

"No financial satisfaction in being a farmer"

HOWARD DARLING is a modern-day farmer.

His 1,000-acre spread at RR 1, Warsaw, has almost 100 head of cattle and the latest in farm machinery. Tall cedars and pines surround the rolling green fields.

He lives in a rustic stone house with fireplace, polished hardwood floors, comfortable furniture and modern appliances.

His wife Laura is a warm and attractive woman and their four children are clever, well-mannered and well-educated.

Mr. Darling is a trim and youthful-looking 39 years old. He is articulate, witty, a deep thinker, and concerned about the world around him.

Holds two posts

He is the reeve of Dummer Township and the warden of Peterborough County — the culmination of 13 years in municipal politics.

He drives a late model car, dresses in smart attire when the occasion calls for it and reads such publications as *Time* magazine, *Readers' Digest* and historical biographies.

Howard Darling is not the city-slicker's tragic and misconstrued conception of a farmer.

This past week I visited the Darling farm to gain first-hand knowledge of an average day in the life of a farmer.

At 6 a.m., as the pale sun was peeping over the horizon and all the world was cool and hushed, I arrived, bleary-eyed, at the farmhouse.

Mr. Darling, fresh and wide-awake, met me at the door. He wore wind-shipped denims, an old striped shirt, scuffed shoes. With him was 19-year-old Dick Douglas in similar dress. Dick, from a nearby farm, sometimes helps Mr. Darling in the day's chores.

Bakes bread

In the kitchen were Mrs. Darling and two of the children—Kay, 14, and Lynn, 11. Oldest daughter Anne, 17, was away working at a summer resort for the holidays.

Mrs. Darling took nine loaves of home-made bread from the oven. The sound of bacon sizzling in a pan filled the room.

"How do you like your eggs . . . over? soft? hard?" asked Mrs. Darling. I said soft.

Presently, we all sat around the table. Grace was said. Then we ate a hearty breakfast of fried eggs, bacon, home-made bread, orange juice, buns and coffee.

Midway through the meal,

By Earl McRae *July 165*

What is life like on a modern-day 1,000 acre farm? To find out Examiner reporter Earl McRae recently spent a day with Peterborough County Warden Howard Darling and his family at their home in Dummer Township.

12-year-old Carl—a good-looking freckle-faced boy—came in from milking the cows which is done with an automatic milker.

We talked "farm" during the meal. Mr. Darling engages in "mixed" farming with dairy and beef cattle. The pasture adjoining the farm is 111 acres, but he also has a 100-acre ranch, a 500-acre ranch and a 200-acre woodlot.

The farm is his own and belonged to his father before that. He grows hay and corn — but merely to feed the cattle. A small garden near the house is pampered by Mrs. Darling and here they grow onions, potatoes, corn, carrots, beets, tomatoes, cabbage and beans for their own consumption.

Dairy cows

Milk from the dairy cows—an average seven cans each day (350 pounds)—is shipped to Pine Grove Cheese Factory at Lakefield each morning where it is processed into cheddar cheese for the consumer market.

Each spring, "stockers"—the offspring from the beef cows—are sold to dealers who, in turn, nourish them for eventual slaughter and Joe Citizen's dinner table.

Mr. Darling has lost four calves this year from calf pneumonia but says scientific advances have eliminated cattle disease to a great extent.

"We keep penicillin and drugs on the farm and keep a close watch on the animals."

As we were finishing our coffee, a dusty red milk truck rattled into the yard and Mr. Darling went to meet it.

Several moments later he returned explaining "that was the truck that takes my milk to the cheese factory".

After breakfast, Lynn started washing the dishes. She does it three times a day along with Kay when they are not at school.

The children also help milk the cows, feed the cattle, do housework and work in the garden.

Mr. Darling hopes his children "will go to university and certainly as far in school as they can" so as to achieve the education he could not get.

The depression hit the Darling family hard and conse-

quently, Howard had to forfeit high school. Years later, however, he earned a high school diploma through correspondence courses.

Anne is a Grade 13 student at Crestwood Secondary School and plans a university education. Carl wants to be an engineer.

None of the children plan to farm and Mr. Darling says it's a matter of economics. With a good education, they can earn more money in the outside world than by farming. And as Carl says: "It's not an easy life . . . too many responsibilities."

Yet the children work hard on the farm. They mature faster and because of the nature of the job—are more appreciative of the luxuries in life.

"Our kids see where the income comes from," says Mr. Darling. "They see all the problems and hardships of life."

The children have a great respect for their hard working parents and rarely complain about doing chores.

"There is no financial satisfaction in being a farmer," says Mr. Darling. "A farmer has a lot of money invested and operates at a loss. The only satisfaction I can see is that it's a wonderful place to raise a family . . . but a poor way to make a living."

Desire to leave

Mr. Darling has had "many many desires" to leave the farm life and doubts he would have chosen it if his education had been more extensive. "But I'm too old now to change."

When the children are grown up and leave the farm and when he gets too old to manage it himself, he will sell.

Despite the farmers' new stature in the social mainstream, discrimination still exists. City people often consider the farmer a second-class citizen. Mr. Darling feels not the slightest bit uncomfortable in the midst of urbanites.

"The people who would shun you off, you don't have to be concerned with. The good people realize the farmers' value."

He laughs in recalling an example of farmer discrimination:

"I once went into a bank in Peterborough with a wheat cheque to cash and I was dressed up. The teller looked at the cheque then he looked me over and asked what I did. I said 'what do you think I do?' He said 'well, you don't look like a farmer.'"

"He was trying to pay me a compliment and didn't realize it was a subtle form of discrimination."

Suddenly the phone rang. It was a Dummer resident with a problem concerning council affairs and Mr. Darling promised to look into it.

We left the house to tackle the day's chores which this day consisted of installing steel siding on an implement shed and mending a pasture fence.

Two dogs yipped and yapped in the yard—Tick, a hounddog, and Tip, a lovable old mongrel. Mr. Darling took a few moments to show how he had trained Tip to slide on his stomach.

Girls do chores

The girls—Kay, Lynn and a friend, Cheryl, were busy painting a fence around the home. Their pants were spattered and Kay got paint in her hair, but no one grumbled.

Besides the dogs, there are four cats and seven kittens around the farm. Mr. Darling says he can do without the cats.

Mr. Darling pointed to the farm implement shed that had to be sided.

"In winter, an east wind blows against it," he said.

He and Dick carried lumber strappings from a nearby pile to the shed and proceeded to nail them along the wall. They cut big sheets of steel and hammered them into place. Perspiration rolled down their faces.

Carl had gone into Warsaw to cut the lawn for his grandparents. Mrs. Darling was in the garden tilling with an electric tiller.

Mr. Darling stood on his 1956 tractor and pounded the strapping into place. He offered an off-handed remark about the weather.

Dry spell affected us a bit, not much. The rain we got helped a lot . . . good recovery."

We spoke on his duties in the municipal field. He has attended about 175 functions since January running the gamut from county council committees, township council meetings, conventions and such.

Has it interfered with your town management? "Damned right." He wishes he had more time to devote to his occupation.

He speaks again on the economic problems in running a modern-day farm. There are a few bonafide farmers today. Most hold down second jobs in urban areas.