

## Paul and Barb Liebenstein

Paul and Barb Liebenstein are the owners of Wolf Creek Dairy (WCD), and first generation dairy farmers. Paul's Dad was a county extension agent and his Mom, a German teacher. He grew up in a time when his Dad was teaching a lot of new things to dairy farmers, including the introduction of teat dip and calf hutches. Paul's Grandpa was a dairy farmer. These two men might have helped lead Paul to his calling. Paul started his dairy project with dairy steers, switched to a dairy heifer and never looked back. Then when he was 16 he kicked his brother's sheep out of the 16 stall dairy barn and started milking. After high school graduation he was set to go to the University of Minnesota, Waseca (UM,W). That summer his parents were in Europe for 3 weeks and while they were there a dairy farm at back home came up for rent. Upon Paul's parents return, Paul was no longer going to college, but was on his way to increasing his herd from 16 to 40 cows. Two years later the farm was sold and he moved to another 40 cow dairy.

In 1987, Barb married the cutest single dairy farmer she could find. Her background involved growing up on a greenhouse and sod operation in Northeastern Minnesota, and going to school at UM,W for veterinary technology. After 5 years at a mixed animal practice in Northfield, Barb got her dream job. She was an Oncology Technician at the College of Veterinary Medicine-Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Things were going along pretty well until Paul had the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 back surgeries and the doctor told him that he needed to find something else to do. Well, that wasn't going to happen. Paul and Barb started researching other ways to dairy and came upon the idea of a parlor and free stall barn. While the parlor wasn't unique, the free stall barn certain was unique. It didn't have any insulation and the walls were made of plastic curtains. It took 2 years of planning, and in 1994 the Liebenstein's went from 40 cows to 300. In 1997 they added another 100 cows. Today the Liebenstein's, and their employees, milk 450 cows 3 times a day in a double 8 herringbone parlor. That is the story of how a 4-H project got out of hand.

One the many benefits of building this facility includes the fact that Dundas is close enough to the University of Minnesota that it can host numerous tours every year. First year veterinary students, dairy challenge students and advanced dairy nutrition students are just some of the people they get to meet. It is with great pride the Liebenstein's have had a relationship with the UMN for many reasons. In the early part of this facility they would host theriogenology students, when Dr. Jerry Olson would bring his students down to pregnancy test cows. Dr. Jeff Reneau has been one of the largest influences at Wolf Creek Dairy. Due to his advice and teaching Wolf Creek Dairy has one of the most respectable, quality milk production programs. Dr. Sandra Godden also allowed them to participate in a mastitis study. Just having her on the farm is always educational. WCD's records are used in other courses to help students analyze and improve dairy herds. Recently, Dr. Godden had a group of advanced students at WCD for a visit. One of the young men told Paul that it was because of the tour at Wolf Creek Dairy that he decided to become a large animal veterinarian instead of small or mixed animal practitioner. Dr. Godden shared with us that this particular student is one of the most gifted students she has had in class. That is something that can make you feel pretty good about the job you do every day, and sometimes take for granted. Most recently professor emeritus, Jim Linn has started doing some nutrition work as well.

Excitedly, the Liebenstein's latest tie to UMN has been the enrollment of their youngest daughter, Mary, into the Animal Science department. Finally they have a Gopher! Their other daughter, Grace, although a SDSU Jackrabbit, doesn't make them any less proud. She was the SDSU Dairy Club President and will graduate from SDSU with a double major in dairy production and agriculture business.

The Liebenstein's involvement in the dairy industry includes being members of Land O' Lakes Cooperative, the Rice County American Dairy Association and Rice County Farm Bureau. Barb serves on the Midwest Dairy Association State and Regional Boards. They are both very involved in dairy promotion. Wolf Creek Dairy hosts 15-20 tours every year, educating and being educated about what is happening in the dairy world.

Just when you think there isn't anything new to learn, research and innovation just seem to turn up something exciting. Having a relationship with the University of Minnesota has been a real pleasure, one that the Liebenstein's hope to continue for many years to come.



Dr. Trevor Ames, Barb & Paul Liebenstein Barb & Paul Liebenstein (Photo: Dr. Sorge)