

Four Sisters Advertise To "Corral" Husbands

By Darrel Koehler

The advertisement in "Hoard's Dairyman" magazine was simple and to the point.

"Four fun-loving sisters looking for farm-oriented men."

That ad, which cost four Mekinock, N. Dak. sisters \$43, has yielded big dividends — three husbands.

Last December in a double wedding, Kathleen Wasylow married James Weber, Hartford, Wis., and Susan Wasylow wed Tom Flanigan, Wadena, Minn. A third sister, Carol, will marry Wade Johnson, Mora, Minn., on April 12.

The fourth sister, Beth, 18, a University of North Dakota student enrolled in English and theater arts, went along with the ad on a lark. She remains single, but looking.

The four sisters are daughters of William and Margery Wasylow, rural Mekinock. The family farms 650 acres and milks 65 Holsteins — a fortuitous coincidence, since they're marrying dairy farmers.

Kathleen, 34, was the ringleader, spurred on by her mother: "I think she had been heckling me for five years to get married."

So on Christmas Day, 1984, Kathleen pulled out a pencil and a notepad and wrote the ad with the help of her three sisters. "We had read about similar personal advertisements in other farm magazines, and Farm Journal magazine even did a story of farmers from Shakopee, Minn., who were seeking wives.

"Usually those personals ads were made by men. Many of the men who write the ads are either shy or they don't want to meet a future wife in a bar. And with the way the farm economy is, many women are reluctant to marry farmers," she says.

None of the sisters were really interested in marriage. "I think we were just looking for companionship. We weren't all that serious about marriage," says Susan Wasylow, 20, who graduated from the dairy production program at the University of Minnesota-Crookston in May.

The sisters mailed the advertisement to the Fort Atkinson, Wis., farm publication on Dec. 28, 1984. "We picked winter because farmers aren't so busy and they read more. They would be more likely to write us," Kathleen says.

Packets of letters began arriving. There were 14 letters in the first packet and from then on they dribbled in, four or five per week, through June. As a joke, the sisters had listed their ages as from 20 to 28. "So when the letters start arriving I had to put them into four piles, trying to correspond the fictitious ages with our real ages," Kathleen says.

The Wasylow sisters received 80 letters in all. Most of the letters were written by bachelors in their 20s and

30s. But there were some from widowed men, some with children.

While some of the men proposed marriage in their first letter, most were just seeking companionship. There was a letter from a 56-year-old New York dairy farmer. And then there were letters from four Irishmen working on a dairy farm in Saudi Arabia, where they got the magazine. They were downright lonely.

A Wisconsin mother wrote about her four sons seeking wives. A man wrote for his brother, the shy one, and a sister wrote on behalf of her brother.

Each sister ended up with between five and seven prospects.

Susan was attracted to Tom Flanigan, 23, a dairyman who farmed with his parents north of Wadena, Minn. Kathleen says Flanigan was on the shy side when it came to women.

FARM SHOW

Ag World

Editor's Note: Most of what goes into Ag World stems from story ideas sent to us by readers. This special section of FARM SHOW touches on the lighter side of farming and ranching — everything from human interest stories, to unusual hobbies, to unique things farm families are doing for fun or profit.

If you've read or heard a good Ag World type story you'd like to share with others, send it to: FARM SHOW, Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.



Photo courtesy Grand Forks Herald

A classified ad in Hoard's Dairyman resulted in wedding bells for Kathleen Wasylow (left) and her sister Susan. A third sister, Carol, will be married soon.

This was clear when he finally met Susan in May at Crookston. Susan was involved in a wedding reception the day he drove up from Wadena in his pickup. Kathleen kept a close watch for him. After seeing the pickup circle the area for the umpteenth time, she bellowed, "Oh, Tom!" He stopped and got out and the two talked and walked for what she said seemed an eternity. "I think we put on 15 miles in that small square. He had cold feet and he offered me half his farm if he could leave without meeting Susan," Kathleen says.

The two finally met, and Tom later met the entire clan at a family dinner.

For Kathleen, there were letters, phone calls and finally a visit to Hartford, Wis., about 30 miles outside Milwaukee, to see Jim Weber, 30. "He was right in the middle of table beet harvest when I went out there," she recalls. He raises vegetables and other crops and has a dairy herd.

"We first became friends, then the relationship grew and by summer we were discussing the possibility of marriage," Kathleen said. She had also been corresponding with a hog farmer from South Dakota, a Seattle

stockbroker who had agriculture interests and a lumberman-farmer from Wisconsin. "After Jim and I became serious, I wrote the others and told them the news," she says.

The Wasylow sisters recommend mail-order romance to others. Their advice is simple: select a reputable publication, use a post office box so you can keep your anonymity and begin your correspondence as friends. Romance can come later. So will the cows and the babies.

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