



Tarpping silage is a family affair at van Loon Dairy. Back row, from left, are Kryn, Terri and Jeremy (son), Melissa and Ben (son) and Kryn's daughter Ashley Zuidema. Grandkids, front row, from left, are Cailynn, Cole, Kasey, Tess, Jameson, Paige, Easton, Kinley, Cash and Brantley. Kryn's wife, Irene, is behind the camera.

## VAN LOON DAIRY

# With a busy interstate for a neighbor, farming is interesting

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**  
For the Capital Press

JEFFERSON, Ore. — Being next to the busiest interstate highway in Oregon provides van Loon Dairy with a unique farming experience.

"That stretch between Albany and Salem is one of the straightest sections of I-5 but the most accidents happen right there," Ben van Loon said. "I'll get calls from friends and family asking how the freeway is over here."

The dairy, purchased by Garrit and Ann van Loon in 1970, is now in its third generation of the family. Garrit's son, Kryn, and his wife, Irene, now own and operate the dairy and are gradually handing off the business to their sons, Ben and Jeremy. The brothers have taken over much of the management of the farm that milks about 400 cows from a total herd of 850.

Lately the van Loons have focused on growing as much of their feed as possible, dedicating 70-80% of their 400 acres to grass and corn silage. This year they are also growing squash for a local cannery.

Though the van Loon herd is predominantly Holstein with Brown Swiss and Red



**Ben van Loon**

Holstein, they also cross breed cows. "My Dad likes the red, so anything that would throw a red — Red Holstein, Norwegian Red..." van Loon said. "We try to keep a higher-component herd and so we are not necessarily pushing for production."

"We might seek a lower-producing Holstein but one that tends to have higher components," he said. "This is why we went into our crosses — higher butterfat, higher protein with high production and sort of trying to get the best of both worlds."

Their milk averages more than 4% butterfat. The co-op, Darigold, pays extra when it is above 3.5%.

The ladies in the cow barn snuggle into spacious waterbeds at night, but a herd of 9-month-old heifers went on an unplanned walk-about a few years ago during a thunderstorm.

"It blew out a herd of about 60 heifers pastured along the freeway; no one really knows

how," van Loon said. "Some people actually chased them along Highway 99E until the cows made a U-turn in somebody's yard."

Someone knew where the cows belonged and used his truck to herd the wanderers back to the van Loon farm.

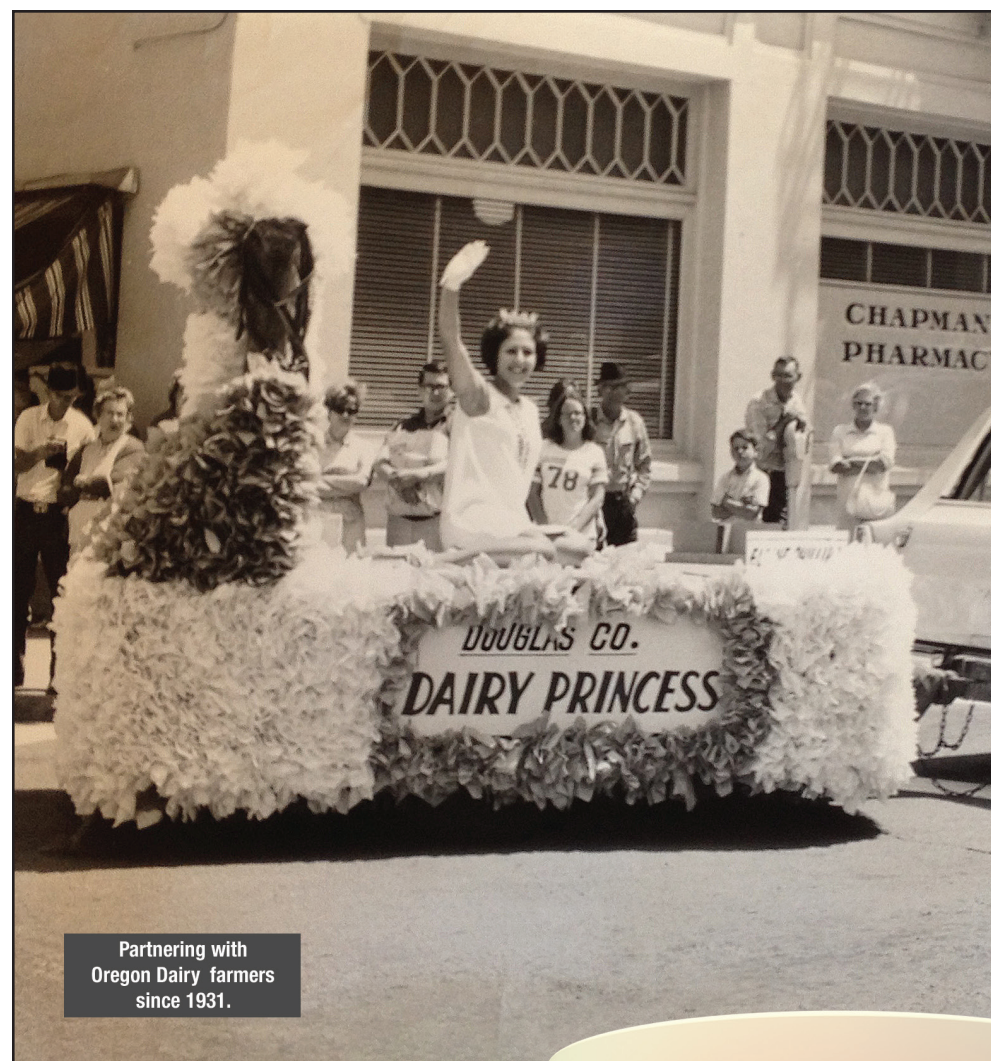
"They didn't even wake us up; they just put them back on the other side of the cattle guard," van Loon said. "The next morning, we saw they were in the other pasture."

Police called late the next afternoon, reporting a dozen Holstein heifers still huddled beneath an underpass on the other side of the freeway. They must have broken off from the rest of the group, he said.

The farm's high visibility has occasionally been a source of conversation in the farming community, like the year they planted grass seed where they typically grew corn.

"I heard from a farmer that someone had said, 'Looks like van Loons are going out of business. They're planting grass seed,'" he said.

"I'm out in the country but about 50,000 cars pass by my farm every day," van Loon said. "Sometimes I think we should figure out a way to take advantage of that."



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