

Open Communications Key To Passing Down Farm

(Continued from Page A1)

tunity to farm that they could. "You have to think back to when you were young and consider how you felt then," said Jim.

"A lot of parents aren't willing to let go of the farm," said Billy. "But if you want your children to continue farming, you have to give them the responsibility and the chance to make it."

The Hills purchased Little Hill farm in 1987 when they sold the existing dairy farm in New Jersey where Jim farmed with his father. The name "Little Hill" comes from the combination of Jim's father's last name and his mother's maiden name, which was Little.

"We knew the year we lost three of the six farms we were renting that it was time to give into land development pressures and move elsewhere," said Jim. "Now we get a queasy feeling when we go over the Delaware river. It seems like we were displaced for the first part of our life -- we belong in Pennsylvania."

Currently Kevin, Terry, and Rich are milking 65 Holsteins and Brown Swiss on the 114-acre farm. The Holstein herd average is 28,700 pounds of milk, while the Brown Swiss average 24,500 pounds of milk.

Rich handles the fieldwork and feeding, while Kevin handles the breeding and herd health work. Terry keeps track of the books and handles the marketing for the herd. They take turns milking. Kevin takes the morning milking, while Terry milks the afternoon shift and Rich milks in the evening.

"People always say the reason we get along so well is because we each specialize in different areas," said Terry. "If we were all trying to do the same thing, it wouldn't work."

Jim still helps out on the farm when he can, but he likes not being tied down to the farm. "You can sell the farm," said Jim. "But you can't take the farm away from the farmer."

The children enjoy having their father around to help on the farm, and he has given full decision-making responsibilities to his kids. "A nice thing about Dad is that he works on the

farm, but he doesn't need paid," said Rich.

Instead of turning the entire farm over to the children all at once, the Hills took it in stages. "We purchased the 35-acre farm where we live now in 1991 for manure management, but we jokingly said it would be our retirement home," said Jim. "That came quicker than we thought."

When the Hills purchased a local country store in 1995, they found that they couldn't keep up with both farming and running the store. "The store seemed like it demanded more hours than farming did," said Billy.

So they sold the Little Hill herd to their children, and Kevin and Terry moved into the farm house with Rich. "We do have one door that separates us from Rich's living area," said Terry. "But we share the kitchen."

Jim and Billy ran the country store for two years and then moved onto the 35-acre farm in Berks County where they now live. The children rent those 35 acres from their parents, along with another 35 acres from Kevin's parents in Jonestown.

Although Rich, Kevin, and Terry own the home property and the cows, they still lease the equipment from Jim and Billy.

"The regulations that the government places on passing down things from one generation to the next are a lot more rigid than you would expect," said Billy. "You really have to check into it when you're going through the process."

"One year we purchased a tractor from Jim and Billy, but then we found out that we couldn't claim it as a full deduction because it was an in-family transfer even though we paid for it," said Kevin.

While most people hold off on passing down the farm because they're reluctant to pay taxes, it was actually one reason that Jim and Billy decided to sell the farm to their children earlier than they had planned. Because they didn't have any debt and couldn't claim rent or anything from the farm, Kevin, Terry, and Rich were paying in a lot for taxes.

"Our lawyer always told us that our children were lucky

that we so willingly passed down the farm, and that we were lucky because they wanted to take it over," said Jim. "But we didn't want to wait until they were too old to want to take on the debt."

"It was nice that we were able to do it in steps," said Terry. "I wouldn't have wanted to purchase everything at the same time."

"We decided early on we weren't going to keep any secrets from our children," said Billy. "We wanted them to know what was available here, and we had to trust each other and keep open communications."

Even though the Hills no longer live on the home farm, they still come to visit often. Kevin and Terry's children, Kyle and Allison, enjoy playing with Grandpa and Grandma on the farm.

Along with helping out on the farm, Jim has worked as a seed salesperson for Hoffman Seeds for the last 31 years. Billy works part-time coordinating activities at Manor Care Retirement.

While working full-time on the farm, Kevin still finds time to work four hours a day for his father as a carpenter and electrician. Rich does custom work with his round baler for area farmers.

