



Big Demand For Custom Milking Service

It's becoming easier for dairymen to break away from the twice-daily routine of milking chores 365 days of every year since "cow sitters" arrived on the scene a few years ago. These are professional milkers who take care of all the milking and feeding duties for a dairyman while he and his family take some time off for a trip, wedding, convention or whatever.

FARM SHOW has written features on custom milking before, but there are often new angles to talk about. Latest new custom milking service we've heard about is in western Wisconsin. Called Custom Milking, it's a partnership of two sisters who have grown up in dairy farming and think milking cows is a good job. Laurie Kusk and her married sister, Peggy Rydeen, formed the business in late winter of 1979. After brief advertisements in a local farm paper and word-of-mouth publicity, they were swamped with business.

"We thought most of our business would be on weekends, but lots of people want help during the week," says Peggy. "By planting time last spring, we had all kinds of calls to help with milking so farmers could get their field work done. Later on it was fishing trips. We've had so many calls that we've stopped advertising, and we've had a lot of inquiries from people who live too far away for us to take care of," says Peggy, pictured above.

Laurie and Peggy limit their service to a radius of about

20-30 miles. They charge transportation cost and a fee per cow milked. The fees differ, depending on their duties. If it is milking only, the fee is 30 cents per cow. If they must milk, feed, take care of calves and other chores, the fee increases to 45 cents per cow.

The girls have a systematic procedure for taking over milking. They visit the farm before they take the job. Observing the milking procedure, they make notes on how the barn is laid out and what jobs need to be done. Together with the operator, they fill out an information sheet on such items as milking time, feeding time, whether to feed calves and young stock, and other procedures. Some of the most important information to get is the names and telephone numbers of the veterinarian, milker repairman, silo unloader service, milk hauler and others. Sometimes there are special chores the farm owner wants done, such as marking cows that are in heat.

The girls generally work together, one doing the feeding while the other milks.

Laurie and Peggy aren't looking for more business outside their local area, but they would be glad to share the benefit of their Custom Milking experience with others who might want to go into the business.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Custom Milking, c/o Mrs. Peggy Rydeen, Route 1, Box 39-R, Osceola, Wis. 54020 (ph. 715 294-2343).

He Turns Weeds Into Money

Selling weeds is "big business" for John Link, Galena, Kan., who makes his living collecting and processing them for sale as decorations. His best sellers include some of your worst enemies — jimson weed, red dock, wild flax, acorns, bitternsweet and mistletoe, to name a few.

For most of us, weeds are plants out of place. To John, they're plants in place — a cash crop! He relies primarily on a crew of about 100 persons who collect weeds for him at various times of the year throughout the U.S.

One of John's best-selling "weeds" is the miniature cattail. He sells up to 10 million of them per year to florists and other firms. Cattails are gathered from swamps, then dried in his solar-heated drying building and packaged for shipping.

A number of decorative "weeds" he sells to customers aren't found growing in the wild. One of these is Italian wheat, which Link has had to plant, or have grown on contract. Another is broom corn, which is planted and harvested commercially.

Some of the weeds he sells are

getting scarce as swamps are drained, or land is used for highway and industrial development. To get enough of them, he sometimes has to plant certain scarce weeds.

What are weeds worth as a cash crop?

The going rate for cattails is 3c ea. Giant acorns retail for 12c, pine cones for 10c and mistletoe for right at \$3.00 a lb. While these prices may give the impression of a "fortune just ready to be harvested from the wild," Link notes that there are a lot of expenses connected with selling weeds. He operates two greenhouses, several trucks and even has two air boats for traveling in shallow swamps to collect certain types of weeds.

There are hazards to the business, too. Weeds left to dry in the sun, for example, can be blown away by a strong wind.

Link notes that he is often suspected of gathering marijuana or other illegal plants and has to prove the legitimacy of his unique weed-selling business.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Link, Ozark Quality Products, 400 Clark Street, Galena, Kan. 66739 (ph. 316 783-5540).



Farm Family Rebuilds Cars For Hobby

Rebuilding classic cars has become a family hobby for Nestor Schenk, his wife, and four children, of Sioux Center, Iowa. Their first project, which they nicknamed "Mr. Icy", is built on a 1922 Model T Ford sedan frame. Outside, it's a realistic copy of an old 1920 ice truck, complete with curved side windows and an enclosed truck box. It's powered by a 375 cu. in. Chevrolet engine, has an automatic transmission, a Pontiac GTO rear axle, and Chevrolet Vega power steering. It runs on premium gas and gets 13 miles to the gallon.

Inside, "Mr. Icy" is equipped with stereo radio and crushed velvet upholstery. Total cost to build, not including labor, is right at \$3,500.

"Most of the fun was in building it," says Schenk, who notes that the car is for sale "for just under \$7,000". A second car, a 1937 Chevrolet Coupe, is now being customized and the Schenk's are looking for "something in the early 1930's," as their next car-rebuilding project.