

“COW SUNDAY” PRESENTATION BY LLOYD & LORETTA SAWATZKY SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

LORETTA: We are udderly out of our comfort zone!

Patty asked us to talk about what we learned from our cows – what did the cows teach us? Well, they taught us to “cow-nt” our blessings; to turn the udder cheek and moo-ve on!

And in Job chapter 12, verses 7-10, we read **“Ask the animals and they will teach you, Or the birds of the air and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In God’s hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.”** Job is saying that even the animals are aware of God’s handiwork, of God’s guiding and nurturing spirit.

LLOYD: I grew up on a dairy farm. My parents had a Jersey herd, adding Holsteins in the last years. I helped on the farm, in the barn and on the land. I enjoyed being involved in showing Jersey calves in 4-H. After Bible School I framed houses for a time and it was then that I realized that dairy farming was what I wanted to do. I was happiest working with cows. After Loretta and I got married, we helped my parents milk for one year, then went on MCC’s InterMenno program in Europe for one year. We worked for 6 months in Germany at a Seniors/Conference Centre and 6 months on a Swiss dairy farm. When we returned to Canada, we started our own dairy farm, and dairied for 28 years.

LORETTA: I grew up in Osler. The only time I was ever even in a barn was when, as a child, I went with my family to visit my grandparents on their farm just outside of Gruenthal, and peeked in the barn during milking time as they hand milked the cows. Becoming a dairy farmer never even entered my mind. In my high school yearbook my probable destiny is “singing with the Bedrock Rockers” on “the Flintstones”. THAT seemed a more likely scenario than dairy farming! It was a steep learning curve for me, but I was up for the challenge and gave it my all. I have always been grateful that the cows gave me the opportunity to work at home and raise a family on the farm.

LLOYD: Dairy farming is not just a job, it is a way of life. It's a big commitment, and it wasn't easy with more work than play, but it allowed us to work together as a family. We were able to raise our children in a safe environment with lots of room to play and lots of opportunities for the kids to use their imagination and creativity: Bale forts, snow forts, tree forts, homemade bike ramps, birthday parties in the pet barn loft – to name a few.

LORETTA: I am an animal lover. Since calves are just a bit big to cuddle, the kids and I would go to the auction mart in the spring and buy bunnies, ducks, guinea fowl, and a baby goat. Plus we would order and pick up baby chicks. With such a menagerie on hand, and since I wasn't busy enough with 50 cows and 3 young kids, I decided to offer spring farm tours to school groups for a few years. The emphasis was on the dairy cow, with samples of grain, hay and silage for the children to see and touch. I would give a milking demonstration and talk about all the dairy products that are made from milk and provide each student with an ice cream treat. One student volunteer could feed a calf a bottle of milk and another could give the baby goat a bottle of milk. They could all pet the kittens, bunnies and chicks. It was a fun way to inform the next generation about dairy farming.

LLOYD: Since I enjoyed dairy 4-H when I was growing up, we got our children involved in 4-H. They were naturals in the show ring, winning numerous awards for showmanship, heifer conformation and record books. It was a lot of hard work getting the calves ready to show. The 4-H motto is "Learn to do by doing" and that's exactly what our kids did, training, clipping, washing, and feeding their calves with our help. In the spring and summer we juggled chores and 4-H competitions, plus we also entered heifers and cows in the Rosthern and P.A. summer fairs.

LLOYD: The cows gave us an identity. We were part of a close knit group of dairy farmers who all struggled with a 7 day work week. I enjoyed the monthly Hub Holstein Club meetings discussing dairy matters and touring other dairy barns. The genetic part of the dairy industry was especially interesting for me. It was rewarding to see our herd improve over the years. We also had Dairy Herd Improvement meetings and awards with a broader group of dairy farmers. It

seemed wherever we went, we would meet our dairy farming friends. We still value those friendships and our common connection is the dairy cow.

LLOYD: We were also involved in the community in other ways. I coached and/or managed our boy's hockey teams for many years. Games tended to be during milking time, so for many years we would hire a local student to come after school to help with the chores. So the cows gave us an opportunity to employ local youth and teach them about dairy farming.

LORETTA: Woven through it all was our love of God's creation and our commitment to our church. It was invigorating to walk over the dew-dampened grass or be blown across the yard by a strong cold wind over drifts of snow to the warm comfort of a barn full of cows waiting expectantly to be fed and milked. For many years I led the church Junior Choir from October till Christmas. I practiced the songs in the milk house, just singing away, while I was washing up milking equipment to the accompaniment of the hum of the bulk tank generators and the swishing of the water in the pipeline. That was joy for me.

LLOYD: We have always made time for church, no matter how crazy busy things were. This community of believers has always been important to us. Worshipping God together and supporting our many programs and committees has strengthened our faith. Watching a calf being born is a reminder that "In God's hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind".

LORETTA: What do you call a cow that has just given birth? De-calfenated!!