

# Life With The Hoovers

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how to process information.

Not only do the Hoovers attend numerous agriculture-related seminars, they also send full and part-time employees.

Their reasons for investing in seminars for their hired help is two-fold. Hoover said, "We want a life for our family. We also want a life for our help's families."

Another reason is the awareness that farmers need to compete for the labor market.

As farm employers, he believes it is necessary to offer comparable benefits as that of non-farming occupations.

"We have excellent help and we want to keep them," he said.

While the farm is run like a business, the Hoovers strive to keep farm and farming in perspective.

"We don't want to be workaholics but enjoy life as we go along," said Hoover.

Top priority for the couple is to build family relationships. Music, relaxing in the family swimming pool, vacationing, and participating in church, farming, and community activities are part of the family togetherness.

Church activities are a prime commitment for family members. Hoover is chairman of the administrative board at the Limeville United Methodist Church. Carole is director of the church preschool program, and participates in choir and a Bible study group.

The couple serve as leaders of the Pequea Valley 4-H Dairy Club. Carole also is a 4-H leader for the beginner's sewing leader and is secretary of the county dairy princess promotion committee.

"I like to be involved with things where my children are active," Carole said. At her children's schools, Carole is a room parent, a soccer mom, and helps with the music booster's band and chorus. She cares for the large house and a big yard.

Daughter Jill is a dairy ambassador and both she and her sister Brenda are former dairy darlings for county dairy promotion.

Jill is a 10th grade FFA student at Pequea Valley High school, where she is a member of marching band, chorus, and the soccer team. She is president of both the 4-H dairy and community clubs. She also takes piano lessons and plays the bells, bassoon, and clarinet. At church she helps with kids programs and is a member of the church youth group.

Brenda is in sixth grade at Con-

estoga Christian Day School. She also plays soccer, piano, and flute and is active in 4-H dairy and community clubs.

Leslie is in second grade at Salisbury Elementary School. She likes living on a farm, playing with kittens, swinging on a rope from the barn rafters and jumping in cottonseed when stored in the barn.

"I still find time to visit my family in State College," Carole said of overnight trips in which she usually takes one or all of the children along.

Hoover finds time to accompany his wife to State College during football season. He said, "I married into a family that has 'blue and white blood.'" As a dairy production graduate of Penn State, Hoover enjoys having season football tickets and tailgating with his wife's family at the game. The Hoovers spend overnight visits during the season.

Although it is difficult to manage time off from demanding farm schedules, the Hoovers believe the gain is well worth it.

They have one full-time employee and two part-time high school students. The children help with farm chores every other weekend. Although he was raised the old-fashioned way of seldom taking off from farm chores, Hoover now makes it a priority to take every other weekend off and to take annual vacations.

This past year, they combined the family vacation with the Land O' Lakes board meeting in Minnesota.

This summer Gordon and daughter Jill participated in Appalachian Service Project. The Hoovers traveled with seven team members from their church to join about 60 other volunteers in a Kentucky.

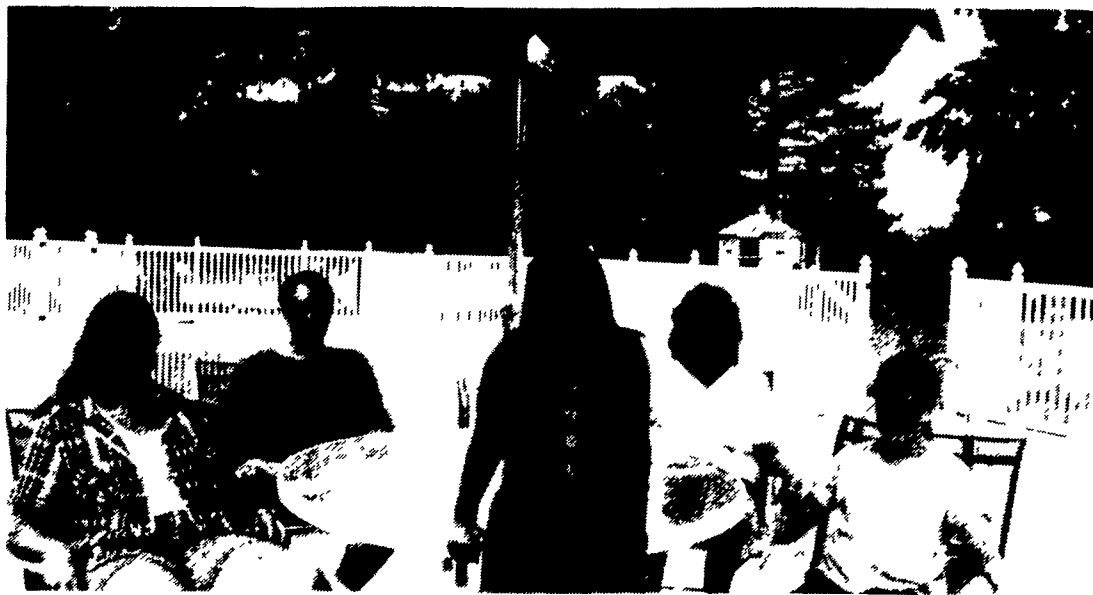
"We stayed at a school, where we had two showers for 60 people," Jill said.