"We all do part-time work whenever we can get it," said Rich.

The Hills and Shueys are also active in various community groups, including the Young Farmers, Farm Women, Jonestown United Methodist Church, dairy promotion committee, and the church volleyball league.

"If you don't give your children a chance to grow into farm-



Rich Hill never left the farm and now enjoys working side by side with his sister and brother-in-law. Rich is responsible for the feeding and field work on the farm, while all three handle the milkings.

ing, they're not going to want to take it over when they're older," said Jim.

"Besides," Billy said, "the

Amish have a neat way of saying it -- you never retire, you just slow down a little."

Gelbvieh Junior Classic Set For Missouri

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — This will be the site for the premier American Gelbvieh Junior Association (AGJA) event of the year — the AGJA Hillbilly Classic.

This national event draws AGJA members and their families from across the nation. Last year's event in Nebraska attracted nearly 150 junior members. The Hillbilly Classic will be at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds in Springfield on July 11-15.

A new feature to this year's Judging Contest at the AGJA Hillbilly Classic is the chance for non-AGJA members to compete for cash prizes and Gelbvieh heifers. The Judging Contest is set for Wednesday, July 12, at 10 a.m. The Judging Contest is open to all teams from 4-H, FFA, collegiate, and AGJA.

Each team is comprised of four members and each member's score counts. The team will judge six classes consisting of breeding females, bulls, and market steers. Performance data may be provided to assist contestants in placing some of the classes.

Oral reasons will be given on two classes by individuals in the intermediate (12 to 15 years of age) and senior (16 to 21 years of age) divisions. All juniors (8 to 11 years of age) will give oral reasons on one class.

For the first time donated Gelbvieh heifers will be awarded to the high individual in each AGJA division and 4-H, FFA, and collegiate divisions. Teams and individuals will also be competing for cash awards.

The Hillbilly Classic will also feature an advertising contest, poster contest, photo contest, team fitting, Gelbvieh Quiz Bowl, impromptu speaking, and a showmanship contest. During the week, AGJA members will compete for the junior and senior ambassador titles, as well as campaign for the AGJA board of directors.

The cattle show is set for Saturday, July 15. It begins at 8 a.m. with the Gelbvieh Steer Show, followed by the breeding female and bred and owned female show. It concludes with the bred and owned bull show. The week is topped off by the AGJA awards banquet at the Holiday Inn North I-44 beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday.

Fair Brochure Available

GRATZ (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs (PSACF) has announced that a listing of all the agricultural fairs within the state is available in a colorful brochure. Information available includes fair name, location, contact phone number, and the dates of the 2000 event. For easier reference, the state is divided into four regions.

County fairs, the showplace of Pennsylvania agriculture, attract approximately seven million visitors during the April through October season. Nearly every county in Pennsylvania has at least one agricultural fair and many have more than one. A total of 114 events are held yearly.

"To participate in the Hillbilly Classic (with exception of the judging contest), youth must be between the ages of 8 and 21, as of January 1, 2000, and a member of the American Gelbvieh Junior Association. Contact the AGA office for a complete registration and rules packet at (303) 465-2333 or e-mail your request to bobw@gelbvieh.org.

The American Gelbvieh Junior Association serves 1,100 members ages 5 to 21 with a comprehensive youth education and leadership development program. For more information on the AGA or the AGJA, call (303) 465-2333 or visit the Gelbvieh website at www.gelbvieh.org.

Agribusiness and agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry. Farming and related agribusiness employ more than one million Pennsylvanians each year, and contribute more than \$30 billion in economic activity to Pennsylvania. The agriculture fairs are the showplaces of this monumental industry.

If you want a free copy of this brochure entitled "Have We Got A Fair For You," visit your local chamber of commerce, tourist promotion agency, AAA, legislative district office, PennDOT "Welcome Center," other locations providing the material, or write to PSACF, P.O. Box 546, Gratz, PA 7030-0546 (provide a self-addressed stamped envelope with your request).



Kevin and Terry are grateful to be able to work together on the farm with their children. While Kevin handles the breeding and herd health work, Terry handles bookkeeping and marketing for their registered Holstein and Brown Swiss herd.