

July 2009 Visit to Canada of Juan Sanchez Martell and Marta Suarez Ramirez¹

Host Farm: Landomills Holsteins; Jim and Gladys Millson & family
Enhancing Sustainable Dairy Production Capacity in Cuba
Sustainable Cities Foundation
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SYNOPSIS: This report summarizes the visit of Juan Sanchez Martell and Marta Suarez Ramirez to Landomills Holsteins, Enniskillen, Ontario July 5 to July 23 2009 as part of the ongoing project Enhancing Sustainable Dairy Production Capacity in Cuba. During their visit, Juanito and Marta had the opportunity to view, first hand, the management and production strategies of a wide variety of Canadian farmers. Their challenge now is to emulate the Canadian methods of increasing production by using crops produced at the CPA to create a similarly nutritious, made-in-Cuba feed ration. Increased irrigation capacity at the CPA has made it possible to provide a greater volume of more nutritious feed for the animals. Designing a balanced feed program combined with improved herd management is the next steps towards achieving our goal of increased dairy production capacity for Cuba. We found both Juanito and Marta to be very observant and quick to recognize differences in management and the implications of those differences. They were observant of the health of our animals and were a competent addition to our farm work force.

Gladys and Jim Millson. Landomills Holsteins

Summary of Farm Tours and Site Visits--

1. Sunday, July 5th: Juanito and Marta arrived at Toronto Airport at 7:50 pm. Ketly (born in Haiti and so fluent in Spanish) and Jim Hamilton accompanied us to the airport to meet and be translator for our Cuban visitors. Since Wendy Holm, (our project manager and primary translator) had not yet arrived in Canada from Italy, we appreciated Ketly volunteering much of her time to provide translation services on at least 7 tour dates including to and from the airport. On the first evening, Juanito watched as Jim bred a heifer by artificial insemination.



¹ This report was compiled two weeks following the visit by Gladys Millson in consultation with Wendy, Jim and Morgan. Photos were added by Wendy and the report submitted to ANAP in November 2009.

2. Monday, July 6th: Once the morning milking and feeding of the animals was completed, we visited a "pick-your-own" fruit & vegetable farm for our annual pick of strawberries. That afternoon, Juanito and Marta helped to prepare 50 jars of cooked strawberry jam. Each day, Juanito and Marta helped with both the morning and evening chores, in the milking parlour and in the calf barn.



Juanito was observing the milking management and feeding of the dairy herd, while Marta worked with Gladys and Morgan feeding and caring for the calves and young heifers as well as the bulls in the old barn.

3. Tuesday, July 7th: After morning chores and breakfast was completed, Ketly then accompanied us to the Orono Fair-East Central Junior Show, to observe some of the local farm youth and their young show calves in competition. Afterwards, we shopped in the Farmer's Co-Operative Farm Supply Store in Orono and then returned to Bowmanville to do some clothes shopping in the Recycled Clothing Store as well as food shopping at the Grocery store. We then returned to Landomills farm for supper and to do the evening chores. A batch of brownies was quickly made because it was learned that Marta liked chocolate.



4. Wednesday July 8th: Landomills (Millson's Dairy Farm)—Herd Health Day- After the morning chores were completed, the cows were sorted and animals to be checked were separated and confined in the milking parlour holding area. The veterinarian arrived to check pregnancies in the cows and bred heifers and used a portable ultra sound machine to confirm pregnancies. If the cow was not pregnant, it was useful to give an assessment of the ovaries to determine the stage of the heat cycle.



In the afternoon we visited the Enniskillen Jersey farm of Tim and Sharron Seargent

and family. Many breeding cows from this farm have been exported to South America to establish new foundation herds of superior genetic quality. We were also just in time to observe while the veterinary was operating on a cow with a twist in her abomasum. Following the evening chores, Addie the cow was ready to calve. She was in need of calcium (milk fever) so required some assistance to calve. Juanito and Marta observed the calving and we named the heifer calf "Amarta".

5. Thursday July 9th: Landomills (Millson's Dairy Farm) Morning milking and chores are completed as usual. Jim took Juanito and Marta on a crop tour of our 400-acre farm. After lunch, Jim and Juanito drove to the Toronto International Airport to pick up our project manager--Wendy Holm. Supper and evening chores were completed routinely.



