clair said.

Three years later, Clair unexpectedly suffered severe pain in his head that resulted in loss of hearing in one ear, which was diagnosed as a side effect of his former concussion. When he lost his hearing, he also lost his sense of balance for about six weeks and couldn't work.

During these episodes, Lavern capably carried out the milking duties. But she confessed that she needed to throw a whole tank of milk away when she unwittingly milked a dry cow.

Local farmers and friends rallied around the family.

"We never put hay away so fast," Clair said of the time neighboring farmers showed up with three hay balers.

As the children grow older, Laverne helps less in the barn and fields. In addition to working full

time as a secretary for a hospital, Laverne tackled exposing the wooden chestnut logs in one room of the rambling farmhouse.

"It took me three winters, 50 gallons of elbow grease, and lots of filler," Laverne said.

The whole family helped with hauling out wheelbarrows of old plaster and debris. An offset grinder wire brush and bleach were used to clean the logs. Insulation was added to the plaster to make the room more heat efficient.

It was a lot of work. But the room now has the warmth of huge timber walls, a built-in corner cupboard, and two other built-in cupboards, and wide floor boards.

Laverne would like to tackle the rooms in the rest of the house, but it's expected to be a life-long project. Laverne said that the side of the double house that they live in

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After the children took over outside chores, Lavern tackled exposing the logs in this room. Behind her is the home's original corner cupboard that required endless hours of sanding to restore the sheen of old wood. She also stitched the window valance.

# HOMESTEAD NOTES