



Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

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Farriss Dairy Farms in eastern Wayne: a half-century labor of love for family

When viewed from a hilltop in early autumn, the Wayne County farm of Bill and Carol Farriss stands out in the rolling landscape of eastern Sugar Creek Township. Contoured strips of green alfalfa and brown, drying corn look like a giant patchwork quilt similar to the ones created by Mennonite settlers of the Sonnenberg valley a few miles to the south.

Farriss Dairy Farms, Inc., of Dalton is the latest property to be protected by a conservation easement through a partnership with Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. Bill and Carol Farriss sought KWLT's help to ensure that the 850-acre farm they have developed over the past half century would forever remain in agriculture.

"This is something we have always wanted to do," said Bill, acknowledging the peace of mind that comes with knowing the farm will stay intact long after he and Carol, both 78, are gone. Their decision to preserve the scenic farm was easy, given the couple's shared

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CAROL AND BILL Farriss have operated Farriss Dairy Farms near Dalton for half a century. Placing a conservation easement on the 850-acre farm is something they "have always wanted to do."

Please help us to support KWLT's mission

Dear Friends of KWLT,

As you think of ways to stretch your philanthropy dollars at this end of the year season, we hope you will consider a donation to the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. We are, as you know, a volunteer board of trustees with more than 50 individual conservation easements on 7,560 acres of pristine lands including agricultural, prairie and woodland sites.

Our area of work is now in seven counties: Ashland, Coshocton, Holmes, Richland, Stark, Tuscarawas and Wayne. This is a part

of central Ohio that draws visitors and residents who delight in the sight of our beautiful and productive farms and woodlands. Every country road could be considered a scenic byway whether or not it has that special designation.

Our job as a land trust is to monitor each conservation easement under our protection to ensure that the land remains as the original owner intended. Each easement stipulates the land protected will remain in its current state

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Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage



FARRISS DAIRY FARMS near Dalton has come under protection of a conservation easement in partnership with KWLTL.

Conservation easement now protects Farriss Farms

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experiences dating back to their youth in an area just south of Akron.

Bill and his five siblings grew up on a farm in East Liberty. He hoped he might someday own and operate his father's farm, located along Arlington Road near State Route 619. But the neighborhood evolved into a commercial mecca on the southern fringe of Akron. After his father's death in a farm accident, Bill's siblings wanted to "lot the farm all out" for sale.

The lives of Carol, her family and their Greensburg neighborhood near the Akron-Canton Airport changed drastically with construction of Interstate 77. Their farmland was taken over and paved into a wide highway corridor.

After Bill and Carol married, they rented his family's farm to start a dairy operation while looking for land to purchase. In 1961 Bill heard that a 209-acre beef and hog farm south of Dalton was going up for auction. They made a hasty trip to see it and fell in love with the property. They learned that the owner was willing to help finance.

Bill hung on at the auction to outlast the competition. His bid, which amounted to \$450 per acre, was regarded by some locals as a steep price that would doom the young couple to failure. And without their eventual change in course, their naysayers might have been proven correct.

For two years after the purchase the Farrisses continued to farm in East Liberty while contracting with a Dalton farmer to work their new property. But with beef and hog prices low, the Wayne County farm went into the red while their leased Summit County dairy

operation made money. So in 1963 they moved to the Dalton farm with their 100-cow herd and their eight-month-old son.

Over the next decade they worked to establish the Dalton farm. Hard work and solid credit allowed the couple to buy nearby farm properties as they came up for auction.

Unlike some successful farmers who buy land a great distance away, Bill and Carol have intentionally kept their purchases close to home to maximize efficiency. Their purchase of a 130-acre farm just up Eckard Road two years



ago brought Farriss Farms to more than 850 acres, with another hundred acres under lease in the immediate area.

They grow 450 acres of alfalfa, 450 acres of corn and "a little wheat," all of which is used in the dairy operation. In addition, they purchase shelled corn.

The herd includes 600 milking cows, about 100 dry cows at any given time, and 700 heifers. Milking three times a day is handled by a herdsman and half a dozen farmhands including several Guatemalans who live in one of seven residences on Farriss Farms.

A semi-load a day of milk from the

farm goes to Superior Dairy in Canton. The farm has dual milking parlors and dual bulk tanks so milking doesn't need to be interrupted when the milk hauler is being loaded early each morning.

Bill is in charge of manure-handling, while he and several other employees do part of the planting and harvesting. The rest is contracted out, particularly since the farm's bunker silos require speedy storage of alfalfa.

These days Carol's hands-on involvement is limited to running the farm payroll and handling other business matters. She still remembers the days, though, when she helped milk cows with a child in a nearby highchair, and doing evening barn chores while listening closely to the house-to-barn intercom system for evidence of their three children getting back up after being put to bed.

While the couple's daughter and two sons all helped on the farm as children, only one son, Alan, is currently involved in the operation. All three live in the neighborhood where they grew up, with daughter Terri and her family living in a house on the main farm and sons Alan and Todd with their families, living on roads flanking the farm property.

The Farriss dairy operation is in a quadrant bounded by US 30, State Route 94, Eckard Road and Withrich Road. Its distinctive strip fields are a landmark on the east side of the scenic state route for those who travel south of Dalton. The family is active in the community and their operation has been a stop on many Wayne County Fall Farm Tours.

