

Of Family and the Land

The Kutztown-Fleetwood area has some of the most productive soil in America. In 1949, Irvan Leid's family decided to make it their home. His son Ammon and his wife Edna took over Seven Winds Farm in 1979. They raised nine children on the 60-acre dairy, corn, hay and soybean farm. Like farms in Berks County, all family members were involved. Ammon mention; "My brothers and sisters helped until they moved on. Our children helped until moving on and now Daniel's children are starting to help". The third generation now continues as their son Daniel and wife JoAnn took over the farm operation in 2013.

To provide for the future, the Leids applied to sell the agriculture conservation easements. Being accepted, Ammon stated; "We had purchased the neighbor's farm of 134 acres which was preserved. We thought the home farm would go with that. The bank also thought it would help with the mortgage".

To help the local Mennonite community, Ammon's father established Leids Shoes and Saddlery in 1960 as a farm supply business. Today three of the children are operating this well known business. Daughter Alta is the manager; son Nelson is the shoe person and daughter Katie fills in wherever needed. However, Ammon and Edna cannot retire, as he helps oversees both businesses. Edna cleans and prepares horse blankets. I dropped by one day and Edna was laying blankets over the fence to dry. She had a wonderful smile, as she mention she thought she would have less work when they left the farm. Hard work is in their blood.

When asked what he would be doing if he were not farming, Ammon reply was; "I have no idea, but in Junior High, because of my good grades, a few teachers felt I should go to college and become a doctor or something important. I said something to my dad. He asked, 'Would the work of a doctor or anyone else do any good if there were no food?' This is still very true today. Can we support farming enough to sustain it, keep it productive, to support this nation and the world so that no one has to suffer from hunger". He also mentioned that "We need to keep economic conditions that farms can exist and improve, have good markets and local farm supply businesses". The Leid's like over 800 farm owners in Berks County have made a permeate commitment to food production.

Questions – Answers

Your name: Ammon and Edna Leid farm owners

Farm name: Seven Winds Farm

Year's family has been farming: 1949 my parents moved here.

Years you have been farming: I farmed for 34 years. Started in 1979 then passed it on to son Daniel in 2013.

Family members involved in the operation: Family has always been involved in the operation. When I grew up my sisters and brothers helped until they moved on. Then our children helped until moving on. Now Daniel's children are starting to help.

Family members involved in the operation: Son Daniel and wife JoAnn do the farming.

Do you or family member work off the farm for additional income?: Daniel and JoAnn are both on the farm.

Municipality farm is located: Maxatawny Township

Did you sell the development rights or purchase the farm with it already been preserved? The home farm we sold the rights. The neighboring farm we bought with with the rights already sold.

Why did you decide to preserve the farm: We bought the neighbor's farm which was preserved. We thought this farm would go with that. The bank also thought it would help with the mortgage.

Acre preserved: 60

Describe your farm operation: Dairy and crop farm. Crop are corn, hay, and soybeans.

Scope and scale: Medium

Any new ventures:

Children involved on the farm: Will be when old enough to help.

Most farmers say weather is one of the most challenging aspects of farming; what else ranks high? Markets or prices are a challenge. This year has been with the inputs.

Best thing about or proudest accomplishment relating to farming? There are many things that make a farmer feel good. A nice crop or good production. To have finished a job that needed to be done. Like seeing the barn filled with hay, or the bin filled grain.

What is needed for the future of agriculture industry in berk and surrounding counties? To keep economic conditions that farms can exist and improve. Good markets and available supplies.

If you weren't feeding the future-what would you be doing. I have no idea. In Junior High a few teachers thought with the grades I had I should think of collage prep. Maybe even be a doctor or something more important. I said something to my Dad. He ask, would the work of a doctor or anyone else do any good if there was no food? This is still very true today. Can we support faming enough to sustain it, keep it productive, to support this nation and the world so no one has to suffer from hunger.

