

# Kling family stands on four generations of commitment to farming

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WEST MILTON — Farming is a strong tradition in the Kling family. Duane Kling, 23, and his brothers Scott, 22, and Andy, 16, are the fourth generation to farm the land around West Milton and New Columbia, Union County.

Duane, immediate past president of the Mifflinburg Young Farmers Association, was named the regional Outstanding Young Farmer Under 30 at the Pennsylvania Young Farmers winter convention. He was also honored as the Mifflinburg Area Jaycees' Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year.

Duane sees his honors as just part of a four-generation commitment to farming. "We're a family," he says. "We've learned how to work together and we've had some excellent teachers in our dad and grandfather."

The Kling tradition began with Duane's great-grandfather, who purchased land on Nittany Mountain and later moved into West Milton, where he opened Sunnyside Dairy. Duane's grandfather, J. Ward Kling, bought land in Lewisburg R.D. 3, not far from West Milton. Today, Ward, age 75, works that farm with his son Richard.

When Duane and his wife, Cathy, started their family, Richard added a piece of bottomland to the family holdings. He purchased a New Columbia farm located under the Interstate 80 roadway near the banks of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

"What we've got is a good balance of land," Duane notes. "The New Columbia farm has good spots and because of the drainage it does well in drought. The Lewisburg R.D. 3 farm is dif-

ferent; it can handle wet weather just fine. With our acreage about equally divided, we spread the risk and it seems to work well."

Spreading the risk seems to be the pattern for the current Kling operation. Each member pursues specific interests, to the advantage of everyone. "We each have different interests," Richard says. "It works because we adjust to each other."

Richard concentrates on the poultry operation. Son Scott has followed his lead, studying poultry technology at Penn State. Richard and Ward raise turkeys and chickens, starting 8,800 turkeys and 17,000 to 18,000 roasting chickens at a time. Scott keeps his own flock of chickens, raising about 10,000 at a time which he keeps at his aunt's farm in West Milton.

Duane's interests complement the others. He raises about 900 hogs a year on contract, manages his father's beef heifers, does much of the equipment repair work, and most of all is in charge of the family's 400 tillable acres.

"Each of my boys is different," Richard explains. "And I try to respect those differences." Although Scott has enjoyed college, Duane didn't find it to his liking. He attended Penn State for a semester in agricultural engineering. "I enjoyed what I learned," he recalls. "But I wanted to be doing something more. I'd sit in the classroom and I'd start thinking about all the field work I could be doing instead. I got pretty restless."

Duane returned to the farm, but notes that leaving college didn't mean he ended his education. "We keep up with things here, and we try to make the right decisions. We try to follow new techniques and



Cathy and Trent Kling work in the newly renovated kitchen of their farmhouse.

keep what works for us."

He works with fertilizer and feed companies and maintains test plots. Duane has been cautious, however, about adopting a single best farming method. "We don't go out on the bandwagon for something. For example, we do some no-till, but we don't use it everywhere because it isn't right for every kind of soil. We still use our chisel drill and moldboard plow, because sometimes the situation is right for them."

Although it's Duane who makes the crop decisions, he still considers it a joint effort, which is part of the family's cooperative spirit. In working together, Richard notes, they've had to learn to give and take. "I may be his father, but I don't know that much about crops. If I want to know something, I ask Duane," he says. "When we're out in the fields, Duane is the boss. When we're in the poultry barns, he's the helper. Of course nothing ever runs perfectly smoothly. We don't always agree. But we know how to cooperate and get the job done well."

When Richard speaks of his family, he's not stopping with his sons. Duane and Cathy have a son Trent, age 3, and a daughter, Katrina, 1. When Duane and Cathy aren't at the main farm, they're very busy on their New Columbia property. The farm includes a large home that dates back to at least 1837 (as far back as Union County records go).

Cathy, an admitted town girl, says she used to tell herself she'd never do like her sister and marry a farmer. But one evening at a local roller rink she met a young man who belonged to the same church she did. It didn't take long before she knew she was about to become a farm wife.



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Now she and Duane are using what spare time they can find to renovate the New Columbia farmhouse. They've gutted the first floor, built new walls, and put in a modern kitchen and bathroom. Now they're working on the front rooms. "With five bedrooms upstairs, we've got a lot ahead of us," Cathy admits as she talks about plans for the summer.

There's a lot ahead for all of the Klings. Richard had a few moments to reflect on the future on a recent Monday afternoon. Duane and Scott were busy testing their newest purchase, a portable welder. Ward took time out from the barn to join Richard in looking for the truck that was on its way to disinfect the poultry barns. Ward mentioned news about more farms failing out west, and Richard noted that the avian flu was getting close enough to make him uneasy. But the Klings don't concentrate long on negative things.

Richard, watching Trent and

Katrina in the barnyard, recalls, "When he was learning to talk, Scott spent so much time in the henhouse that he used to cluck like a chicken instead of saying words. And when Duane was in first or second grade and he was supposed to count he said 30, 60, 90, 120...because that's how he heard his mount count eggs on a flat."

Richard smiles and continues, "Now that they're grown, I've given the boys the option of going away. I'm amazed that they've come back and wanted to work the farm."

He shouldn't be so amazed. Richard and his sons are an extension of the spirit that underlies farming. As Trent and Katrina will soon find out, they're supported by four generations of positive attitudes about farming.

As Duane notes, "Farming is still all I ever wanted to do, and if I have anything to say about it, I'm going to go on farming the rest of my life."



The Duane Kling family: Duane, Trent, Cathy and Katrina.



Four generations of Klings have made their living by farming. Representing those generations are, from left, J. Ward, great grandfather; Richard, grandfather; Scott and Duane; and Trent.

# Homestead Notes