

# Zahnbach Farms Prepares For Next Generation

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promotional people arranged to rent a helicopter to fly the Sattazahns back to the farm to do their milking, and then fly them back to the fair for the evening award presentation.

"The helicopter landed in back of the silos," Robert recently recalled.

The Sattazahns were also featured in some now defunct publications and in the Reading Eagle for such things as having the first waste water lagoon built.

The lagoon was built to handle the milkhouse waste water from their double-six herringbone parlor. Measuring 3-feet deep, the rectangular lagoon still exists and was built 138 feet long and 66 feet wide.

It would not fit today's standards for environmental control devices on farms, but, when it was built it was the newest thing, it worked, and people paid attention.

In 1987, there was a proposal from a county U.S. Soil Conservation Service worker to build upon the existing lagoon to create a manure storage facility. Robert said that proposal didn't seem to make as much sense, and he didn't feel confident with the plan.

In addition, cost-share funds weren't available to him because the farm is in the Delaware River Basin, not the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (the Susquehanna River Basin) where cost-sharing for manure storage ponds, equipment and facilities was being made available.

Now, with cost-share funds administered by the state Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources (DCNR), through the Berks County Conservancy, for water quality improvement devices and practices on the Tulpehocken Creek and its tributaries, the Sattazahns are expecting to very soon see the farm stream's banks fenced from cattle.

The Sattazahns sold the development rights to their 185-acre farm through the state and county Farmland Preservation program.

Robert, a member of the township planning commission for years (to help protect agricultural interests, he said), helped push for establishing an Agricultural Security Area and getting farmland preservation underway.

The value of the farmland and the lack of enough farmland is becoming more and more apparent, according to the Sattazahns. Recently a rumor somehow was spread that the Sattazahns were getting out of farming or selling.

They said they received lots of phone calls from people looking to rent and buy. While the whole incident proved somewhat strange, it also served to reinforce the fact that the demand and value of the farm is high for farming.

The herd has been cut back to 75 cows.

The outer surfaces of the facilities are showing the wear of serving the Sattazahn family for a long time. There are some chores that are starting to get away from the couple.

Robert is 64, Jane, 61. They said they intend to farm for a little while longer, but do intend to retire in several years.

Robert said he still has plans for changes on the farm, but he and

Jane readily admit that they are starting to feel their age. There are more aches and pains, and arthritis, etc.

The couple is taking it a little

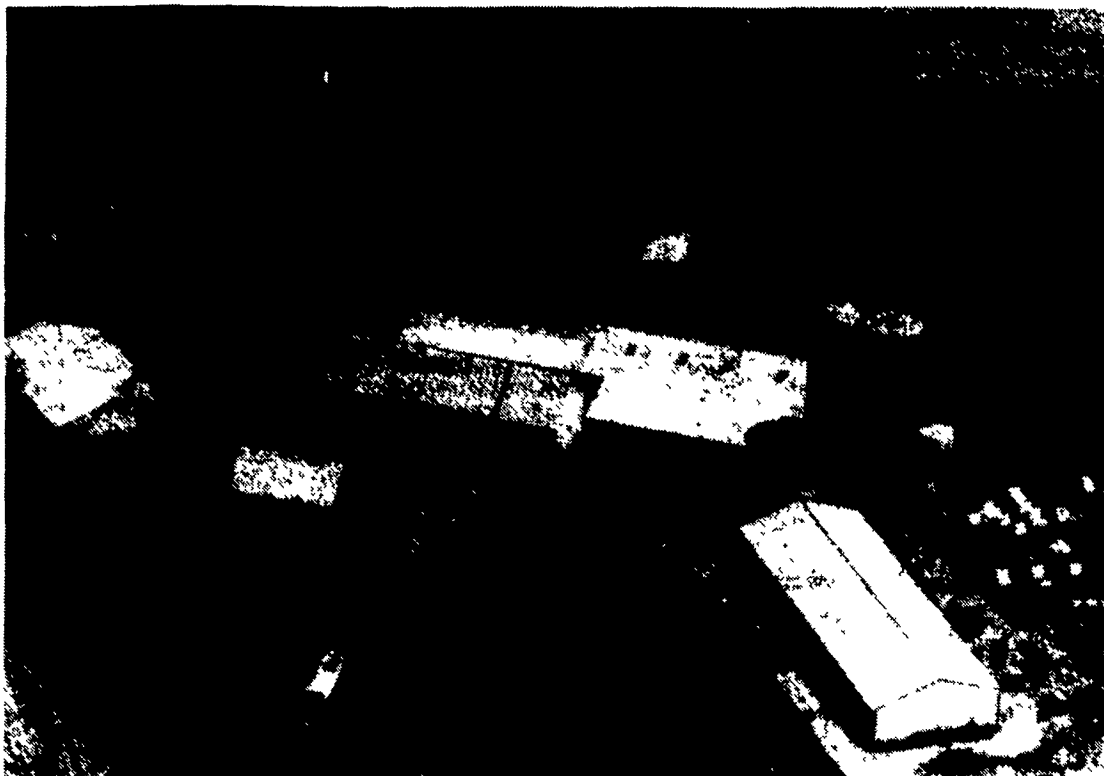
slower these days.

The family business continues, but as with all businesses, especially family businesses, the dynamics of the business depends

upon the dynamics of the people involved.

The family has changed, and thus the business has changed. The

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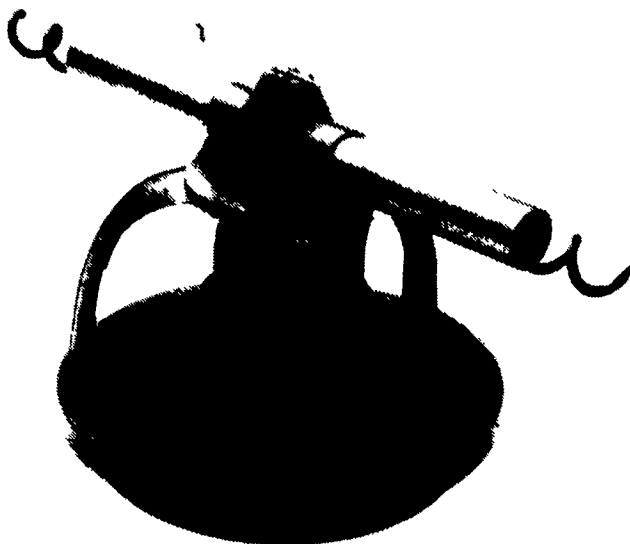


Zahnbach Farms from an aerial view shows the layout and design of a dairy farm that was leading edge in its heyday and still remains competitive. A lagoon for milkhouse waste water is above the dairy complex. From the silos, an area under roof for preparing and delivering feed parallels a 104-stall freestall (though some of the stalls are not used today) barn, which connects to a double-six herringbone parlor and milkhouse. The old stone bankbarn is used for storage of some equipment and square bales. The long building in the lower right is a bedded pack helper facility and storage area for large roundbales. A trench silo, fairly empty in the photograph is to the left. Further left, is another outbuilding and corn crib, and left of that is equipment and tractor shed and workshop. The main house, believed to have been built in the 1700s is partially concealed by trees, though the walkway leading to the door can be seen. The main farm lane comes between the house and an old summer house in disrepair. The stream is to fenced off soon on the farm side, and a spring development project is planned.

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