

Heather's Comedy Promotes Dairy Products

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
VENANGO (Crawford Co.) — Heather Riley has endeared herself to hundreds in the role as a gum-snapping, overbearing waitress.

Not exactly the pristine image a dairy princess usually portrays as a spokesperson for the dairy industry.

But, Heather's spoof as a waitress impacts the audience in a way most skits promoting the dairy industry fail.

Audiences erupt with hysterical laughter as Heather finds fault with an imaginary customer's order with such remarks as "Not French fries—it's bad for the gall bladder. . . ." She entices the customer to change his order from a burger to a cheeseburger because "a burger without cheese is a like a kiss without the squeeze."

Heather said, "I like to act and be creative and silly rather than serious."

Despite Heather's ability to seemingly inject humor into any situation, she is no stranger to seriousness. Her bubbly, outgoing personality has burst forth through a lot of pain.

The 17-year-old who seems wise beyond her years frankly talks about "the most devastating event of my life that forced me to become a better person."

Heather was only in fourth grade when her dad left the family. Heather was heartbroken. "I remember crying often and my mom promising me with tears in

her eyes that things will get better."

To a little girl, Heather didn't believe things could ever get better without a dad. To make matters worse, her great-grandmother with whom she was close to died.

"I needed to grow up fast. My mother needed to get a job. I learned to cook and do things around the house," Heather said.

Her mother's nursing home job kept her away during evening hours, and it was really tough adjusting Heather said.

Grandparents often assisted in caring for Heather, and her brother Ron a year older than she, and a younger sister Stephanie.

"My number one problem was missing the love of my dad. I don't get to see him even now—it's his choice—not mine. That was really tough to accept, but now things are 100 percent better—not perfect—but much better," Heather said.

Heather said that before her dad left she was quiet and prone to sit in a corner and pout when things didn't go her way.

For emotional survival, Heather was forced to verbalize her feelings. Now Heather finds it easy to converse with people everywhere. She learned to stop focusing on missing the love of her dad and concentrate on enjoying the love of grandparents, cousins, and friends.

She refers to her mom as "my strength" and says the tough times really drew her closer to her mom and other family members.

"I do want to give thanks public-



Pennsylvania Alternate Dairy Princess Heather Riley signed autographs for her many admirers at Munoz-Marlin Elementary School.

ly to one person—God. He got me through those tough times. He's given me talent, speaking ability . . . I'd never be where I am today if it wasn't for him," Heather said.

In addition to improvements in attitude and personality and knowing that life does indeed get better even when you're convinced it can't, Heather sees other positive results from her dad's abandonment. She's confident she'll be a better parent because of her sensitivity to the hurts and needs of children. She also is able to cheer up many of her friends who are

now suffering from the results of their parents' divorces.

Although Heather doesn't live on a farm, she has been involved in helping on her grandparents' farm who live minutes away. She started showing Holsteins as soon as she was old enough to join 4-H. She was seven years old when she received her first cow, which has

produced a calf every year since then thus multiplying her little herd to eight cows. She keeps them on her grandfather's farm, where they milk 150 Holsteins and raise 70 replacements.

"Showing cows is a big family thing," Heather said. In addition to she and her siblings showing, her

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HOMESTEAD NOTES



Maharaja is a Snow Leopard Bengal Cat. He is only seven generations from the jungle and his Asian Leopard Cat heritage. The Bengal breed is a relatively new breed of domestic cats.

Bengal Cats Spell 'Alternative Agriculture' For Canton Couple

CAROLYN N. MOYER

Bradford Co. Correspondent
CANTON (Bradford County) — With a quiet yawn, Maharaja stretches each paw as he contemplates his surroundings. Nearby, Maharani naps peacefully, perhaps dreaming of her ancestral land — the Asian jungle.

No, these are not wild cats confined to a zoo. They are Bengal cats, a relatively new breed of felines descended from an Asian Leopard Cat, which are being raised by Fred and Beth Metcalf as an alternative agriculture enterprise.

Immediately one might question why the need to raise cats as a form of agriculture. But to the Metcalfs, the answer is clear.

"We were looking for something to diversify with," Fred noted. "The cats we're providing are quality cats. We need to realize that these cats fill a gap that ordinary cats can't fill."

Metcalf, who teaches Vocational Agriculture at Athens Area High School, and his wife also raise Arabian horses, but they wanted to do more with animals.

At first they tried to raise Himalayans, but the breed standards

seemed contrary to the health of the animal. Beth noted that the ideal look of a Himalayan is to have a very flat, almost indented nose. With that feature comes many respiratory problems.

"Bengals were a welcome alternative," said Metcalf.

"When we first heard of the Bengals, we saw an ad in the Williamsport paper. We fell in love with their personality right away and we saw them two or three times before we bought them," Beth said.

When you think of the wild her-

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Beth Metcalf holds Weldon while Fred Metcalf holds Wanda, a brother/sister pair of Brown Spotted Bengals. The Metcalfs began raising Bengal Cats as an alternative agricultural enterprise in 1994.