

Preserving Farmland, One Book At A Time

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Paging through the book, "Farm Life," familiar images in stark black and white capture the essence of agriculture. Canning jars, corn fields draped in snow, hay wagons, families at work, fruit, and farm cats either educate or bring back fond memories of working the land for the reader.

The dedication, "For the farm families of Lancaster County, stewards of the soil," is a dedication that sets the tone for the call for land preservation that resonates through the entire book.

The pictures, taken by Lancaster native Gini Woy, formerly Gini Wagner, are woven among the interviews with seven farm families that make up the chapters of the book. Quotes that tout the importance of preserving farmland are laced among the pictures.

The book, "Lancaster County Farm Life — Farming Families And Their Commitment To The Land" was four years in the making.

A booklet in Vermont caught the eye of Karen Weiss, former director of land preservation at Lancaster Farmland Trust. At

from Korea ready to be sold, all the money was able to go back to the Trust," said Woy. "We were pretty proud of that accomplishment. It's a good selling tool, too."

Woy herself took vacation days and weekends to shoot the photographs. She estimates that she took 60-70 rolls of film to get the pictures for the book.

"I don't think I ever had so much fun on my vacation days as I did shooting photographs on those farms," said Woy. "I feel like I have a special connection to each family."

"It's a labor of love for all of us involved. We are all very proud of it."

Weiss chose the seven families highlighted in the book. "She chose families dedicated to preservation and able to tell their story in an interesting way," said Woy. "They are also scattered all over the county, because we wanted to represent each area of Lancaster County."

Photographing farm families posed an enjoyable challenge to Woy. Using only silhouettes helped Woy capture an Amish family. "The families were all happy and willing to participate because they believe in what they're doing."

"I don't think they had a full understanding of what it was going to be like to have me follow them around," said Woy with a laugh. She rode in a combine, took pictures during dinner, and followed around farm animals to capture the pictures which grace the pages of the book.

"I wanted to show every aspect of farming that I could. I just kept my eyes open and grabbed scenes as I saw them. I tried to immerse myself," she said of the many hours she spent at the farms. "They couldn't get rid of me. I easily spent eight hours there, and most of the time I went back more than once."

"I tried to represent different seasons, because I think that is part of the beauty of this area. Each season brings something unique," said Woy.

Although the seasons and farm life do provide excellent opportunity for color photos, Woy, whose first love with photography is black and white, chose the medium for the book.

"I felt the black and white worked the best with the subject matter. It has a more natural appearance and keeps with the

theme of the book. It allows one to look at the composition."

Besides the insightful pictures and copy, the small details, according to Woy, help to make the book a standout. The green, textured end sheets were chosen for their similarity to a tobacco leaf. The end sheets with wheat superimposed on translucent paper also lend a quality touch to the book.

However, "There are still things that I would change about it," said Woy. "That's what makes you continue to grow."

Woy is already entertaining ideas for a book about farm women. "I need to see this one out a before I move onto other projects," she said. "There's a lot of marketing to do."

"Farm Life" has been available to the public for a month.

With completion of the book, marketing strategies have become the main focus. To contribute to the project, Turkey Hill stores are selling the book with all proceeds going to the Trust. Provident, Barnes and Noble, and Borders book stores also carry the book. Advertisements



These photographs appear in the book, available at bookstores, Turkey Hill stores, and Lancaster Farmland Trust. All proceeds help the Trust preserve Lancaster farms.

national, as buyers of the book are sending it to clients, universities, or friends in such countries as Sweden, Germany, Japan, and England.

This spring, the Trust plans to market the book more towards tourist industry.

"I loved it. That is a life experience I would never change. That's where I learned to bake bread and do canning. We worked in the fields with them and developed lifelong friendships. It really made me appreciate this area."

With aspirations of becoming a reporter, Woy earned a degree in English from Millersville University. To gain experience in the journalism field, she began writing for the school's newspaper.

Because of shorthanded staffing at the newspaper, she soon began to shoot photographs on assignment, an aspect of journalism which quickly became her favorite. "It was a natural fit for me," said Woy.

After college Woy headed to Philadelphia to attend Antonelli Institute in Philadelphia, a photography school, for two years.

After graduating from Antonelli Institute, Woy returned to Lancaster to work at a photo studio before moving into her present job as a commercial/industrial photographer for Godfrey Advertising, where she has

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Gini Woy
Photographer, "Farm Life"

have also appeared in *Lancaster Farming*.

Volunteers have also handed out fliers advertising the book in downtown Lancaster to complement sales at Central Market's community stand. Additionally, Woy plans to hold more book signings. She will exhibit and sell prints from the book the evening of Feb. 22 at an art reception and book signing. The exhibit, open to the public, will take place at Landis Homes.

"There has been so many people willing to help us out to promote it," said Woy. "It makes me feel good that people not only say, 'Oh, that's such a nice book,' but also say that it's for a good cause."

"When we were conceptualizing it, we debated whether to sell it or hand it out. It's a tool for preservation and education on why preservation is important, so if can accomplish both of those missions, we can't ask for any more; it's doing its job."

"I like it when people look at the images, read the quotes, and say, 'I didn't know that,'" she said. "When people start to understand how hard these farmers are working."

"Some people are buying the book as a gift for parents who grew up on a farm and have warm memories of the farm life — the nostalgia aspect of it," said Woy.

The book is also going inter-

Reared in Lancaster County, Woy learned to love the area through firsthand experience. "I've always loved this area. I think when we were kids (she has one older sister and a younger brother and sister), the seeds were planted. When I was about 10 to 14 years old, we would spend our summers on Amish farms. My mother made arrangements with the Amish gentlemen that she worked with so we could stay during the day."



Gini Woy, formerly Gini Wagner, shot the striking black-and-white pictures for "Farm Life," a book sold by the Lancaster Farmland Trust. "It tells the stories of preservation and also stories of what it's like to live on a farm in Lancaster County," she said. "I think it makes people feel good to buy something that supports preservation."



the time Woy was considering the idea of shooting photographs for fund-raising note cards, so the concept of a book for preservation fund-raising became a reality.

Sara Barton, also from Lancaster, wrote the descriptive copy that accompanies the pictures. Barton interviewed the families and teamed up with her father, a veterinarian and member of the Farmland Trust board, to draft the colorful quotes that capture farm life in words.

"Farm Life" is largely a volunteer effort, part of what makes the project so appealing, said Woy. The film, paper to print the pictures, writing, design, and prepress preparations were donated to the project. A fund-raising reception at the Pressroom Restaurant, Lancaster, paid for printing costs. The book was printed in Korea for greatest cost efficiency.

"It's hard to remember everyone who has given to it," said Woy. "One thing that still overwhelms me is all the people who gave freely to it."

Money from the sales goes to a separate account which tracks cost and profit.

"When the book came back

