

### Chapter 3 1960-1965

Just before the pooling program began there were lots of dairies in Tulare and Kings Counties. In fact in the 1930's, Tulare County alone had over 1,100 dairies. Most of these were very small, averaging just over 31 milking cows per dairy. By the late 60's the number of dairies was considerably less than the size of each herd had gone up considerably. In 1970 the average size herd in Tulare County was 274 cows. Total herds: 230.

In the early 60's people of Portuguese descent owned most of the dairies, however Kings County had a number of Dutch dairymen. Of course there also were a good number of producers who were of neither descent. Already prior to the milk pooling bill a number of Dutch people purchased existing herds in Tulare County and were producing milk at manufacturing milk prices. Times were difficult and uncertain and most of these people worked extremely long hours and doing all or almost all of the work themselves and as families.

These were people who were young and just beginning the dairy business. Almost all began with buying a herd of cows and leasing the dairy facility. Included in the cow purchase (prior to 1968) were the "shipping rights" or contract with a particular processor. I'm sure I've lost the names of some of these pioneering Dutch. Our family didn't arrive until 1964.

One of the first of these was Frank and Adriana Leyendekker who settled on the Hesse Dairy southwest of Farmersville. They later purchased the property, and then began the purchase of land north of Visalia where they built a new facility. As the family grew up more land was purchased and several new dairies were built. An extremely hard working family that worked together to assure that each of the family members at some point could own their own facility if they wanted it.

Jacobus "Koop" and Elizabeth "Lisa" De Groot moved in the early sixties and began dairying north of Visalia in a partnership with the Doe family

Tom and Grace Byl got their start on one of Gary Eilers facilities located east of Visalia. After a number of years they were able to purchase a great location between Visalia and Tulare and built a brand new facility. Land at that location was very desirable and sold for all of \$1,000 per acre.

Kees and Helia De Jong started their herd in the Reedley area and then moved to a rented facility at Woodville in the mid 60's. After a few years they were able to purchase 320 acres north of Visalia from Branco and soon built a brand new facility. The De Jong family worked extremely hard, purchased all the land around them that they possibly could and then built several new facilities over the years. Each of the family members contributed an awesome amount of work toward the success of the operation.

John and Willie De Jong began dairying in Riverdale and then moved to Tulare where they also purchased the facility. One of the few early settlers who purchased, this dairy facility is still being operated and is owned by the Pacheco family. John and Willie have gone on to operate a number of dairies in Kings County over the years.

Cornie and Margaret Vander Vander Stelt began in the Dinuba-Reedley area on a leased facility. They later purchased an 80-acre parcel north of Visalia and constructed a new facility. Their daughter Beverly and her boys built a new facility in west Fresno County many years later.

Adrian and Betsy Van Groningen came from the Hanford area to operate a facility east of Visalia for a number of years and later their son Art moved to the Eiler's facility vacated by Jay and Agnes TeVelde. A grandson still operates it today.

Joe and Ann Diepersloot in partnership with Joe's brother Adrian and his wife Willie purchased the Replogle herd between Visalia and Dinuba in 1963 and operated the facility for a number of years until they purchased the Allan Grant Dairy north of Visalia along with a separate parcel which has recently been subdivided and sold. Both have retired from the dairy business and Adrian and Willie' son-in-law and daughter now operate the dairy.

Jay and Agnes teVelde came from the Chino Valley and purchased the cows on one of Gary Eilers dairies east of Visalia. After a number of successful years they had the opportunity of expansion in Chino and returned to that area for 20 or so years before returning to Visalia.

Tony and Betty De Groot began dairying on a rented facility located between Visalia and Tulare on the east side on Mooney Blvd when it was just an ordinary two-lane road and the first stop sign on the way to Visalia was at Mooney and Walnut. Tony and Betty moved up from the Escondido area and were followed by Betty's brother John and his family who established Bothof Bakery in Visalia. In later years two other brothers, Gerrit and Wilber moved up – both still in the construction business.

It was this group of people along with others, mostly but not all of, Dutch descent that began the First Christian Reformed Church of Visalia in 1965, with Pastor Bartel Huizenga, meeting at the Visalia YMCA

These were the real pioneers who didn't come with money from the sale of property, did not have a herd of cows prior to coming but started from scratch. They literally worked themselves to the bone and were so sleep deprived that it was not at all unusual to see one or more of the men nodding their heads or falling asleep in church or even at the small Bible study evening group in a home.