

# Wilkom To Berks County: State Young Farmer Conference

BERNVILLE (Berks Co.) – Wilkom to Berks County was the greeting proclaimed to all those who attended the 1998 State Young Farmer Tour and Banquet. Hosted by the Tulpehocken Adult Young Farmer Chapter, New Schaefferstown Road, Bernville.

State officers kicked off the conference with an executive committee meeting called to order by President David Groff.

A luncheon, at the Tulpehocken Jr. Sr High school, featuring rib-eye steak sandwiches, preceded the Thursday afternoon educational tours.

Participants had the opportunity to select from two tour options on day one of the event. Tour A featured agribusinesses including Ridgidply Rafters, Inc., Farmer Boy Ag Systems and Dutch Valley Food Distributors. A family run business, Ridgidply Rafters, Inc., which began over 40 years ago, with the fabrication of flue-laminated rafters in the basement of the family home. Today, the company employs more than 110 people and operates a 175,000 square foot manufacturing facilities located on 46 acres of land. The facility includes a glulam-plant specializing in the production of beams, posts, arches and heavy timber trusses. Wood roof and floor trusses are produced in an additional plant. Ridgidply Rafters also sells steel, roofing, siding, and other construction products. They have their own fleet of trucks with cranes for truss setting and unloading materials.

Farmer Boy Ag Systems, Inc. a swine and poultry facility construction company currently builds swine and poultry facilities. Founded by Leon G. Hoover in 1979, to provide swine equipment to local producers and later "turn-key" type systems. As this time, Dale Martin, Dean Weaver and Leonard Martin own the marketing rights to this Eastern region. The company is currently building swine and poultry facilities in Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, at a rate of 200 buildings per year.

Dutch Valley Food Distributing delivers to 24 states with its own trucks providing quality bulk merchandise with top quality service

Servicing large and small businesses, bakeries, supermarkets, churches and co-ops. Their mission and philosophy statement is as follows: The mission of Dutch Valley is to glorify God by serving Him and carrying out His plan. By pursuing the highest standard and respect of life, integrity, and morality. By providing a place of employment and personal growth for each of our employees. By building a strong corporate organization that will provide consistent leadership, development, and growth. We, the Dutch Valley Management, believe that success of any organization depends on how it serves human needs through the combined efforts of people. Our company must provide its customers with quality products and services on a consistent basis.

Tour B featured the diversity of production agriculture with a view of Mor-Farms, DA-JAC Lumber Inc and Johnson Farms.

Ralph and Crystal Moyer own and operate, More-Dale Farms. One full-time employee, Richard Hershey, helps with all aspects of the operation.

Their 105 Registered Holsteins average over 24,000 pounds of milk, marketed through Land 'O Lakes. They are housed in free stalls and milked in a double six herring-bone parlor equipped with Germania detachers. Replacement heifers are started in an environmentally controlled calf barn, then moved to group bedded pack pens before reaching the slatted floor mono slope heifer barn at 4 months of age, where they are raised till being moved to the dry cow facility 6 weeks pre-freshening. A recent renovation, the removal to the siding off the northwest side of the dry cow facilities and its replacement with chicken wire and curtains to provide for more adequate ventilation was pointed out by Ralph.

300 acres is cropped, 128 is owned with the remaining rented from Ralph's parents. Alfalfa, corn and soybeans are grown. Substantial time was spent reviewing the feeding and storage facilities which are under roof.

DA-JAC Lumber Inc. was started in 1955. Today it produces lumber for the furniture



Arthur and Elaine Johnson demonstrate how to ball a Christmas tree for trucking.



Tom Andreas, a lumber grader, discusses the grading and pricing of timber.



At Mor-Dale Farms the young farmers visit the heifer housing facilities.



David Younker, center, explains how strips of wood are used in paint brushes.

market, railroad ties, and ballet cants. Tom Andreas, a lumber grader demonstrated and spoke to the group about lumber value.

Johnson Farms owned and operated by Arthur and Elaine Johnson, grows Christmas trees including Douglas Fir, Concolor Fir, Balsian Fir, White Pine, Colorado Blue Spruce, Canaan Fir, and a limited number of Norway Spruce. The first trees were planted about ten years ago on 65 acres. Trees are wholesaled and retailed. They are cut and balled as was demonstrated.

A wreath business is conducted in November and December. Wreath are made in Maine with some being made locally. The tour hosts demonstrated the construction of a double and single sided wreath for those observing.

In spring, bedding plants, geraniums, and perennials are raised and sold through the greenhouse.

During the summer, vegetables and flower bunches are marketed on a self-serve basis. Pumpkins and mums are sold in

the fall.

The Lantern Lodge, Myerstown, provided the setting for a social hour and banquet. Lebanon and Berks County's Dairy Princess' Heidi Finicle and Alicia Gross served milk punch as guests enjoyed cheese, bologna and fresh fruit.

Donald Daub, President of the Tulpehocken organization, served as M.C. for the banquet which included commodities of Filet Mignon and Loin of Pork. Scavenger Hunt teams turned in