

Berks County Dairy Adds New Level To Milking System

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 dairy barn," John said.
 That farm had 83 acres, was a single family operation with a 32-stanchion bank barn.
 In 1967 he built a 110-stall freestall barn and a single-six side opening Surge milking parlor.

John said there is a coincidence between the dates when his father started milking in the then-advanced dairy setup and the start-up date of the family's newest setup.
 "We started the new parlor within five days of 30 years when dad

starting milking parlor. I think he started on Dec. 10, and we started Dec. 15.
 "In 1967, it was the oddball (dairy farm). More or less, this one is now," he said.
 The decision to build a new barn and parlor actually began about 10 years ago, John said.

"It really goes back to 1987. We remodeled the milking parlor down on the home farm, that single-row six (parlor) we made into a double-4 side opening in 1987, and the plan was to use it until we built a new facility.

He said the double-4 was equipped with automatic takeoffs and was designed for one person in the parlor. The plan was to use it for five years and build a new parlor.

"Then in the early 1990s, we started taking tours of different milking places, mostly in New York, and that was our first eye-opening experience to see what was being built in the 1990s.

"We came home realizing we didn't want to build a new parlor where we were at," Johns said. "You don't realize how bad or

good it is at home until you go somewhere else."

He said that started them to really take in tours of other facilities, and going to open houses to see what people were building and how they were being built.

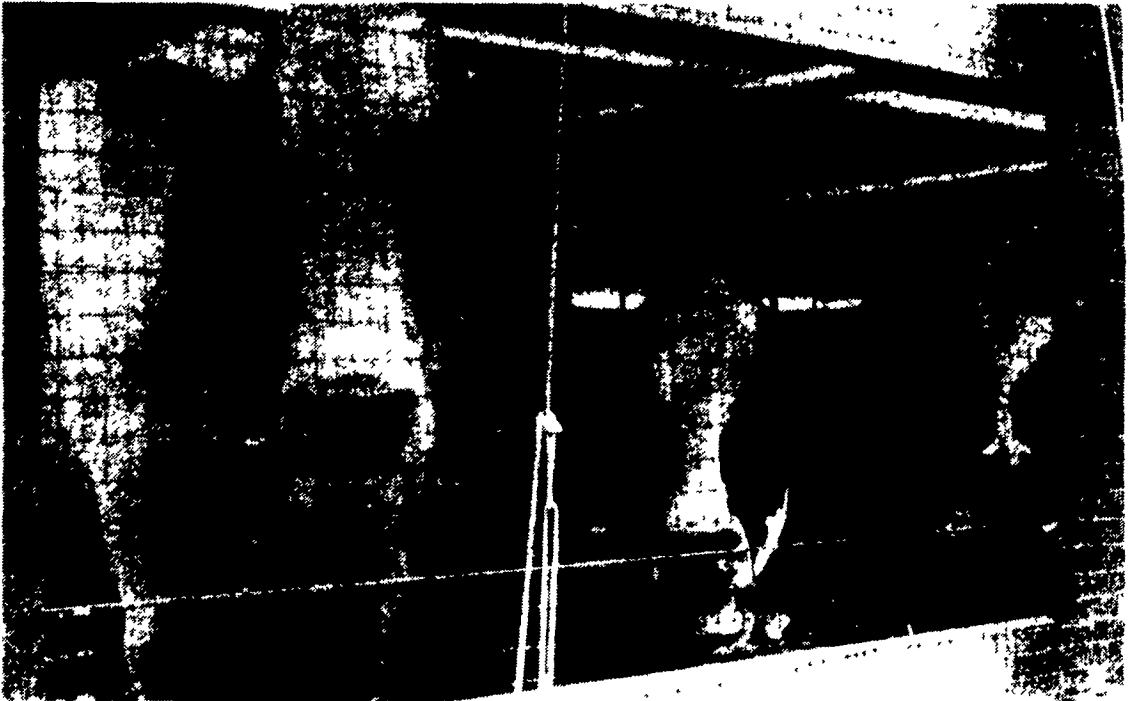
The existing facility is its own creation, an amalgam from meshing the envisionsments of John and equipment and builder representatives.

"I always tell people, between what the equipment dealer and I envisioned, this is not the same

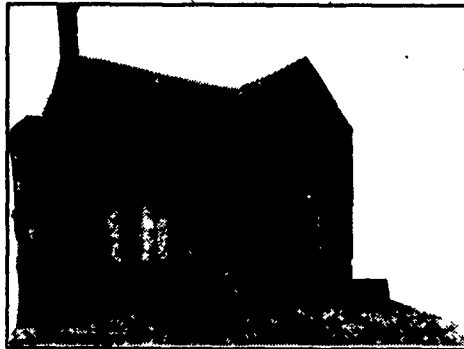
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This is the milking floor of the parlor with the claws and automatic takeoffs. The floor is actually suspended on six air bags, each with a 10,000 pound capacity. The vinyl covering is over a metal frame to which railroad rails were added to increase floor weight for better stability on the air bags. The floor is adjustable to accommodate the height and reach of the milker. From its lowest position, it can move up about 11 inches.



The outside facing stalls allow especially good ventilation for cows lying down chewing cud and making milk. Studies have shown that cows make more milk lying down than standing up. Between the cows and outside is a wide board and high tensile fencing. Plastic bird mesh is kept on the outside of the framework, but underneath the curtain. The dividers allow plenty of head room for cows to get up easily. The cow mattresses are covered with dried saw dust.



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