6. Friday July 10th: Following chores, we visited the Brighton Sewage Treatment Plant in the Municipality of Brighton, Northumberland County. Jim Phillips, the Municipal Director of Public Works and "Tiny" the Wetlands manager took us on a tour of their town's sewage filtration system that includes a natural wetlands buffer zone, before the treated water is discharged.



Jim Phillips was very interested in the proposed Bayamo wetlands project to provide irrigation water for crops and dairy production in Cuba.



Following the evening chores, we drove to Little Britain for the Victoria County Twilight BBQ, hosted by the Troup family dairy farm known as Vale O'Skene Holsteins. Juanito and Marta participated in the judging competition and did very well at assessing the conformation traits of 5 dairy cows and placing them in order of ranking.



7. Saturday July 11th: Following the morning chores we prepared for a family BBQ at Morgan & Darryl's home. They had slow roasted 5 roasts (about 15 lbs. each) that were supplied by a 800 lb. bull calf that had been raised on the Millson farm and butchered a couple of weeks previous. About 70 relatives & friends attended and were pleased to meet Juanito and Marta.

Unfortunately, the morning of the family picnic, the





submersible pump at the bottom of the 200 foot well stopped working. This well provides the water for the cows and the milking parlour, so it is an emergency when it does not function. Jim, Ben and Juanito along with our local plumber spent most of the day raising the steel water line and broken pump and replacing it with a plastic line and a new submersible pump. Replacement parts were purchased from a shop in Lindsay—an hour's drive. Repairs were complete and they had water running by about 4:00 pm. Only then did they stop to enjoy the family picnic.

8. Sunday July 12th: Darryl and Morgan, Jim and Wendy, Juanito and Marta travelled to Niagara Falls. They had lunch in the Skyline Restaurant at the top of the tower overlooking the fall



9. Mon. July 13th: We travelled to Toronto to visit with Marta Valdes at the Consulado de Cuba. Since this office is in the city it was more efficient to travel by the metro system. We took the GO train from Oshawa to Toronto Union Station and then the Subway system with a transfer at the east west line and our stop was the last stop at the west end. Since Marta Valdes was so busy with her responsibilities at the Consulado, our meeting was very brief so we very rapidly returned to the GO train station and caught the earlier train with 3 minutes to spare.



This allowed us to return to the farm in good time to prepare for the visit from our MP, Bev Oda, who is also our federal minister of Co-operation with jurisdiction over CIDA. Juanito explained to Oda our farmer-to-farmer co-operation project at CPA Julio de 26 and its financial functions. We lobbied her for more funding.

10. Tuesday July 14th: We had an early start this day so chores were done by Ben, Morgan and Angela. It was about a 4-hour drive to Grazing Meadows Farm in Brussels of Huron County in Western Ontario.

When we arrived they had just retrieved 5 good embryos from flushing one of his prize beef Wagyu cows. We were given a tour of the rotational pastures, which were efficiently managed with electric fencing. We were shown the watering system used to graze the beef animals as well as a home designed moveable mineral supply bucket.



Tim Prior and his family also own a fencing and farm supply store (Brussels Agri Services Ltd.) located on the site of Brussels Livestock Auction Barn. We watched while some cull cows and beef animals were auctioned off to the highest bidder. (processors) Afterwards, we visited the store. Tim was very generous to donate to Juanito, some waterline attachments and a float valve to equip a movable water trough for cattle in rotational pastures.



Our next stop was at Oeds Geertsma's egg-layer Chicken & Dairy Farm in Lucknow—only about a 45-minute drive from Brussels. We visited the 10,000 layer chicken barn then toured his dairy operation where he milks about 35 Holstein cows.

Juanito and Marta were very observant to notice even subtle differences in the management techniques of the various dairy operations.



11. Wed. July 15th: Following morning chores we drove north to Bobcaygeon, Ontario to tour the Kawartha Dairy Milk Processing Plant. We were very honoured take this tour because very few are allowed such a privilege. We all had to wear hairnets and hard hats, steel toed boots and white lab coats.



We saw production techniques for milk pasteurization, homogenization, milk being packaged in bags, chocolate milk in cartons, and sherbet being made and placed into large tubs. The tour ended outside with a large complimentary ice cream cone as well as T-shirt for each of us with a Kawartha Dairy logo on the front.



