

Leitrim Personality of the Year 1987

Frank Sweeney (Ballinamore)



Above: Frank Sweeney with his wife Margaret and their two children, Muire and Eamonn.

Frank Sweeney, Tullyhusker, Ballinamore, is our Leitrim Personality of the Year. Deservedly so.

Frank is a farmer — the first farmer to receive this award — and he everything that the outside world appears to think a Leitrim farmer is not.

He gives a lie to the oft-held impression that Leitrim farmers are welfare parasites, unwilling to work, unwilling to develop their land and continually looking for handouts and sympathy. Indeed, such false impressions are a source of deep annoyance to Frank and he cites several examples of farmers throughout the county who have reached exceptionally high standards through their hard work.

This man works. And works hard. He is well organised, industrious and anxious to learn and develop new ideas.

Frank Sweeney had the distinction of being named in 1985 as a National winner in the National Farm Development Competition sponsored by Nitrogen Éireann Teoranta, The Farmer's Journal and ACOT.

During the previous year Frank's farm had been visited by a total of eight judges and in this nation-wide competition he was chosen as the farmer who had made the greatest progress in managing and developing his farm business. All aspects of farm management — machinery, livestock, fodder, land development etc., — were taken into account by the judges. The **Development Farmer of the Year** title brought Frank a cash prize of £1,000 and a specially inscribed Dublin Crystal Glass Ships Decanter — but perhaps most important of all, it brought a marvellous sense of achievement to Frank, to Leitrim farmers in general and indeed to the county as a whole.

Receiving awards for his farming is nothing new to Frank Sweeney — over the past number of years he has been honoured in the Connacht-Donnegal Region; in the West-Midlands club, and in 1980 he was placed third nationally for Summer milk production. ACOT has selected his farm on numerous occasions as the venue for Farm Walks for other farmers, members of the Committee of Agriculture and indeed for other groups interested in monitoring the level

of progress of farms in Co. Leitrim. Back in 1978, Mr. Michael Cullinane, Deputy C.A.O., described Frank Sweeney's farm as "as good as any to be found in the country".

Frank's wife Margaret is of great assistance to him in the management of his farm and she is anxious to keep up to date in modern farming trends. Margaret herself attended the special EEC course organised by the Leitrim County Committee of Agriculture.

Frank Sweeney, who has concentrated on Dairy Farming since the 1960's and at present has a herd of pedigree registered friesians is one of the top milk suppliers to the Killeshandra, Co. Operative Society Creamery at Ballinamore. He is a member of the "Friesian Breeders club of Ireland and England" and of the "Irish Grassland Association". Always willing to attend classes organised to help farmers, Frank is deeply conscious of the advice received from ACOT and is highly appreciative of the work of Mr. John McWeeney, ACOT's local Dairy Advisor.

Frank and Margaret, who have two children, Eamonn and Muire, are involved with other concerned parents throughout Ireland in the raising of much needed funds for the Children's Cancer Research and Development Fund. This work is undertaken by the parents on a voluntary basis and Frank and Margaret have accepted responsibility for counties Cavan and Leitrim. To date they have been instrumental in raising a total of £47,000 for the Fund — a very noteworthy achievement. But in typical fashion, Frank and Margaret are slow to accept credit for this; rather they pay tribute to the generosity of the people in Cavan and Leitrim who have contributed to the Fund and all who assist in this campaign at local level.

In a rather depressing time for the farming community we hope that the choice of Frank Sweeney as Leitrim Personality of the Year will be accepted as a tribute, not only to the man himself and to his family, but to the farming population of Leitrim.