

Pair Of Cousins Sweep Lancaster Tobacco Show

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— There were two cousins, you see . . .

No, not the two that formed the garage, pasta place, minimall, or shoe store.

We're talking about the two cousins that formed a unique tobacco growing championship.

They're second cousins, actually, but Jessica Neff and Andy Burkholder share more than a family tradition of growing the county's premier cash crop. They also shared grand champion honors Tuesday afternoon at the Lancaster County Tobacco Show at the Farm and Home Center.

By telephone, Jessica told Lancaster Farming that her father, Gary Neff, is cousin to Andy Burkholder's mother, Mary.

Jessica, 20, won grand champion Pennsylvania-grown smoking tobacco with her 16-leaf hand from Class 6, tops. Jessica, daughter of Gary and Dianne Neff, Millersville, is a 1996 graduate of Penn Manor High School. She is a sophomore at Penn State studying ag business.

Her cousin Andy Burkholder, 17, won grand champion Pennsylvania Type 41 tobacco from the Class 1Y, wrappers. Andy, son of Tina and Sherman Burkholder, Millersville, is in the 11th grade at Penn Manor.

Like cousin Jessica, Andy is enrolled in FFA. Jessica served as chapter secretary. Andy works at a wholesale flower company in Washington Boro.

Both work as seasonal farm hands on the 14-acre Neff Brothers farm in Manor Township, Jessica noted. Jessica and Andy have helped in all stages of tobacco production, from planting the transplants grown at the farm to hoeing, cutting, stripping, and "sharing information about tobacco," she said. Jessica indicated the Neff Brothers have been growing tobacco for 50 years.

Jessica said this year, being dry, provided a "better chance of getting a more clean leaf," with fewer holes. It was a "pretty good year for growing," she said. They follow a planned insecticide program to control aphids and "fortunately had no problems with blue mold."

This was Andy Burkholder's first champion. Jessica has received champion at the show before.

In choosing a potentially winning hand of tobacco leaves, Andy said, "We look for thickness and color and size." Jessica said her father, Gary, helped her choose some good leaves because of his tobacco growing knowledge.

Judges for the Lancaster County Tobacco Show were Geoffrey H. Ranck, Domestic Tobacco Company, and Raymond Rinehart, leaf purchaser with Lancaster Leaf.

Ranck said the winners were selected because of a "gut grab" type of feeling. "One smelled the most, had the light on it," he said.

The overall appeal brought it to their attention. The judges look for the uniformity of leaf, stretch, texture, and overall color. Any kinds of holes, blemishes, or spotting can

work against a final grade.

For the smoking tobacco, Ranck noted that you really should take the leaves being judged and "set them on fire" to see how they burn, he said. Size is not always the determining factor, as long as it is long enough — it doesn't have to be the biggest leaf. But burning the leaf is one way to determine exactly the quality of the tobacco.

The county tobacco show serves as a "prelude" to the state show, scheduled at the Farm Show Complex tomorrow on the second floor of the Northeast building. Judging begins at 9 a.m. Show judge is John Yocum, manager of the Penn State Southeast Extension Research Center in Landisville.

At the show on Tuesday, there were a total of 39 exhibitors and 107 exhibits. Following is a list of Lancaster County Tobacco Show results.

LANCASTER COUNTY TOBACCO SHOW RESULTS

OPEN CLASSES

TYPE 41

PA.-GROWN SEEDLEAF OR BROADLEAF

Class 1 Wrappers: 1. Gary R. Neff. 2. Michael Rohrer. 3. A. Lois Burkholder.

Class 2 Fillers: 1. Collin Bitts. 2. Tony Bitts. 3. Raymond Burkholder.

Class 3 Binders: 1. Eugene Rohrer. 2. Michael Rohrer. 3. Gary R. Neff.

PA. GROWN SMOKING

Class 4 Bottom One-Third: 1. Jessica Neff. 2. Henry Barley. 3. John Burkholder.

Class 5 Middle One-Third: 1. Jessica Neff. 2. Ronald Ulrich. 3. Ryan Michael Mellott.

Class 6 Top One-Third: 1. Jessica Neff. 2. John Burkholder. 3. Ariene Bingham.

YOUTH CLASSES

Class 1Y Wrappers: 1. Andrew Burkholder. 2. Mark Rohrer. 3. Adam Enterline.

Class 2Y Fillers: 1. Clint Frey. 2. Stephen Knight. 3. Audrey Nissley.



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Class 3Y Binder: 1. Garrett Neff. 2. Andrew Burkholder. 3. Mark Rohrer.

Class 4Y Vo Ag Smoking Bottoms: 1. Garrett Neff. 2. Wendy Witmer.

Class 5Y Vo-Ag Smoking Middles: 1. Garrett Neff. 2. Clint Frey. 3. Adam Nissley.

Class 6Y Vo-Ag Smoking Tops: 1. Wendy Witmer. 2. Adam Nissley. 3. Garrett Neff.

