

Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

Milk Bottles On Display At National Milk Bottle Collectors Convention

CHARLENE SHUPP
Special Correspondent

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.)

— The halls of the Holiday Inn at Grantville, Dauphin County were full of activity as members of the National Association of Milk Bottle Collectors strolled from room to room to see milk bottle and dairy paraphernalia on display.

Each room display reflected extensive time and planning, however, the work did not matter to these members who show a devotion for their hobby and enjoy sharing their knowledge.

Attendees of this convention traveled from across the United States and from as far away as Germany to gather for their annual meeting and share in their joy of collecting.

The convention kicked off on Thursday, June 5 as collectors set up displays in their rooms offering a wide variety of bottles for sale. However, this was also a time to visit with other collectors, perusing the numerous collectibles available and gain insight about bottles in their collections.

Each room's display was distinctive of each collector's loves and unique finds. One such find was the cow button collection on display by John and Sonja Force of Flemington, N.J.

John, who is known to button



Known as the "Purple Cow," Ralph Rivo greets people with a large Holstein Cow outside his room. Rivo has received national recognition in milk bottle collecting as having one of the largest collections in the United States.

collectors as "the cow man," recently won a first place at the New Jersey Historical Society for his cow button display.

"I was so proud of myself. I designed this display and the positions the buttons were in," said John. "And I was so happy that I got it (the award)."

Although John and Sonja enjoy adding to their cow button collection, the Forces' primary passion is for the quality of the milk bottles of yesterday.

"The new bottles are not as detailed as the older ones and the quality of the glass is not the same," said Sonja noting that older glass bottles have the look of almost crystal and pointing out the pride in workmanship of the older bottles.

For Charles and Judy Iager of Fulton, Md., the convention provides a nice break from the running of their registered Holstein farm.

"I enjoy coming to milk bottle convention — it's a vacation away from the farm," said Charles.

The Iagers' enjoyment of dairy farming is evident with their collection of Maryland dairy milk bottles. To date they have collected 700 bottles from the estimated 900 dairy bottlers known in the state.

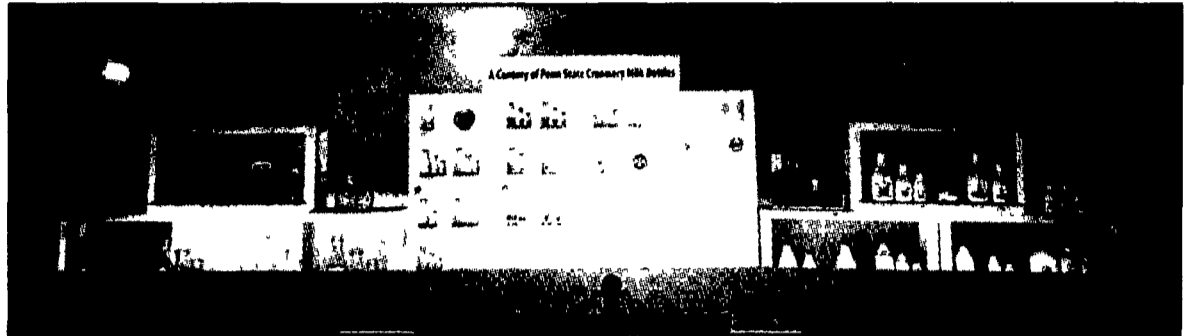
Besides having their display to sell bottles at the convention, the Iagers participated in the "three milk bottle display" this year.

The three milk bottle display is open to any collector to exhibit three favorite bottles in their collections. This year, the Iagers submitted three bottles that were printed in red and blue encouraging Americans to buy war bonds for World War II.

"I thought it was appropriate, with everything we had going on this year with our troops," said Charles.

Many collectors at the convention have a specialty area that they enjoy to collect. For Larry Ibach of Lancaster, Lancaster County, it is a love of the local dairy industry that drives his collection and his mission to find bottles of Lancaster County.

A fluid milk production manager for Turkey Hill Dairies, Larry has been collecting since the early 1970s and feels it's a re-



Darwin Braund of State College, Centre County won the most educational award for his display about the history on the Penn State Creamery bottles.



Larry Ibach, left, is joined by bottle collector Jerry Gerard of Brattleboro Vt. Larry has been collecting since the 1970s and enjoys the fun he has every year at the convention.



Ralph Rivo of Alburdis, Lehigh County, submitted a trio of bottles for display at the convention, including a rare green milk bottle from the East End Dairy of Harrisburg (center).

flection of his tie to the dairy industry. His hard work has paid off, to date Larry has collected 200 Lancaster County bottles.

Jokingly saying he has the milk bottle collecting "bug," Larry will sell several milk bottles during the convention, but go home with little profit because he will spend most of what he has made on new bottles for his collection.

However, it is a man known as the "Purple Cow" that gets everyone's attention going down the hall. With purple cow sugar cookies to give away to everyone that visits and a giant Holstein Cow outside his door, walking into his room to view his display is a tribute to the history of the dairy industry.

With one of the largest milk bottle collections in the United States, he has added on into his collection with milk bottle caps.

"Back in the depression, kids still wanted to collect," said Ralph Rivo of Alburdis, Lehigh County, "so they collected things that did not cost anything. Milk

bottle caps (were popular) because everyone has to open a bottle of milk in the morning."

With binders brimming with bottle caps of all shapes and sizes, Ralph noted, like in the depression, milk bottle caps are a great collectable because unlike milk bottles, one can get started with a few dollars.

"They are affordable to start," said Ralph. "You can buy one for a quarter or several for a dollar."

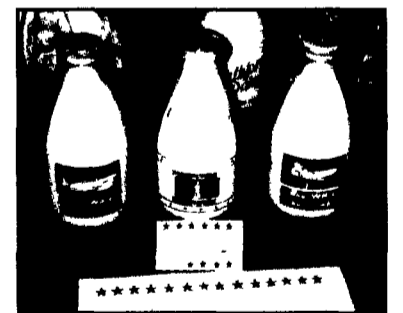
Convention attendees also were provided with the opportunity to participate in a milk bottle display competition, showing off their best to be judged. The display room was open all day Friday and the displays were judged among several categories.

This year's winners were for the Most Original Display was Charles Focht of Carlisle, Cumberland County for his Abbot's Dairy display. For the Most Educational was the Penn State Creamery Display, by Darwin Braund of State College, Centre County. The People's Choice

Award went to Dean Shippy of Newark, Delaware for his comprehensive display of College Milk Bottles.

Each winner was recognized at the dinner Friday night in the ballroom at the Holiday Inn.

To summarize the experience of the milk bottle collectors convention in Grantville, one exhibitor said, "it's great fun and a chance to meet people and to share in the fun of milk bottle collecting."



In the spirit of patriotism, the Iagers entered three World War II bottles as their three favorite bottles this year.



Dean Shippy of Newark, Del. earned the People's Choice Award for his comprehensive display of college milk bottles.



Charles Focht of Carlisle, Cumberland County, was selected as the winner of the Most Original Display for his Abbot's Dairy entry.