

Haenlein - Retires From Faculty, Not From Teaching

NEWARK, Del. — When Dr. George Haenlein, professor of animal science and extension dairy specialist, immigrated to America from Germany in 1953, he never dreamed he would work at the University of Delaware (UD), let alone stay for 42 years.

The only thing he knew for sure is that he wanted to marry Lizzy, a farmer's daughter whom he'd met when he was a scholarship student from the University of Stuttgart-Hohenheim in 1951 and 1952.

He hoped to lead an ordinary life with Lizzy, raising a family and working on a farm. An ordinary life, however, is not all what Haenlein has led, not from the very beginning, in Germany, during the war.

A tall man who towers above any crowd, Haenlein wears a red alpine sweater, looking as though he has just skied down a mountain somewhere. With a trace of his homeland still lingering in his speech, he tells of his youth on a highly diversified small farm.

"Our extended family had 15 acres when we raised many

kinds of animals and crops so we had something to eat and sell 12 months of the year," he said. "The war years were filled with hardship and rationing, but the one thing that was not rationed was the goats," recalled Haenlein, his strong voice serious. Suddenly, his eyes sparkle and his face crinkles into a wide grin.

"I took care of the goats," he said.

"Goats are wonderful animals," said Haenlein. "They saved our lives."

It was Haenlein's childhood passion for goats that led to his doctoral degree in animal nutrition at Hohenheim, and ultimately to his career in dairy science at UD. And, a quarter of a century later, it was his doctoral research on goat nutrition that launched him into an international leadership role on the importance of goats.

Between 1953 and 1957 Haenlein worked as a herdsman and assistant manager at a local dairy farm. UD College of Agriculture Dean George Worrilow, who often dropped in to visit farmers throughout the

state, recognized Haenlein from his graduate work at UD.

"This one day he found me under a cow and encouraged me to apply for a position open at the college."

Haenlein got the job. Appointed to do research full time, he conducted research and helped with the cows by day, and analyzed data by night. A few weeks after his arrival, the supervisor of the UD dairy herd retired.

"Let George do it," Worrilow said, warning Haenlein that the herd would be sold if Haenlein didn't improve their production.

"Okay," said Haenlein. "I'll do it!" a phrase that would echo throughout his career.

Haenlein assumed responsibility for about 80 cows, soon transforming them into an award-winning herd, a model in the region and across the state.

"My girls — They are my pride and joy," said Haenlein affectionately, noting that the herd he inherited in 1957 produced 8,000 pounds of milk per cow, per year, while the current herd of 100 produce close to 22,000 pounds per cow per year.

Almost at the same time Haenlein took over the herd, the extension specialist for dairy science died, and Worrilow again turned to Haenlein.

"Okay," said Haenlein "I'll do it!" although his position presented special challenges because of the writing expectations.

"When I came to America in 1951, I had a German-English dictionary in one pocket and an English-German dictionary in the other," said Haenlein, his laughter filling the room. "But Jack Murray, the college editor, told me not to worry: 'George you write, and I'll correct it.' And so I banged away at it."

He's been banging away every since, churning out more than 575 popular articles and monthly research-extension publications on current issues in dairying, in addition to almost 200 scientific papers published in technical journals of one sort or another. His column on dairy management, "Cow Tales," which is distributed widely throughout the industry, has its roots in his first months at the university.

Haenlein's pace picked up in 1978 when people "suddenly" became interested in goats. Because of his background, Haenlein was asked to organize symposiums and to write a book on goat management "Extension Goat Handbook," a thick book on 75 different dairy goat topics, was published in 1981. Distributed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the book became the bible for goat management "Nutrient Requirements For Goats" which he wrote the following year for the National Research Council (NRC),

became the standard for goat nutrition. Haenlein still travels the world for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), helping Third World countries develop dairy industries.

"I love my goats, but I love my cows too. The goat industry was about 50 years behind the cows, though," said Haenlein. "The goat people needed my help, so I helped them."

Haenlein, a natural storyteller, weaves tales of everything from bulls to blizzards to rams "with horns so big they wouldn't fit in the stalls," providing some glimpse as to his effectiveness and popularity as a classroom teacher. And many of the stories are punctuated with "and Lizzy helped," because usually she was at his side helping with everything from the statistical analyses of his scientific data to record keeping to taking care of the university herd when Haenlein was out of town.

Summing it up, Haenlein, who officially retired in the summer of 1999, says he's loved teaching and working at UD.

"It was 42 years of work that was no work at all," he said "It was a joy "Now I want to spend more time with my family, especially my 14 grandchildren."

He looks pleased at the thought, then remembers: "Of course I am continuing to write my 'Cow Tales' column Oh, and the USAID wants me to go to Jordan next week, and the USDA wants me to help update "Extension Goat Handbook," and the NRC asked me to help update the "Nutrient Requirements For Goats," and a publisher in England invited me to be on the editorial board for a new dairy encyclopedia

"Okay, I told them," He is exuberant "I'll do it!"

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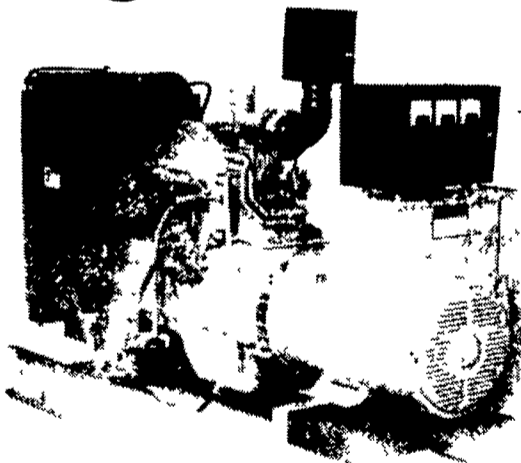
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