

# Ranck's Ag Perspective Broadens After Working On Farms In Brazil, Tanzania, Kenya, Portugal, Poland, Moldavia

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Food And Family  
Features Editor

**PARADISE** (Lancaster Co.) — Aaron Ranck recently returned to his family's Lancaster County dairy farm. After traveling the world, and working in agriculture in several different countries, his viewpoint is much broader than Lancaster County agriculture.

*Lancaster Farming* in the Aug. 3, 2002 issue reported that Ranck was one of 60 outstanding college graduates nationwide to receive a prestigious \$22,000 Watson Fellowship to finance a project of his choice.

"I drew on my ag roots and wanted to expand my ag horizons," Ranck, 23, said of his decision to work on farms in Brazil, Tanzania, Kenya, Portugal, Poland, and Moldavia.

Back home on his parents' — Don and Ginny Ranck's — dairy farm, Ranck recently joined the farm's bed and breakfast guests for a meal. The breakfast included whole wheat, white, and zucchini breads, veal sausage, eggs, peach cobbler with peach yogurt, and apple crisp. The traditional breakfast brought back memories of more unusual fare that he had recently eaten. Zebra and whale were some of the more exotic tastes he remembers.

He traveled independently and was responsible for mapping out his own transportation and time schedule. He slept eight hours on buses some nights and learned to navigate his way around countries by reading maps.

In Brazil, Ranck worked on a 1,700-acre dairy farm where he helped milk 200 Holsteins.

"Brazil is a well-developed ag-

at the end of the year.

Working on a Northeast Brazil plantation, Ranck saw sugarcane as far as his eyes could see.

People in the rural areas were curious and friendly, happy to talk and learn about American ways from Ranck.

His ability to communicate in Portuguese and Arabic or Hebrew benefited him in his travels.

His plans had been to spend at least two months in Jordan, but the Iraqi War changed that. Instead, he substituted Poland and Moldavia.

Ranck said his experiences broke down stereotypes. "I absolutely loved every place I was. It was neat to see communities and how people lived."

As a visitor, Ranck said that his focus was not to judge. For example, his Tanzanian host had two wives. Although that is acceptable in that country, the community also had their own criteria of what is considered respectable.

Men were expected to be able to support all their children. The villagers often talked about a "foolish rich man" in the community who had 100 cows, 100 goats, and 100 sheep. He also had several sons who partied and drank. The sons would steal a cow from their dad to pay for their partying, but their dad did not do anything to stop the crime. Hence his neighbors considered him foolish.

Villagers in Africa were worried about potential famine after a bad growing year. Ranck observed that the government is disconnected and has little impact on rural communities.

The weekly market was the soul of the community. Ranck

a foreign service such as serving as a diplomat to another country. While working on his parents' farm, Ranck is applying for government internships in Washington D.C. and to graduate schools to study international relations.

Ranck would like to represent foreign policy not only in agriculture but work his way up to ambassadorship or to a higher level, which requires about 20 years of rising through the ranks. Ambassadors generally have no choice in the country they are sent, Ranck said. He would prefer the Middle East. He is interested in the conflicts and how the United States interacts with these countries.

Despite the increasing turmoil in the Middle East, Ranck thinks peace is possible.

Ranck was in Portugal when the War in Iraq started.

"It was shocking watching the war coverage. I was in Portugal, having a wonderful experience, and people my age were dying every day."

Of the Iraqi War, Ranck said, "It was an enormous undertaking, and I hope it turns out for the better of all involved. It's too early to be pessimistic and throw in the towel."

Ranck reads about 10 books monthly on agriculture policy in Western Europe.

"Without understanding the past, we can't understand today or the future. The future is not something we passively accept, it is something we should create," Ranck said.

Of Poland, Ukraine, and Moldova, Ranck said each faces unique and challenging situations. These countries faced extremes in shifting from a socialist to capitalist economy, and can teach us a valuable lesson: how constant change is, which we don't notice if we aren't paying attention. We are either following or left behind."

In Lancaster County, Ranck said that his parents have income from their bed and breakfast operation, so they don't need to have as large a dairy op-



After spending a year working on farms in Brazil, Tanzania, Kenya, Portugal, Poland, and Moldavia, Ranck takes a break on the family's dairy farm to talk about his experiences.

eration as many other countians do. The Rancks milk 30 cows on their fourth generation 118-acre farm. They also own an adjacent house used for bed-and-breakfast guests. The Rancks follow rotational grazing practices using seven paddocks on 10 acres.

"Lancaster County has good soil, a good location, and can continue to be competitive, but the constant challenge is to never sit back and be satisfied, but continue to compete to produce a better product at a lower price."

"I love it here (the farm), but will leave it behind. I want to help build an international community," he said.

"It's somewhat difficult to leave the farm, but I've spent my time preparing a career in international interests, not in management and business skills needed to farm here."

While working in other countries, Ranck did not teach, but observed for independent research.

The Watson Fellowship was established in 1968 by the children of IBM founder Thomas J. Watson Sr. and his wife Jeanette to honor their parent's

longstanding interest in education and world affairs. The program identifies prospective leaders and allows them to develop their independence and become world citizens.

Many of the former recipients went on to become diplomats, doctors, researchers, professors, college presidents, and chief executive officers for major corporations.

Although Ranck's future isn't clearly mapped out, he said, "I have the advantage of growing up on a farm and knowing how it works. I understand how cooperatives differ from corporations. My dad is on the zoning board and has been active in community affairs and politics to help shape community opinion."

Ranck considers his farm background a great asset, regardless of his career path. He said, "Living on a farm also taught me the need to be flexible and to multi-task."



Aaron grew up with lots of exposure to other cultures through mingling with guests at his parents' Verdant View Farm Bed and Breakfast, Paradise. His parents, Don and Ginny, are on the right.

riculture country. This year, they will bypass our country in soybean production," Ranck said.

Although the land where he worked looked similar to Lancaster County, the social inequality of the area was evident. The urban poor and the rural poor contrasted sharply to the small percentage of the very rich.

After viewing various governments and economies, and how it impacts the people, Ranck said, "There is no other way than capitalism."

He said, "In Brazil, the price of milk is about half of ours, but farmers' feed and labor costs are also half as much as ours (the U.S.) Land is much cheaper, but machinery costs are much higher," Ranck said. The farm owners are alarmed by the rising land costs.

"Inflation and recession can be good for farmers," Ranck said. Farmers who buy inputs in the beginning may see inflation rise, which causes labor costs to go down, and results in selling high

lived in an area that was so remote it had no electricity, telephone, or mail service, so he purchased a bike to ride 17 miles to mail a letter to his mother.

Tanzania is a socialist country, where individuals cannot own land. Wealth is measured by how many cows you have. There is not enough money to even think of using insecticides, and no commercial agriculture.

Ranck would like to forge a career in

## GOT WOOD? WE HAVE THE FURNACE!

- All stainless steel construction
  - Uses present central duct or Hydronic system
  - Heats home/household hot water
  - Shaker Grates
- Hardy has been heating homes in N.Y. and PA. since 1982



100,000-250,000 btus  
**WILLIAMSON ENTERPRISES**  
601/656-2639  
877/606-3113

**Hardy**  
\*10 Year Warranty



**SUSQUEHANNA  
PRINTING**

- Wedding Invitations
- Brochures
- Business Cards
- Sale Cards
- Catalogs
- Newsletters
- Newspapers



Arl Haas  
One East Main Street  
P.O. Box 527, Ephrata, PA 17522  
717/733-6397 • Fax 717/733-6058