

## Fourth Generation To Farm Peach-Vale

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BELLEVILLE (Mifflin Co.)** —

"This is how our farm looked 30 years ago," Johnny B. Peachey says while holding an aerial photograph of Peach-Vale Farm, located between Reedsville and Belleville in Mifflin County. Compared to the Dairy of Distinction it is today, the farm in the photograph is missing a second house and a lot of white paint. "I wonder what it'll look like in another 30 years."

Johnny B. might not be able to predict how Peach-Vale will look structurally 20 years from now, but he can be sure of one thing. The conservative approach to business that has served him so well in the past will do the same for his son Robert. Robert started working with his father in 1986 and shares many of his father's views on managing a farm.

"We're slow to jump on any miracle products," Johnny B. explains. "Feed by-products, preservatives, BST — it all costs money and cuts into profits. Our cows are already milking good. We don't want them under more stress."

The Peachey's own 145 tillable acres (plus rent an additional 25 acres) and milk 90 registered Holsteins in a 76-tie stall barn for a 23,319-pound herd average. The farm has come a long way since Johnny B., grandfather (also Johnny B.) rented it in the early 1900s. He rented it for 30 years. His father, John E. Peachey, was born there and rented it from 1932 until he purchased it in 1954.

Johnny B. joined the farming operation in 1968, named it Peach-Vale, and started registering the herd. At that time, the barn housed 40 tie stalls. In 1973, 24 more stalls were added. In 1988, Johnny B. added 12 more stalls and built a manure pit.

Robert now farms in partnership with his father but began as a wage earner after spending one year on the western wheat harvest. He has purchased cows over the

past nine years, examining pedigrees and studying cow families. Last year, he purchased half the herd. Robert lives in the main farmhouse with his wife Lisa and children Chelsie, 8, Zachary, 6, and Taylor, 2.

While Johnny B. foresaw the marketing advantages of registered cows, Robert is the one who is in charge of the herd's breeding program.

"My goal is for a good type herd. It's better now than it was five years ago. We have more older cows in the herd, and we're not culling as many cows as we used to. The udders are holding up better because we're using more type bulls," Robert explains.

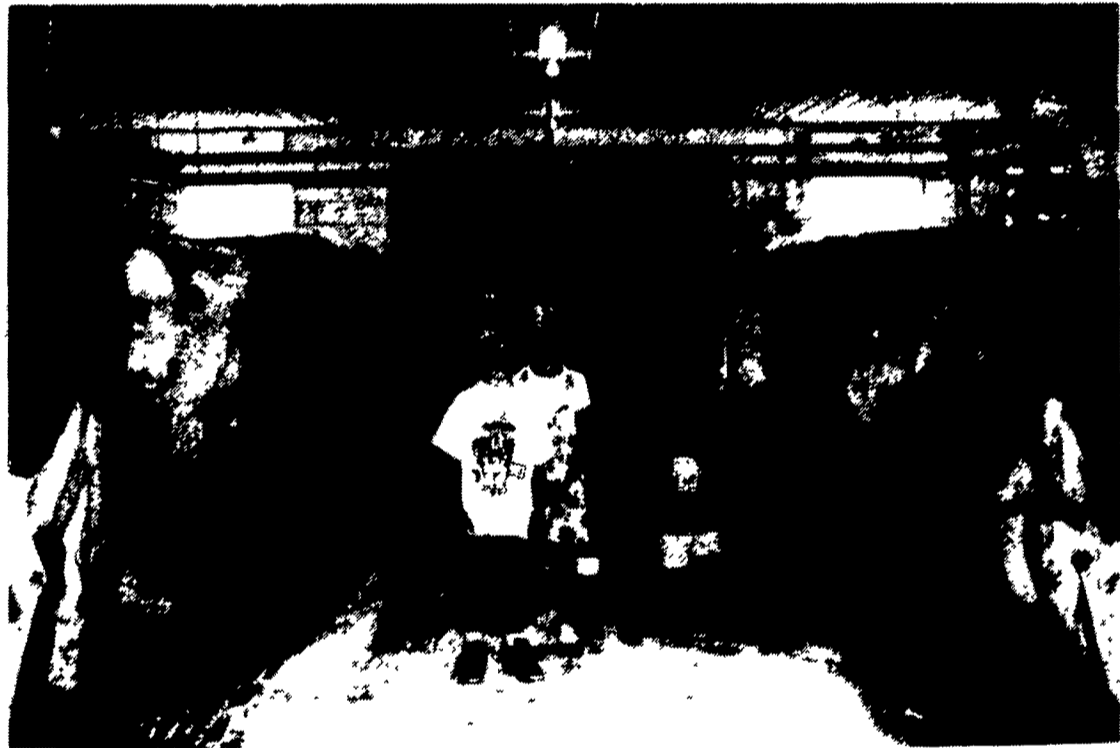
Robert is building the herd around five main bull families. He's seeing a more uniform line of cows with good udders, feet, and legs. Neither Johnny B. nor Robert have any desire to expand the herd, but Robert says he wouldn't mind merchandising a couple of cows each year and sees some extra profit in selling fresh or bred heifers. "I'd like to flush a couple of deep-pedigreed cows and get a couple of excellent cows in the barns," Robert reflects.

