



## Willow Bend Farm Spring Hope Dairy & Bonna Terra Farm

A PARTNERSHIP OF PEOPLE & NATURE.  
*Spring 2017*

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Here we are, celebrating our 60th year of farming! Who would've predicted that, back in 1957? How many more years will there be? Hopefully, several more generations will be able to enjoy this business and lifestyle, as we have.

Also, here we are, entering our 3rd year of writing bi-annual newsletters. Who would've predicted that? It turns out that they're fun to put together and we like giving others a snapshot of what's going on with our three growing farms. Plus, we have so much to share (especially George!); we just have to keep it going. Hope you enjoy this one as much as the last.

*-Our Farm Families*

### WNY Dairy Industry is Struggling

Western New York is an ideal place to make milk. We have a good climate for growing crops and good soils. There is usually plenty of rain and cows love the cooler weather. The nearness to large population centers makes distributing our dairy products a relatively short haul. Our national milk production currently is up less than 2%, while New York is up 3.6% and Western New York is up 6 to 8%!



### The Milk Price was Too High, Now There's Too Much Milk!

In 2010, the Muller-Quaker company started building the world's largest yogurt plant in Batavia, NY. In 2014, the Chinese purchased a lot of dairy products and milk powder on the world market. Milk products became scarce and the price rose to ration the supply. With strong prices (\$26/cwt), many farmers (like us) decided to take their profits and expand production, which is just now coming online and has overrun our processing and marketing capacity. Rather than dump excess milk, milk plants are offering the distressed surplus for up to \$7.00 less than the present price at \$16/cwt. Sadly, we expect this situation to continue in the months ahead.

### Milk Plants are Struggling

Willow Bend Farm has been a member of Upstate Niagara's milk co-op since 1979 (George has been a director since 1992). Upstate Niagara is doing their best to handle the supply. In 2006, they built a yogurt facility in West Seneca. In 2011, they purchased an abandoned yogurt plant in North Lawrence that is utilizing a lot of milk. In 2015, they bought a plant in Williamsport, PA, to better serve Wegmans as they open more stores in the south. Sadly, Kraft's Polly-O plant, Campbell, NY plans to close, leaving 170 million additional pounds of milk per year with no home! Despite the co-op's best intentions, the surplus milk situation is very difficult and unfortunately means continued low milk prices for us.



### CONTACT US ANYTIME!

Please let us know if you have any questions about our farm, or if there is anything we can do to be better neighbors.

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*Check us out online*  
[willowbendfarms.com](http://willowbendfarms.com)  
[springhopedairy.com](http://springhopedairy.com)  
[bonnaterrafarm.com](http://bonnaterrafarm.com)

### Opening our Barn Doors

Willow Bend Farm has become the calf raising center for all three farm locations, meaning we take care of about 480 baby calves there. With around 13 new calves born daily, there are always plenty of cute animals for people to see and an ideal location to host tours for school children. Here's one of our favorite farm tour stories that was relayed to us by Laurie Lundeen, the owner of Great Start Preschool, in Canandaigua:

"A lucky group of children just witnessed the miracle of a cow giving birth to new life. A particularly compassionate little girl, jumped right up on the fence and endearingly yelled, "Congratulations! It's a Girl!" to the new mother."

## Chapter Five. Willow Bend...Through the Years. As told by George Mueller.

### The Slow Courtship.

It was exactly 60 years ago, this month (May 1957), that I became 25 years old and began my upstate New York adventure of pursuing a farming career. I drove up the Thruway on a rainy day with all my worldly possessions in a little trailer I was towing. As mentioned in our fall newsletter, I decided to stop off at Syracuse University and visit the young lady who had sent me the rice crispy cookies while I was in Korea. The warm hug I got was quite encouraging and certainly worth pursuing. My dream had always been to be a farmer, find a good wife, have four or five children, (if God so blessed us) and be successful enough at farming to support a growing family. The fact that Miss Morgan had grown up on a farm and knew there was hard work ahead, and surely some tough times, only added to her attractiveness; if she was willing to go that route.



*The cow stable is not the usual location for a courtship. But, then again, I was not a normal courtier. Miss Morgan is standing in doorway. Slim, trim, George with arms crossed observes, as Willow Bend's first cow is milked.*

The summer of '57 was a full one. Miss Morgan took a job as a 4-H assistant and worked at several counties. I remember driving to Ithaca, Morrisville and Canton to become better acquainted with the young lady that I hoped would someday be my bride. I made sure Miss Morgan was invited to our family functions. I was delighted that my mother, a farmer's daughter herself, hit it off well with Mary Lue Morgan, and vice-versa. They both were well versed at cooking and sewing.

It was hard telling what Mary Lue's parents, Ralph and Mabel Morgan, thought of me; a city boy who thought he wanted to be a farmer. They probably wondered if I would be able to support their daughter (who happened to own 17 pairs of shoes!). I tried to be helpful and impress my potential in-laws. On one occasion, I was washing dishes and broke one of Mabel Morgan's special ruby glass plates. They never let me do dishes again.

### Let the Farming Career Begin.

The possibility of becoming a farmer was also falling into place. My two years of service as an R.O.T.C. artillery officer in peace time Korea were behind me. My Uncle Norval Budd was partners with Emmet Plyter, the farm manager who had taught me farming every summer of my teen years. Uncle Norval offered me a 1/5 share of this partnership. One fifth of the crop sales were to be mine, in return for my labor. I was to keep my own set of books as a share cropper. Things were going well. I was an established share-cropper with a good chance at partnering with a good wife.

**Next chapter: Farm Partnership Prospers...  
Courtship Postponed**

## Hungry for a New Challenge

One main reason Willow Bend Farm expanded to include a 3rd site was there were many employees who were ready and eager for new opportunities. Ryan Janney was one of them and rose to the huge challenge he was given in 2016.

Ryan got his start in farming early on his Grandpa Donald's 100-cow farm in Madison, NY. His studies led him to Morrisville, then Cornell. One of his first jobs after college was in Hilmar, CA, where he gained experience with Jersey cows and a rotary parlor. His next stop was Spring Hope Dairy in 2011, where one of the partners, John Davies, taught him all he knew, for five years. After this tutelage, he was ready for more responsibility. And he sure got it!

He became the dairy manager/herdsman at our new Bonna Terra Farm in Bloomfield. He happily took on this position, complete with an all new dairy crew, new routines to establish and plenty of new and interesting problems. He made, and continues to make, as many improvements as he can - and all his hard work is now paying off. The cows are healthier and quality milk production is up. Ryan says, "I couldn't do half of the things I wanted to do without the team effort and attitude. A big pat on the back goes out to my team of diligent workers that have stood by my side and persevered through the trenches in making these improvements."

Thus, Ryan was named "Most Improved Employee of the Year" at our annual Goals Dinner in January 2017. As John Mueller said, he earned this award "because of his dedication, persistence,



perseverance, his positive attitude and most importantly, his passion for dairy farming."

## Bonna Terra Plans on Hold

At our new Bonna Terra Farm, we have made progress throughout the year in developing new routines, learning about the land, and building some new facilities. We had hoped to build a modern dairy facility with a rotary parlor in the near future. However, the milk market is telling us to slow down. Thus, 2017 will be a welcome pause in our building plans as we get to know the land and people of the West Bloomfield area better. Stay tuned!



According to Cornell University, for every \$1 generated on a dairy farm, an extra 81 cents is circulated in the local economy.