

Three Brothers Become Dairy Farmers

The journey for brothers Robert, Clarence and Dennis Sattazahn, started when their family decided to walk their dairy animals from Little Kutztown in Lebanon County to the newly rented farm in Marion Township. In 1934, father Ray Sattazahn started with 24 cows, two horses, two mules, chickens and ducks on this rented 140-acre farm, which the family purchased in 1968. Growing up on the farm taught all three the necessities as they developed their own dairy operations. In 1955, Robert left the home farm, married Jane, a city girl, and rented farms in the Stouchsburg and Myerstown area. In 1967, they moved onto the 185 acre farm off of Rt. 419, which his father had purchased. It was preserved in 1996. He retired from farming in 2001 and has served on the Tulpehocken Township planning commission since 1973.

Clarence left the home farm in 1960, moved to an adjoining 132-acre farm and with 32 cows and 15 youngstock started Zahnheim dairy. They purchased the farm in 1968 from dad and preserved it in 1996. A nearby 180-acre farm was purchased in 1980 and preserved in 2000. After 51 years of farming, Clarence and Marlene retired in 2011.

Dennis the youngest, never left the home farm which was always known as Zahncroft Dairy. After helping his dad for 18 years, in 1976, he and wife Betsy, a Home Economics teacher, took over the farm, starting with 65 cows. They sold the easements in 1998 to help pay for the farm. Being close to each other, the brothers shared equipment and labor, benefiting all. Crops grown were similar on each farm with most being fed to the dairy animals. They included; alfalfa hay, corn, wheat, soybeans and pasture. Milk was purchased by Clover Farms Dairy. Local farm suppliers included; K & K Feeds, Agway and Farm Bureau. When asked, what was the most challenging aspect of farming, Robert stated "Getting the Crops Harvested," Clarence mentioned "Paying off the Debt" and Dennis said, "Making Ends Meet and Being Tied to the Daily Chores of the Farm."

The brothers and their families were always involved in local church and community activities along with Grange, 4-H and FFA, Society of Farm Women and the Holstein club. What were they most proud of, Robert said, "Being a Farm Family," Clarence noted, "Seeing the Children succeed in 4-H and FFA", and Dennis replied, "That his boys know how to own and operate their own dairy on the farm I grew up on."

Answering to "What is Needed for the Future of Agriculture in Berks County," Robert mentioned "Finding ways for young families to take over the farm." Clarence said "Making farming affordable and profitable for the next generation," and Dennis stated "That the non-farming community realize that we need farms to produce food."