

Fifth Generation Wakefields Farm At Friends Cove

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Bradford Co. Correspondent
BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — For five generations the Wakefield family has been farming in Friends Cove, near Bedford. "Big difference is," said Tom Wakefield, now in partnership with his brother Jim, "we farm more land, have more cows, and work more hours for percentage-wise less profit than our great grandfather."

Tom and Jim do basically all of the work on their 400 acres of scenic land.

They milk at least 110 head of Holstein with the help of a neighbor. Jim's son Scott, 18, also helps on the farm.

With replacements and young stock, they have about 200 Holsteins on the farm at any one time.

Great grandfather never dreamed of the modern equipment now used on the old homeplace. There is a computerized system which can help the Wakefields keep track of feeding, breeding and milk production.

Forage, roughage, and hay are all grown on the farm, along with shelled corn.

"We try to put out enough acres to allow a buffer for a drought year," Tom said. "If we get lucky and there is no drought, we sell the extra, but this always allows us a buffer for a disaster year."

While Tom favors working with the cows; Jim enjoys the equipment and crop production.

"However, if one of us isn't here, the other picks up the slack," Tom explained.

Tom's wife, Cathy, is a home economics teacher at Tussey

Mountain High School. They have two sons, J.T., 8, and Thad, 10.

Jim is married to Beverly, a teacher at Bedford Elementary School. In addition to their son Scott, they have a daughter, Betsy, 16.

"We don't know at this time if any of the children are going to want to take over the farm," Tom said. "Scott is still undecided about what he wants to do. However, he does plan to attend Penn State University to major in agriculture and may decide to come home when he is finished. Betsy is not interested, and my boys are still a little young for such a big decision."

He said that the future of dairy farming is uncertain.

"We think we are good managers," Tom said, "and that is what it takes to make a go of farming these days. Our milk production last year was 21,500 (pounds of milk) per cow."

"We are sure the trend towards a larger farm will not stop, but we hope and think there will always be room for all sizes of dairy producers," Tom said.

"Those who are good managers will survive," he continued. "Large farms do have the advantage of being able to buy in bulk, which helps keep costs down."

"The days of a small farm supporting a family are gone."

Tom said he and Jim joke about their wives working to support their farming "hobby."

"However, at times we wonder if it really is a joke," Tom said.

"Twenty years ago, when we made an improvement, it could be paid off in a short amount of time. That is no longer true. Costs con-



From the left, Jim and Tom Wakefield work together in their milking parlor. The Wakefields represent the fifth generation of their family to farm at Friends Cove.

tinue to escalate, and part of this is because there are fewer and fewer farms. The less demand there is for equipment, the more it will cost.

"It's really kind of scary, when you think that 2 percent of the population is growing all of the food for the entire population of the United States," he said.

The Wakefields ship their milk to Land O' Lakes, and are paid on

butterfat and total solids-not-fat components. Most federal milk marketing orders are going in that direction, according to Tom.

Like many others, the Wakefields get tired of hearing all the "fat-free" propaganda. "We sincerely believe that you should eat what you want, just not so much of it."

Unlike the hog and chicken

markets, the Wakefields do not foresee a wave of large corporations owning dairy farms. "It is too labor intensive for corporations to be interested. They would have to hire too many people."

Working together, Tom and Jim said they hope to remain farming until another generation of Wakefields takes over the home place.

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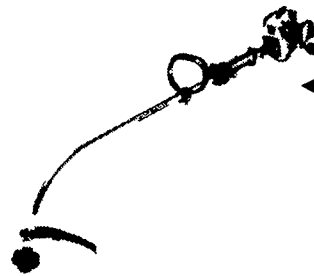
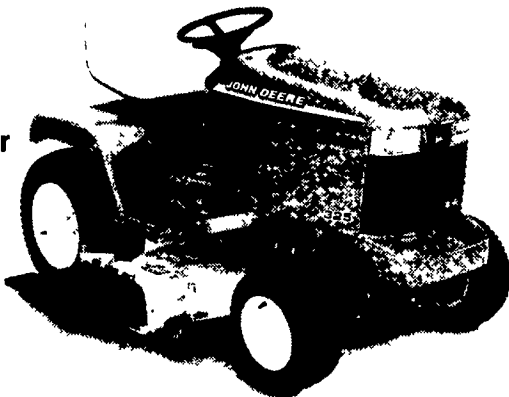


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