

Brubaker Farms

(Continued from Page B2)
age was needed since with they farm 700 to 800 acres.

A 1,000,000 gallon poured-in-place manure system takes care of manure needs.

The office is decorated like a home with color-coordinated walls, furnishings, and flooring. It's in this room that the family often gathers while Luke's wife Barb and Mike's wife Lisa take care of the bookkeeping and payroll. A cow-shaped cookie jar holds cookies for the five grandchildren who often join their parents there.

The walls are lined with large matted color photos of the grandchildren, taken by daughter Cindy, who is known for her artistic ability.

Cindy is married to Marshall Meador. They live in the farmhouse and have four sons, Mitchell, 7; Brett, 4; Zachary, 2; and Lucas, 1.

Although Marshall is a full-time pilot for Delta Airlines, he enjoys "pitching in some unskilled labour needed around the farm," he said.

The parents encouraged their children to get a college education before deciding to choose farming as a career.

"We wanted them to choose farming by choice and not by necessity," their mother said. "We think it is important to have that degree sort of as an insurance policy."

Five years ago, when Mike graduated from Penn State with an ag business management degree, he knew that the home farm was the place for him. He and his wife Lisa and their 9-month-old daughter Molly live in a home that adjoins the farm land.

Tony graduated this spring from Messiah College with a business administration degree. He said that he had never wavered in his desire to farm full-time. But to be able to support three full-time partners, changes needed to be made.

Luke said, "We realized the old facility was not capable of supporting three families so we chose to expand in order to do what we enjoy."

Timing seemed perfect for mak-

ing changes. Luke and an older brother, Jim, had farmed in partnership since 1962, when they began with 18 cows and used a two-row corn planter to plant 125 acres. Now, the brother wanted to phase out of the farming operation to open a bed and breakfast named Olde Country Log House Farm. The dissolution of that partnership was affable and one that enabled Luke to form a partnership with his sons Mike and Tony.

With many doomsayers in the farming business, the decision was not an easy one.

Although Luke considers himself average to aggressive when it comes to keeping on the cutting edge of agriculture, he was a bit cautious about the expansion.

"The bigger you are — the bigger the losses," he said. "It was never my goal to make it big and accumulate a lot. If you own a house with a roof, have a good family, and enough money to pay the bills, what more can you ask?"

"Formerly we were milking in a stanchion barn. We had two tie stall barns with 100 head in each. For years the boys would talk about adding a parlour. But I didn't take them seriously until Tony was halfway through college. Then I knew that we had to do something to be able to support three families on the farm. We decided to counteract the doomsayers. I want to work with the boys and make it worthwhile for them. After all, you can't take it (money) along."

Luke pointed to the picture that hangs above his desk. It's a painting of a businessman at a desk consulting with Jesus.

"It's the Lord who we counsel for guidance. We don't just make decisions on our own," Luke said.

His sons agreed. Mike said, "Our main goal is allegiance to the Lord. We work to make that a top priority."

At first, the Brubakers planned to expand on the home farm where Luke had grown up and raised his own family. But it is located next to a development so the family decided to build on what they call the Musser farm, which Luke had purchased 18 years earlier for its adjoining land. The farm had lots

of obsolete chicken houses, which Brubaker used for raising hogs before the new facilities were built.

"I'm totally for using what you have and doing the best for it. The boys were creative with modern trend of ventilation and renovated the chicken houses into modern designed calf and heifer barns with lots of southern exposure," Luke said. "We are still using all the farms and all the buildings but with different purposes."

The whole family is delighted with the new facility.

"I'm grateful to dad for having things established so that we could do this. We've been here only three weeks and almost half the herd are first calve heifers, but the herd averages 62½ pounds milk production," Tony said.

He attributes it to cow comfort. "You can tell the cows are really happy. They are so comfortable and content in the new barn. With the mattresses, they lay where they should. It's so easy to manage because the gravity flow takes it right into the manure pit," he said.

The cows are milked three times daily and rather than more work the Brubakers consider it less manual labour than when they were in their outdated barns. Then it required five people to milk 200 cows. Now it takes only one to one and a half persons to milk 300 cows," Tony said.

The three take turns getting things started at 4:30 a.m. The remaining two start work at 6:30 a.m. Each takes one nighttime shift and rely on hired help for the remainder.

They oversee the evening milking by viewing it on the computer in the comfort of the office. It's possible to detect exactly what's happening in the barn because the screen shows each cow as it's being milked, if the milker shuts down, milk weights for each cow, records times, compares produc-



The Brubaker Spring House is available as a retreat center for church, civic groups, and individuals. With streams, meadows, and surrounding fields, the retreat center offers rejuvenation to guests.

tion input and output costs.

"We don't have the hands on time that we did before, but the computer allows us to spot problems so that we can stay on top without every day hands on milking," Mike said.

During the expansion, the partners purchased cows but ordinarily all replacements are home bred with AI.

Although the three share duties, Mike and Tony manage the cows together with Mike specializing in dairy nutrition and Tony in herd health. Dad is general manager and takes care of the hog operation, Mike and Mom manage the chickens and Mike also takes care of field operations.

One of the agreements before making the decision to expand was that Luke could come and go as he pleased. At his age, he wanted to slow down from the hurried pace that he had always kept. Now the boys joke that he never completes a milking, but Luke likes running

for parts, phone work, taking care of the details that general managers do, and the public relations required.

Luke is most grateful that, for the first time in his working life, he doesn't need to get up early every morning. He likes being able to see all the cows and to detect when one is in heat just by driving through in his car while he's still dressed in a suit and tie.

Theoretically the brothers have every other Sunday off, but time off is easily negotiable.

All family members are active in church work, Mike and Lisa are youth leaders, Tony teaches Bible school and works on person to person relationships.

The groundwork for family togetherness was actually laid when the family was growing up.

Barb's advice to her sons when looking for a spouse is "Don't pick a wife for active participation on

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