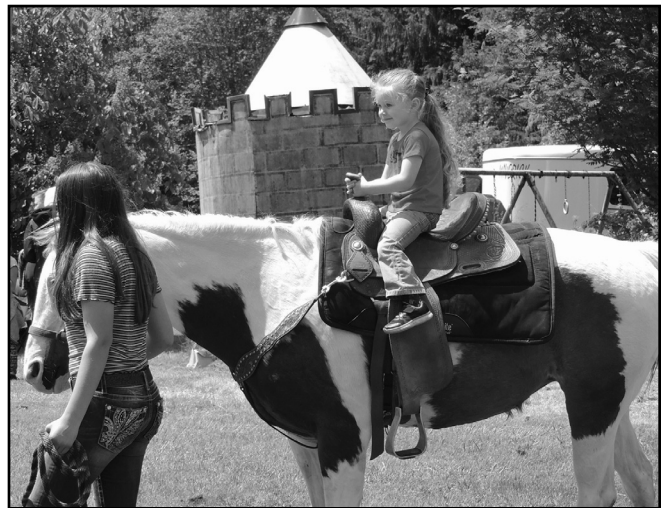




PHOTOS BY CHANTELE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS



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Jami said they got treats for helping. In those days, it was Pop Rocks, candy cigarettes and bottles of Squirt bought at the Cleawox Market.

Barb said the older generation didn't get those — but they would stop at Woodsman and pick out flowers.

The milk runs were special, something their family did. It created a shared memory of helping with the cows and cleaning out the barns. The family remembered details — the smell of the feed bins, squishing the scratch in between their toes, walking along the fence, hauling hay. "I don't remember much (about my childhood)," Nancy said. "I remember milking cows. Other than that, I just remember having fun."

She added, "We used to ride the cows."

"Yeah, Mom and Dad wouldn't give us a horse so we had to ride the cows," Georgia replied.

According to Barb, the

Smith, Huff and Martin farms sold their milk to bigger productions out of the area.

"They were all Grade A milk, so they sold their milk to the big farms. In the early '70s, the government bought out all of those farms," she said.

The Elliott farm continued to produce milk from their Guernseys until the 1990s when regulations shifted. Around that time, Richard Elliott, brother to Nancy, Georgia and Barb, brought in the Scottish Highlands.

Despite the passing of more than 20 years, Loni said she still shakes her gallons of milk when she takes them out of the fridge. This shaking action would recombine the cream in whole, unpasteurized milk, but is unnecessary in much of the milk Americans drink today.

If people sit down with the Elliott Family progenitures, they can tell a story about every foot on their 116 acres of land. The hard part is getting them to sit down.

"We weren't allowed in the house" said Nancy. "We spent all our time outside."

"We either had to be dead or asleep if we were in the house. That was the rule. We were never in the house," Barb agreed.

While historically that was for farm chores, as generations passed, more of that outdoor time went to enjoying the beauty of the hilltop acres — or getting into the usual and unusual scrapes.

Barb and Nancy described playing baseball in a field, putting a bag over a cow pie and using them as bases.

"If you slid, then you'd go far," Nancy said.

Barb added, "We made sure third base was on a hill so you slid down the hill."

The family talked about injuries, problems with farm vehicles, accidents with the electric fence and the fun and peril of being on the farm.

"I'd drive a motorcycle," Nancy said, describing a Honda 50 that they used for trips as far away as Mapleton.

"I'd have Loni in the back of me, Keli behind her. I don't know how they survived!"

Barb described the years they "had good snow" and would send kids down the hills in inner tubes. One accident with a fence convinced them to place some hay bales to avoid further injury.

"It's a wonder any of us survived," several family members said as they reminisced.

"Well, it was soft dirt," one person added.

There was also a pond — full of at least a dozen baseballs and golf balls — where the neighbor kids swam. And despite more than 60 years of kids playing on the farm, there were only a handful of broken bones, even after the brakes went out on a truck hauling hay from the Libby farm.

In the 1980s, the Loni and some friends wanted to film a Mountain Dew commercial for a contest. They put together some inner tubes, got inside and rolled down

the hill into Woahink Lake. The first made it. The second ended up with several scrapes.

"And then we learned we probably shouldn't do those commercials," Loni said, still laughing. "We tried it here — it worked then."

"We tried a lot of things we probably shouldn't have," Barb said.

And many things they succeeded at. The family talked about kindnesses over the years, much of it the inspiration of Leona, who taught them "there's no such word as hate." She volunteered for years with the senior center, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, their church and more. She hosted foreign exchange students, several of whom are still in contact with the family, and picked up strangers to bring over for dinner.

"We're just kind of reminiscing," Nancy said.

The day was emotional, not only for the end of the popular field trips, but also as the 21st year since Leona's

death.

"Twenty-one years ago yesterday, she was in her bed watching the kids go by on their field trip. She got to see them one last time," Loni said.

Anytime the wind picks up, it's Grandma, Richard and Grandpa, the family said — all family who have died on or near the farm. Or the rain, since the family played "Tears in Heaven" at Leona's memorial service. "Every time I hear the song I think of Grandma," Jami said.

Despite concluding the big milestone of 55 years, Elliott's Hilltop Acres Farm will continue, the family said.

"It's not the end for us," Barb said.

After cleanup, helped along by family, friends, neighbors and Ada Grange members, Megan said, "One person wanted to buy shirts," indicating the shirts the family and volunteers were wearing.

"Oh geez. We could have made a fortune!" Barb answered.

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