We then visited Grass Hill Farm--Lloyd and Barb Wicks Milking Goat farm a few minutes drive from the village of Bobcaygen. Lloyd and Barb are very interested in exporting high quality milking goats to Cuba. They are in the process of establishing a classification system to identify the desirable conformation traits of a milking goat which will



establish the basis of data on which to build a genetic record for improved mating purposes. (similar to the current classification system for milking cows as run by Holstein Canada)

12. Thurs. July 16th: Morning Chores were done as usual and then we headed east on Hwy.



401 to a Water buffalo Farm in Sterling.. Martin Littkemann and Lori Smith

milk a commercial herd of 22 water buffalo. They were interested in hearing about the milking water buffalo at the CPA. Juanito and Marta were impressed with the



calm temperament of these Canadian water buffalo and feel that the Cuban water buffalo temperament could also be improved if the young calves were handled more immediately following their birth. A large amount of nutritious feed is required to sustain increased milk production.



13. Friday July 17th: Chores in the morning as usual and then Darryl took us shopping in Whitby. We returned home to do chores and leave for the Peterborough Twilight BBQ in Millbrook. This was hosted by the Allona Holstein farm in Millbrook, Ontario.



14. Saturday July 18th: Darryl took Juanito, Marta and Wendy to the Woodville Sales Barn to watch the auction of a variety of large and small farm animals.



On the way home they stopped in to tour the fully operational water powered mill in Tyrone, Ontario.



As recent as a few years ago, waterpower was used to move large wheels that crushed the apples to make apple cider. However, new government regulations requiring pasteurization of commercially sold cider, forced them to stop production because they could not justify the large expense of upgrading their equipment.



The power generated by the water wheels is still harnessed to run the sawmill at Tyrone Mills. The rest of the Millson's stayed home to harvest haylage.

15. Sunday July 19th: Morning chores as usual and then Darryl treated Juanito and Jim to an afternoon and evening of Fishing on Lake Ontario. Unfortunately, they forgot to invite the fish. Marta, Wendy and Gladys stayed home preparing a Cuban feast for when the hungry fishermen returned. We all enjoyed a very late meal of Black beans and rice, with barbequed green peppers, BBQ steak (Millson beef) and corn on the cob. (No fish to barbeque). I believe there was another Rhubarb pie made especially for the occasion.



16. Monday July 20th: Chores done as usual. Wendy left in the morning to catch her flight to Vancouver and Jim left after lunch to catch his flight to Regina to attend the Dairy Farmers of Canada Annual Conference. The remaining Millsons (with the help of Juanito) harvested haylage. Marta was always a wonderful help in the Millson kitchen. I learned very early to say, "Marta, ayúde" because Marta could clean up a mess, as fast as I could make it. Marta and I provided lunch in the field so that haylage harvesting could continue non-stop. That night we went to Morgan and Darryl's for an evening of Domino's and fireworks.



17. Tuesday July 21st: Chores as usual in the morning. Then Ben took Juanito, Marta and Gladys shopping in his 1994 Firebird. We ate at Montana's and had fish and chips. (the fish that the boys didn't catch on Sunday) then we went back to the Recycled Clothes store in Bowmanville to purchase a large suitcase and some more clothes. We returned for supper and did chores in the evening.



18. Wednesday July 22nd: We did morning chores as usual and then the Hoof Trimmer arrived with his electric tilt table used to aid in the trimming of the cows' hooves. They trimmed the feet of 25 cows and finished around 4 pm. Evening chores were completed and Marta and Juanito were faced with the challenge of packing. At around 11:00 pm. the phone rang and it was Ben. A cow was calving and it was coming backwards—he needed help. Even though Marta was in her nightgown ready for bed, she was changed in a minute and ready to go up and help calve the cow. (Juanito was in bed asleep.) We pulled that calf out very efficiently. It did not suffer any fluid in the lungs and was a very large bull. Ben said that Marta is very strong!



19. Thurs. July 23rd: Morning chores as usual. Juanito and Martha left at 8:00 am for a 12:10 flight. Jim Hamilton dropped Ketly off so she could join us for the airport trip. Darryl drove us in his truck. It went very smoothly and we had a very pleasant farewell visit with Juanito and Marta. As we were leaving the airport, the skies opened up and the rain poured down... Ketly said that Canada was crying.

