

Chapter 7 Motivation

What was the real motivation behind so many producers coming to the Central Valley over the years? Before getting into the long list of Dutch “migrants” who came in the seventies, it would seem appropriate to discuss just why they came. Those on the outside of the industry seem to have very differing opinions as to why the Dutch came. Perhaps a little background would be helpful.

Many of those who came in the early years were immigrants to America. They had come across the Atlantic as children with their parents or as young adults. They had settled in the U.S. to make a living, not unlike immigrants from all over the world. Why did they come to the U.S.? (Some immigrated to Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, etc.)

In 1945, the Dutch (as well as others) were liberated by the U.S. and Canadian soldiers. After five years of occupation the country presented very little opportunity for its young people. The possibilities of buying a farm/dairy were practically nil. Many middle aged people saw very limited opportunity in this small country for their children and so they began to look elsewhere. And this is where a personal story comes in:

Dad and Mom had done well in Holland and even managed to get through the war without becoming a financial casualty. Dad was the second person in town to buy a car after the war (the doctor was first). They owned their place with a 28 cow milk barn. The fact is that they were quite comfortable. But the folks had 3 boys and 1 girl and the overriding question became: What opportunities will be available for the family? Would the kids be able to find work or have a chance to own their own farm?

In order to immigrate to the U.S. a person or family had to have a sponsor, someone willing to take on the financial responsibility of the immigrant family so that the family never became a burden to the state. Inquiries were sent and Dad lined up a tentative sponsor in Missouri. After further inquiry, Dad did not find the future opportunities in MO very attractive. He eventually found a sponsor in California.

Despite the fact that you could not take your money out of Holland, we embarked on our journey to the U. S. When we got to New York our train fare to San Diego was paid and Dad had a total of \$75 out of which to buy food on the train and pay for the first months rent on a home! Fortunately, Dad began his milking job the day after we arrived and my older brother also found a milking job in a few days. My sister began a domestic job within a week. (Dad was a month shy of being 51 when we came.)

Nine months later we moved to Artesia. Dad had found a partner who had \$5,000 and he found someone who would loan him \$5,000. They rented a little dairy and bought 40 cows which were milked by hand. As most partnerships go, this one didn't last and Dad found himself renting another little dairy and owning 30 cows. For the next 15 years Dad kept expanding the herd and established two additional herds with a partner.

By the time Dad retired – 15 years after immigrating – he had helped my older brother buy a place and a herd in Washington, helped my sister and her husband buy property for a nursery business and sold the cows of the home herd to my younger brother and I.

Dad and Mom had reached their goals for their children in less than 15 years and had ample money to retire comfortably. Their dream was fulfilled and as Dad so often said, “Only by God’s blessings” During those 15 years they were willing to live in what today would be sub-standard housing They never needlessly spent an extra nickel and yet helped many people who needed assistance in one way or other.

The above story is told only to give the reader a feel for the motivation of these people. They did not come to the Central Valley because they were greedy or because of a big ego or even to accumulate riches. They came because they had a vision for each of their children and a sense of responsibility to help them get a start in life.

Today we see actual riches within the dairy industry. How did this happen? The Dutch seem to have an innate desire to improve upon themselves. The thinking seems to be: Do something well – the best you can. Then look around to see if you can learn and adapt other methods to help improve what you already have. As dairymen came to look at the Valley, one of the most important things was to look at dairies that were already built. They would then figure out ways to improve on what they found. Very few dairies were built as an exact replica of one that had been built a year earlier. Once built, improving the facility and equipment as well as expanding it was a never ending process. Why? The same reason as were given earlier. In addition, it allowed the families to help build new churches, a large Christian school complex and a beautiful retirement village. Other charitable causes were also supported very generously.

Most have the attitude that “We’ve been blessed so that we can be a blessing”.

Chapter 8

To Be Continued.....