GRAND CHAMPION
PA. TYPE 41
Andrew Burkholder

GRAND CHAMPION
SMOKING TYPE
Jessica Neff

Tobacco Growers Wait While Auction Season Stalls Again

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff

PARADISE (Lancaster Co.) — Once again, as millions of dollars worth of tobacco waits in the warehouse, the auction has been put on further standby.

The auction season stalled again on Monday as growers await word on activity by the major processors to give buyers the go-ahead to bid.

It was reported in the local newspapers on Tuesday that since Dec. 8, when the auction season was set to open, no buyers bid at

the auction and no buyers are making offers on the farm.

"We told farmers not to panic," said Eric Probst of Paradise Auction, where 600,000 pounds wait for buyers to bid. "It seems to me that everybody is on hold."

The only tobacco moving are bales under contract for \$1.60 per pound. The contracts were written last winter, and the tobacco is due next week.

Buyers were anticipating bidding to \$1.80 per pound, but some buyers wanted only the top leaves.

One buyer, Geoffrey Ranck with Domestic Tobacco, said his company purchases only the top end for cigars, the binders and wrappers and long filler, using strictly Pa. 41 type. Ranck said he doesn't deal with Maryland 609 — the tobacco waiting for sale at the Paradise warehouse.

But while Ranck said he can't answer about the 609 tobacco at the warehouse, he suspects that the major processors are waiting on world conditions to improve and world demand to dictate what to

do.

According to Clark Stauffer, Ephrata, a buyer for Golden Leaf, demand has been light for the large amounts of lighter-type tobacco waiting at the auction. Demand is up for the darker tips and bottom stalks of the plant.

Golden Leaf, based in Keysville, Va., purchases only contracted product in this region. That tobacco was contracted last December and delivery is scheduled now to the 14th of the month.

As for the 600,000 pounds remaining in the warehouse, Stauffer

fer said it is important that the tobacco is stripped dry and in good condition to prevent spoilage. Tobacco stripped dry and in good condition, as long as the weather remains cool, will hold for some time.

Tobacco stripped wet can start getting "warm" and begin to produce a discernable odor, according to Stauffer. Spoilage can create real problems when it comes time to market it.

A Paradise Auction spokesperson noted that they will try to get the season started on Monday, Jan. 12.

Machinery Has Changed From Small To Big To Small Again In This Man's Farm Show Memory

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
CHALFONT (Bucks Co.) — "Over the years, the machinery got bigger and bigger. Now it's gone the other way."

Only recently did Joseph Nowakowski, who's attended farm shows for 43 years in a row since 1955, comment about the changing look of Pennsylvania agriculture's big event.

Nowakowski said that, when he attended Farm Show as a child, he remembers the equipment being displayed as small, made for the small farmer. In the years since, the exhibition hall has grown with the size of the tractors and implements.

Now the tide has changed, and the focus has "gone the other way," he noted, "back to the small equipment and the small farmer," in many cases the farmer working part time.



The memories of the early days of attending Farm Show are strong in Joe Nowakowski's mind. He remembers, as a vo-ag student and Central Bucks FFA member in high school, that he helped set up the FFA project displays.

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high school, that he helped set up the FFA project displays.

But the Chalfont farmer recalls a great deal of what he loved about the show that's still true today: the livestock shows, the exhibits, and the overall flavor of focusing on Pennsylvania agriculture.

His favorite aspect of Farm Show has always been the machinery. The prices often were too exorbitant. So he'd simply wait for 10 years and purchase the equipment he saw at the Farm Show through auction or private sales, he noted.

Nowakowski grew up on a dairy farm in Chalfont. Now he maintains about 31 acres on the home farm and manages another 200 acres of leased ground. He cares for a herd of beef heifers and grows produce for a farm stand.

Nowakowski was graduated from Central Bucks High School in 1958. He enrolled at Delaware

Valley College and was graduated in 1963 with a degree in dairy husbandry.

Since graduating from Del Val, he has driven school bus every year.

Nowakowski recalls his "worst" Farm Show weather experience.

About 22 years ago, he remembers looking out the window from the Farm Show and it looked "all gray" outside, he said. When they decided to leave, snow started to fall. It took them 4-5 hours to drive the normal 1½ hour distance home to their farm in Chalfont.

Nowakowski is married to JoAnne. They have a daughter, Lynn, who is involved in the dried flower business with a degree in horticulture from Del Val.

One improvement in the Farm Show Complex itself that is satisfactory to Nowakowski is the building's "no smoking" policy, which he said has been helpful. He

appreciates the amount of innovation in the size of the show, the buildings, and the events that have begun in the time since he started attending Farm Show 43 years ago.

Despite a bout with colon cancer a few years ago, in which he spend seven weeks in the hospital in the summer, Nowakowski still recovered in time to attend the Farm Show and keep the streak alive.

One improvement the Farm Show made was to switch the opening Day from Sunday to Saturday, giving families the weekend to enjoy the show. He said he probably will attend the show Saturday.

"I enjoy all the parts of the Farm Show," he said. "I wouldn't want to take anything away from it, and nothing to add to it. I've enjoyed myself better last year at the show than in many of the previous years."