

A Few More Stories

Colin King in squash patch, 1986 or '87. He still wears the blue ball cap.

There were stories braided into these fourteen interviews, and a few of them simply stand on their own. I do them more justice to let them be, rather than creating a literary thread to pull through them. Here they are, simply by the speaker:

Inga Haugen (remember, "I'm not a girl, I'm an Ingal!") had the experience of representing her peers as a 17-year-old Dairy Princess in Fillmore County. She was a spirit of truth even then—lobbying the association to let the princesses sit on hay bales and wear bib overalls. She could not really imagine wearing a dress for this function. "**I'll even throw these bales and show you what a real dairy princess does,**" challenged Inga. Yet they rode, instead, on the back of a hay wagon on plastic lawn chairs, even down the steep roads into Lanesboro. Luckily the chairs were duct-taped down, but there were times when she nearly leapt off the trailer to save her skin. I can truly imagine Inga in a dress and heels ready to leap!

This Inga is now up at Concordia College in Moorhead, representing through story and persuasion, the whole big issue of cows on grass. **"I had the opportunity recently to talk about dairy farming and agriculture, something I never pass up. It was a Friday night and I had two graduation parties to attend, as two of my friends had graduated this last semester. I went to the first one and was introduced to my friend's parents (who'd come up from Chicago to see their daughter graduate). I was then**



sucked into a conversation explaining about the dairy industry for a whole hour. The funny part was when my other friend called me and asked if I'd gotten lost, since I was over an hour late. I apologized and said that after the conversation was done, I would come. I told her I was 'talking cows.' She interrupted me and said, 'So we won't see you for a bit, huh?' And she didn't ask for any other explanations. When I finally got to the second party, I had to tell them all about the cows as well. Yep, on a Friday night, at two separate parties, I'm talking agriculture." ❖

Colin King made me laugh with a story about geese weeding strawberries. This was a part of his youth in Long Prairie, Minnesota: **"My parents had an acre and a half of U-Pick strawberries that were weeded by domesticated geese. [How did geese know the weeds from the strawberries?] Well, they don't like the leaves of the strawberry plants, but it was a real problem when the green fruit started coming on, because they loved the green fruit, which ultimately led to us stopping that practice. As soon as you saw the first berries come on, you**

had to herd the geese out of the berry patch into a fenced off area. So they were great fertilizers, but they weren't great weeders . . . you couldn't tell them "that spot is really weedy over there." ❖

It was mid-August 2003, and Josh and Cindy Van Der Pol and I were standing in their chicken barn. They have three small corrugated huts inside the barn each holding over a hundred chicks (428 in total at this time). Maggie, their aging Border Collie, was watching the chicks closely, especially as Cindy put feed in their feeders and water in their watering canister. Cindy explained that soon the chicks will go out into the pasture with a large fenced off area (5' high mesh electrical fencing). Each evening, their dog, Maggie (12) and their son, Jacob (8) will go out to herd the chickens into the huts for safety during the night. Maggie is arthritic yet can still herd hundreds of chickens into housing each night. And Jacob has learned by watching that the chickens respond to both the sound and shadow of a hawk. To hasten the process of herding chicks, Jacob knows how to make the scream of the Redtail Hawk. ❖

Influences of Their Own Children

The image of Jacob Van Der Pol screeching like a Redtail brings me back to the concept that the second generation is impossible to feature here without talking about the third generation. It all keeps going! Melissa MacKimm listens to Ian in his upstairs crib as we talk in her dining room. Connie Carlson hands crayons to Madeline at the coffee shop. Merrisue Minar notes how the Minar grandchildren work around the creamery, and a playpen was often seen in the main salesroom of Cedar Summit Farm. Josh and Cindy Van Der Pol have moved a house onto Pastures A Plenty, and recently their son, Jacob, asked, "Where will my house go someday?"

As I stood in the yard at Pastures A Plenty, Andrew Van Der Pol (then five years old) walked through our conversation toting half of a five-gallon bucket of water, headed out to some pigs stuck in a certain part of the pasture. Andrew could hardly lift the bucket, but no one stopped to help him; he was doing fine. He would carry and stop, carry and stop. His mom watched and remarked, "**Andrew sees a job and does it.**" ❖

"I wanted to give him the life I'd had."

It becomes apparent that each generation puts its hopes in the next one, and not so much on specific behaviors or dreams of that next generation, but simply on their presence. Even operational changes on their home farmsteads are made in the name of the next