

# Windy-Knoll View Farm: Luck, Love And Holsteins

**VERNON ACHENBACH JR.**  
**Lancaster Farming Staff**  
**MERCERSBURG** (Franklin Co.) — From the intense urban sprawl of the southcentral-eastern part of the state, head west on the Pennsylvania turnpike, then go south on I81, into the lap of the Appalachian Plateau, and something happens.

Housing developments fade away from the landscape, gradually thinning, almost disappearing.

It is the western edge of the banana-shaped Cumberland Valley, before it bends further south across the Mason-Dixon Line into Maryland. It is an area whose people live off of and understand agriculture.

This area of Franklin County is dominated by the silos, barns, crop fields and the pastures of family farms, but these farms are different from those in the state's more eastern counties.

These family farms still have woodlots, areas along streams and fencelines that harbor wildlife. And there are places for young and old to explore on their own.

It is the locale of James and Nina Burdette's 200-acre Windy-Knoll View Farm and its 67-head registered Holstein milking herd.

The farm is aptly named.

Several miles outside of Mercersburg proper, the dairy farm sits on the face of the knobbed head of a great, rounded, beached-whale-looking ridge of land that gazes southwest, straight into the winds of winter storms as they flow over the mountains on a northeast journey.

From the manicured front lawn of the stone farmhouse at Windy-Knoll, with its grape vines twisted on a wire trellis, flower beds, shade trees, and children's playhouse, the horizon is shared by a large open sky and Two Top Mountain, and its sister formations.

It can get quiet as evening ebbs.

Just to the west, Cove Mountain's long, flat ridge-top draws a



The Burdette family stands in the lawn behind their Windy-Knoll View farmhouse with Windy-Knoll View CC Pear-ET, a homebred daughter of the family's well-known

Ultimate Pala cow. From the left are Nina, Kyle, James and Justin. The cow is Justin's.

longer and straighter line where land and sky meet.

To the north, not visible from the farm, is yet another mountain.

The three mountains create the edges of a "bay" of fertile valley land — an alcove from the broad swath of the limestone-rich Cumberland Valley.

On winter evenings after milking, while changing back the swinging cattle gates in the barnyard, the Burdettes' sons — Jason, 16, and Kyle, 12 — can look out to see a fuzzy halo of muted light coming from the backside of Two Top mountain.

If there is time, and their chores

are finished and done well, the brothers may go skiing on the lighted slopes and meet other teenagers from the area, from high school, or the church youth group.

Nina, who raises the calves from birth, she said she has been treated, especially this fall, to spectacular sunsets.

This place in the world is just beyond the edge of man's 24-hour, civilized activities.

At night, the heavens can still be seen from the ground, not obscured from view by the glowing security blanket of electrical lights that urban and city people draw up over themselves.

At Windy-Knoll View Farm, the stars still shine, and the fall of darkness is welcomed for its invitation to rest and re-energize.

A queen lives at Windy-Knoll Farm.

She is Windy-Knoll View Ultimate Pala, former supreme champion of the World Dairy Expo, the Maryland State Fair, the Pennsylvania Holstein Championship, etc.

Perhaps history will make more of her as time passes. Through the technology of embryo transfer, she has many daughters. In fact, the royal bloodlines have been running true, with 15 of these princesses have been named All-American Award winning Holsteins (perhaps more to come).

Classified by the Holstein Association of America as an Excellent, Pala has brought world attention to the Burdettes.

Pala's image in on the farm sign that hangs from a tall post, along the long farm lane, at the edge of the farmhouse yard.

She is important to the Burdettes, but is valued not just for her stature and productivity and the commercial attention to her strong genetic traits for physical character, but also for her behavior.

According to James, Pala is a "smart" and gentle cow with an apparent affinity for people. And, while the queen tends to be boss of the herd, the nature of Pala is conducive to ease of handling and care.

And the Burdettes can demonstrate how her offspring seem to

(Turn to Page A32)



Nina Burdette feeds a young heifer calf which may grow up to be a sixth generation Excellent.



Kyle Burdette gives a hug to Prissy, a daughter of Windy-Knoll View Ultimate Pala.



A love of the great American West goes along with horses. James Burdette talks to this young yearling stallion he bred. He says he wants to breed a good paint.