The volunteers repaired mobile homes for low-income families. They replaced skirting, patching roofs, replaced windows and floors, and other upgrading jobs.

Although Jill did not have previous carpentry experience, she said, "I have a pretty good hit with a hammer."

"I got to see how other people lived. Some homes looked great but right next to it would be a pathetic dump where a family lived. It helps me appreciate what I have."

The father and daughter team said that at first they were tempted



Instead of taking a family vacation one year, the Hoovers put in a swimming pool, which has proved to be a sound investment for promoting family togetherness in between farm chores.

to be critical of the way many of the Appalachian population spent their money.

"They would have a falling down house with no indoor plumbing, yet have a satellite dish and a big screen T.V.," Jill said.

A person who grew up in this environment explained that this happens because of the easy availability of the buy now, pay later policy. Residents can't get a loan to install indoor plumbing, but it's easy to purchase a television and satellite dish on credit.

"They have the same desires as we do, but it's more difficult to attain them," Hoover said. "They buy what's easiest to obtain."

Hoover is a former president of the Lancaster County Farm Bureau. He serves on the legislative committee for Sen. Noah Wenger. When he was elected to the board of directors for Atlantic Dairy Cooperative, Hoover slowed down his involvement with the Farm Bureau. With the recent merger, Hoover's involvement with ADC was transferred to the board of Land O' Lakes, where he is now secretary of the board.

Although firm believers in the advantages of volunteering for farm organizations, the Hoovers know it is a huge challenge to find the time for farm, community, and church involvement.

"People are more independent. It's hard to get people involved in volunteering time, but it's important to remember that many of these farm organizations have brought us a long way. Many are not aware what those organizations did for us (farmers). Some want to reinvent the wheel instead of promoting a spirit of cooperation, and by doing so gives farmers more negative competition."

Hoover thinks it's important to understand the reason behind laws and why policies need to be modified. He pointed out that the government got involved in agriculture pricing in order to guarantee adequate food at an affordable price for everyone.

"Many of the same farmers who were screaming 'get the government out now,' are the same ones who are now screaming to get the government back into it to protect market prices," he said.

Hoover believes agriculture must go through a culling process in order for law of supply and demand to stabilize prices.

The Hoovers are grateful that in the early 1980s they were selected as former participants in ADC's Young Couples Program and in the National Milk Producer's Young Couples Program.

"We were exposed to other farming techniques and young couples facing the same challenges we are," Carole said.

For 15 years, they have been part of an advisory council, which is made up of couples about the same age who get together and discuss issues and send it recommendations for legislation. The council started with six couples. Today only two couples are active in farming.

The Hoovers admit that the lifestyle of having a freer schedule is appealing and generates a lot of peer pressure when attempting to socialize with those from non-farming occupations. Socializing with the non-farming community forces the Hoovers to be more eight to five o'clock, a goal that the

Hoovers see as beneficial to their quality of life.

At the same time, Hoover doesn't think that being the only farm couple at church and many community functions is isolating.

"What career outside of agriculture is one we can't relate to?" he asks then answers his own question. "We certainly relate to those with their own businesses. We relate to those who work with computers, to the bench chemist, to the financial manager, to the mechanic. . . ."

"It's always been my dream to farm and to own the farm," Hoover said. At the same time, he believes it is important to encourage children who want to take over the family farm to get away from it and look at the farm from a different perspective.

As a college student and as a member of the National Dairy Science Club, Hoover received a different perspective on farming that he believes has made him a better manager and farmer than he would have been without those experiences.

Although he's lived on the farm all his life, the thrill of the history surrounding the farm still brings a sense of intrigue to Hoover. Within eyesight of the place is the oldest mill in the U.S. The mill, which still has its original stone walls, is said to have been commandeered during the Civil and Spanish Wars to make gun powder and undercarriages for cannons. Also nearby is a farm used as a boys's school, which was later moved to N.J., and is said to be the beginnings of Princeton University.

## Teachers Taught Ag Awareness

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Awareness Foundation of Pennsylvania. The theme of this year's workshop was "Travel the Harvest Highway" and its main goal was to help teachers educate America's youth about agriculture.

The teachers came from urban, suburban, and rural backgrounds. Many of the teachers came from urban areas to gain hands-on experience about Pennsylvania's number one industry. Everyone had an enjoyable introduction to the week by hearing John Rodger's speech about the "Thresholds of New Frontiers." The group then journeyed to the Penn State Ag Arena to meet farm animals up close. The 4-H youth of Mifflin County proudly showed and explained the animal's attributes.

During the remainder of the

week, teachers attend classes covering many ag-related topics. They learned how agriculture is the keystone to civilization and how to find ag topics using the internet.

Workshops covered a variety of topics like "Seed Sense," "Hydroponics," and "Barnyard Basics."

The participants had a wonderful opportunity to take field trips to a family-operated dairy farm, a fruit farm that uses integrated pest management, the Mushroom House, and the Penn State Dairy Research Center.

The evenings were spent enjoying a pig roast, a pizza party, a banquet, making tin can ice cream, and visiting the Pasto Farm Museum. Each teacher received many ideas and materials to take back to their classrooms to use with their students.



Building family relationships is a top priority for Gordon and Carole Hoover with daughters, Jill, 15; Brenda, 11; and Leslie, 7. "We don't want to be workaholics but enjoy life as it goes along," Hoover said.