

Windy-Knoll View Farm

(Continued from Page A28)

also carry similar behavioral traits, even as calves. With about a third of the herd direct descendents of Pala, the differences can be sensed after a few minutes among the herd.

The cows and heifers that appear unafraid and curious and calm, the ones with the "receptive" look in their eye when confronted with human interaction, are most likely Pala's offspring, or grand or great grand daughters.

The others seem more aloof and uncertain.

"I don't like dumb cows," James said. "Dumb cows don't stay around here. They got to be able to get through to the (feed) trough and walk to the barn to get milked."

Of course, the skeptical may suggest that perhaps the Burdettes are biased toward the Pala cow family, and spend more time with those animals, washing them, handling them, getting them used to being comfortable with people. Maybe.

But, last week, while James and Nina were sitting at the round maple table, in the wood finish-themed farmhouse kitchen, the wall-phone by the door rang.

Kyle answered and told his father the caller was someone from Toronto requesting approval for a collect call. James got up from the table to take the call. It was about breeding Holsteins.

Later, another phone call, from another state in the United States, was taken by Nina and she discussed some of the placings of Pala daughters.

And so it is, James said. The calls, the interest, the inquiries, the talk about breeding ...

"The phone bills are atrocious," Nina said, "but that's part of the business."

The Burdettes grew up in Maryland, on farms located about four miles apart, but they went to different high schools.

Nina and James met through 4-H activities. She raised horses and beef steers and one year she

had dairy heifers. He raised Ayrshires and grew up milking cows on rented farms that would range from 100 to 500 acres.

James was active in 4-H and as a teenager showed three All-American Ayrshires.

He also was active in dairy cattle judging, and the Maryland team was second in the nation by three points, in his last year of eligibility. James was fourth top individual nationally that year.

The three-point loss of first place was disappointing to James, Nina said. She said that Maryland had always sent its team on a trip to Europe as a reward for winning a national title. She said it was perhaps his only chance to travel to Europe.

But these days James does travel, around the United States, judging, showing, and looking at cattle. A review of photographs taken over the past several years at many national and regional Holstein shows will reveal at least one Burdette, usually James — as owner-breeder, breeder, showman, or judge.

He can be expected to continue to judge important shows, but he has turned down some offers in order to not eliminate Justin's eligibility to show cattle — if the father is judge, son can't show.

James said he is proud of his sons and wife Nina, and that he's thankful for happiness that they've been granted.

"Justin's wild about (showing). Justin's a much more accomplished showman at his age than I was," James said.

He said his son, who also swims for his high school team and works out with the team five nights per week to prepare for meets, is dedicated.

When preparing for the showing season, James said that Justin will start working 15 weeks ahead of time, hosing down those to be shown, at the same time, day after day.

And the boys work with their animals with halters, with the same commitment, James said.



While the milking herd at Windy-Knoll View Farm beds on clay in freestalls and is fed ensiled forages and grains in the freestall bunk, they get hay in this exercise and pre-milking area bunk. The overhead chain conveyor allows square bales of hay to be transferred from the loft to the square drop-down chute in the middle of roof over the bunk.



On the right, the queen of Windy-Knoll View Farm herd, Ultimate Pala is part of the milking string and matron to about a third.

"I think it really hit home to me when Nina saw Justin drag Kyle out (early on in the morning after school let out for the summer) and say, 'Come on, let's lead cows.'"

Last year, James said, Justin's big goal was going to Louisville, and he started on a program working toward it the first day of summer school vacation.

Currently all help with milking and chores. "I don't want to see (Justin or Kyle) milk every day, or Nina," James said. And even though it cuts into their income, Nina said they have hired help some times so that they get more time together as a family.

In 1992, the family took their big vacation, going as a family to the national Holstein convention. "It was the trip of a lifetime," James said, "10 days."

The Burdettes crossed north of the Mason-Dixon into Pennsylvania in the 1970s, having rented farms for a while in Maryland.

James grew up farming rental property, which was advantageous at that time. He said that living in Gaithersburg, a close drive to Washington D.C., there was a lot of land speculation for development and it was inexpensive to rent property for farming that was otherwise idle, waiting for future development.

But eventually, he said his family came to a point where the only rental agreements they could get for crop fields were for 30-day periods. When investing money into seed and fertilizer, and trying to feed cows, that kind of insecurity in assets is dangerous.

Nina's father originally had purchased the farm where they now live. He rented to them for several

years and then they purchased it.

They didn't start with much, but with the luck that they've had, and commitment to seeing things through, and skill, they were able to come to where they are.

When the Burdette's moved to Pennsylvania, James had 19 Ayrshires and five recently purchased Holsteins, three of which were registered. After a while, the final few Ayrshires he had left he sold back to Ralph Shenk, from whom he had originally purchased his first Ayrshire.

Although the Ayrshires James had were well shaped and some had earned All-American honors, "I liked them, but I couldn't turn a dollar on them." He switched to Holsteins.

One of the first Holsteins he bought was a Crusader daughter and her first calf, the first one with the Windy-Knoll prefix, went Excellent.

Since then, he has had a number of Excellents. But, there is no photograph of her. "At the time, we didn't have the money for a professional photograph."

How they got Pala, the cow that they admit helped them find a sense of financial security, and

enabled them to purchase an adjoining 100-acre farm in 1986, is a story similar to someone buying an art masterpiece at a flea market.

"We bought several cows off of the bottom (of a herd)," he said, two were Creek Bluff Elevation daughters. "One was classified 88 points and really good. She probably would have gone Excellent if scored a third time, but she got sick and died."

But Burdette had liked daughters of Ultimate, he said, adding that, though Ultimate didn't otherwise have strong breeding data, "Ultimate turned me on."

He bred those two Elevation daughters to Ultimate — one had lots of quality and went reserve All-American, and was second at the World Premier. He sold half interest to Lyle-Haven Farm. The other calf was Pala.

He showed her as a calf and she took first place as a yearling and first as a 2-year-old, and fourth at Harrisburg. He was offered money for her, but didn't take it. He said finances weren't quite as tight, and, at the time, milk prices were fair. "That's why I didn't sell," he said, smiling, adding that he is very glad he didn't.



James Burdette checks on frozen semen.

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