Robert manages Peach-Vale's feeding program too. Because of the tie stalls, the Peachey's can feed each cow individually. The cows in the 70-pound group get one-half corn silage and one-half haylage, two to three pounds of baled hay the first thing in the morning, 18 pounds of high moisture corn, and seven pounds of 36 percent protein. Anything above 80 pounds gets 20 percent top dress. The Peachey's used to feed one-third corn silage and two-thirds haylage, but have changed their ration for a number of reasons — better herd health, less hay acres, and the availability of more corn silage and high moisture corn storage over haylage storage.

While Robert oversees the feeding and breeding programs, Johnny B. manages the crops — 95 acres of corn and 70 acres of an alfalfa and orchard grass mix.



Taylor, Zach, and Chelsie Peachey (on the four-wheeler) are the fifth generation at Peach-Vale Farm near Belleville. Johnny B. (left) and son Robert are in partnership. Robert's wife, Lisa, helps feed calves and keeps the farm records. The family dog managed to get in the picture too.



Managing 90 registered Holsteins in a 76-tie stall barn enables Johnny B. and Robert to feed and care for the animals individually. Johnny B. and Robert are joined by Zach, Chelsie, and Taylor.

Johnny B. believes good forages are the key to profit.

Lisa feeds the calves each morning, keeps the books, and milks occasionally, and except for Johnny B.'s niece, they hire no extra help. While no major changes are planned for the operation, Robert would like to install a stationary mixer, a bunk feeder, and tunnel ventilation in the barn to reduce the noise.

"We're both picky," says Robert. "We work well together. If you hire someone, you get into Social Security and workman's comp. And you need someone who already knows how to milk. Sometimes it's easier to do it yourself. Maybe we'll get some part-time help this summer."

As it is, each gets one Sunday evening off a month. But Johnny B. still sees the everyday advantage to farming and running your own business.

"There is less physical work than years ago. But there is just as much stress if not more. You're dealing with a bigger operation and you have to stay on top of

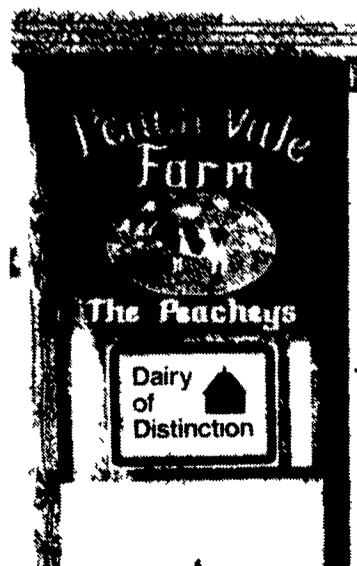
things. You have to have good nerves. I like managing my own business rather than managing help. This way, I always have a job; I'm never laid off; I'm my

own boss; and I'm not working the hours someone else is telling me I have to work. Whatever work we do, we reap the benefits.

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Gail Strock, a Lancaster Farming correspondent for the past 8½ years, enjoys highlighting the people and events in Mifflin, Huntingdon, Centre and Juniata counties. She writes advertising for the "County Observer" and writes features and brochures for the Big Valley Area Business Association. She just completed a 400-level Copyediting course at Penn State.

Gail graduated from Penn State with a degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. Gail, her husband, Dennis, and children Evan, 14, and Aaron, 10, live on their 27-acre farm near Belleville.



Peach-Vale Farm, a Dairy of Distinction, is located in the heart of Big Valley, midway between Reedsville and Belleville, Mifflin County.



Johnny B. Peachey holds a framed notice of his grandfather's public sale dated 1932.