

An enduring link to the farm

Growing up, living, working and raising a family on the same dairy farm for ninety years keeps Richard Schlegel young and proud. As a young lad, little did he realize this land in Oley Township would make him understand the importance of family, productive soil and food production. R-Lost Creek Farm was started by his parents, Paul and Sarah in 1935 when they bought 47 acres. The farm was expanded with 30 acres in 1958 and 60 acres in 1960. Richard and his wife Janet, who have been married for 62 years, took over the farm in 1976. They permanently preserved the farms saying, "We wanted to save the farm for future generations and since it is good quality soil, we felt it important to save the land from buildings." The family dairy farm continues as son Kevin took over the dairy in 2006 and the crops in 2010. Animals are bred with artificial insemination to the best sires available. Kevin says he is most proud of "Selecting, breeding and raising dairy animals that have high genetic indexes and exhibit well in the show ring."

Milk is sold to Land O Lakes, bull calves to Leesport Farmers Market, and extra crops to Kurtz's grain. Corn, soybean, wheat, hay and pasture are the crops grown with the majority fed to the dairy animals. They support local businesses for the farm inputs including; Oley Valley Feeds, Fisher and Thompson, IBA and Premier Select Sire. Kevin mentions "The biggest challenge to farming is the fluctuating milk and commodity prices and input costs."

Music is in the families' genes as Richard has been a Tenor in the Salem UCC Church Choir for 73 years. The music beat goes on as Kevin plays drums and manages a local band, the "Mystic Warrior". Kevin stated; "Other than wanting to be a Rock Star, I would have no idea what I would do if not farming. I never learned anything else." The family is involved in the local community through church, Grange, Farm Woman and 4-H. On the sidelines, Kevin's sister Heidi Berger, a Head Start Preschool Teacher, still helps out on the farm. Now her daughters, Sarah, a sophomore at Penn State Berks studying Animal Science and Rebecca, a senior at Oley Valley studying Agriculture, now help with daily chores of feeding youngstock and milking.

When asked about the future of the agriculture industry in Berks, Richard said, "With farmland preservation and the excellent soils and weather, there will always agriculture in Berks but small dairies will have a tough time surviving." Kevin stated "We need a younger generation to become interested in production agriculture and the knowledge to be profitable."