Melody Snure, Ripples editor

Walking the trail

When we leave our house and travel through Fredericksburg to Holmesville, a distance of about seven miles, we cross Salt Creek nine times. The last half of the journey is through one of the prettiest valleys in this part of the country. Since early roads and railroads and water, of course, follow the path of least resistance, all three traverse this pristine valley. A corner of our son's farm touches Salt Creek from the south in this pleasant place on earth.

This is the section of the old Penn Central Railroad I walked. A friend dropped me off at the last crossing of Salt Creek; where County Road 192 and the railroad formed an X and then each crosses its own bridge and the creek flows toward its confluence with the Killbuck. Graffiti on both bridges proclaim boundless love for someone. There seems to be a particular fondness for Suzy.

I walked northeast on a cold November day with the wind on my back, the sky slate-gray, and the ground snow-covered. This part of the old rail bed has now been paved and is the northern part of the Holmes County Rails-to-Trail path, but here in the chill of November it belongs to the wildlife that lives along its edges.

For a while the creek and the tracks run parallel. Even when they separate, the song of water is never far away. Salt Creek is fast-flowing, and unless in flood, always clear. The water purls over and around a mixture of shale and sandstone and erratic Canadian Shield



granite boulders, some the size of a VW beetle.

Signs of wild things were everywhere. Downy woodpeckers were busy checking for insects beneath the bark of dead elm trees and on the tall cottonwoods. A pileated woodpecker cackled from the wooded ridge to the west.

Along the edge of the trail, protected by the snow-bowed blackberry brambles with leaves the color of red wine, and teasel and goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace, were mixed flocks of song sparrows, chickadees, and titmice. Cardinals showed off from the tops of sumac seed clusters. White-tailed deer tracks crossed the trail in the direction of a cornfield next to the creek.

It was sometime in early July of 1969 that the last train rumbled down this peaceful valley. It all ended with the 1969 Fourth of July flood, when 11 inches of rain ravaged the valley, ripping out bridges and washing away parts of the rail bed leaving steel tracks suspended in the air for hundreds of

feet. While the tracks and most of the ties were salvaged, some half-buried moss-draped ties are still visible tenaciously resisting decay.

The valley has several neat, well-kept, and prosperous farms owned by the Parrot family that add greatly to the beauty of the place. Opposite of the Parrot farm is Ora Lytle's Hill with its nice grove of native hemlocks. With the leaves of the hardwoods gone in the fierce winds, the rich green of the evergreens stands out vividly along with the mottled white of the stately sycamores that border the creek.

Crossing the road, I followed the trail next to the creek. A belted kingfisher flew upstream low over the swift water and rattled his call.

As I neared the end of my walk, two red-tailed hawks took wing from high up on Levi's Ridge. Dropping into the valley, the pair began hunting for mice. A kestrel stayed ahead of me; sometimes hunting, sometimes perching on the wires between the track and the county road.

A young white-tailed buck crossed in front of me and headed across the wheat field. Since it was nearly mid-November and the peak of the rut, he didn't pay much attention to me. Business beckoned up on Cherry Hill.

My walk ended in Fredericksburg where I did some business at the hardware, ate some pizza at Lem's, visited the library, and was picked up for my ride home.

David Kline, KWLT trustee

Remember KWLT in your year-end charitable giving

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forever. That means we, and future generations, will have peace of mind knowing a particular beloved view will not change – no “Knobby Hill Farm Subdivision” on this spot! We look in on our landowners with an annual visit, just one of the delightful perks of getting to know the people who have such passion for their properties.

We talked in the last newsletter about the meaning of sustainable communities. We feel we play an integral part, along with our landowners, in maintaining the economic health, heritage and quality of life of these places we call home. We hope you feel the same way. And we hope that you feel it

is worth more than words to support the work we do with your dollars.

Please include us in your gift-giving this year with a generous donation. And remember, a donation to KWLT is tax deductible as we are a 501(c)3 organization.

Thank you!

Maryanna Biggio, President

KWLT Board boasts yet another published author

The KWLT Board of Directors includes busy, thoughtful people who notice the world around them and for the enjoyment of the rest of us have written and published books about their personal experiences. The latest author we are celebrating is Ron Holtman, our Treasurer and local attorney.

His book of poetry is titled "Limit Theory." It is delightfully illustrated by Amanda Vacharat. Ron's poems are deeply felt yet simple and touching. Some are humorous, some personal, and all are meaningful. It is easy to relate to his writing.

Readers of this newsletter are familiar with David Kline. His column for Ripples appears regularly. He has authored three books, all gentle and inspiring reads: "Great Possessions," "Scratching the Woodchuck," and "Letters from Larksong." His books are inspired by his family and friends and life on his Amish farm.

David is often sought as a speaker for events, both locally and around the nation. He always draws a crowd because of his knowledge of the natural world, his humor and authoritative voice.

Linda Bush, KWLT Secretary, has written "A Seed, A Dream, A Boat," which is a journal of a year-long adventure aboard Sea Hawk, traveling what

is referred to as "the Great Loop" with her husband Dave and frequently joined by their family and friends.

Reading Linda's book, we feel we are along for the ride and it is great! In her book she never misses a day describing people met along the way, the fog, the food, and particularly the scenic beauty they experience every day.

David Wilkin, a faithful board member who never says no to any task asked of him, has an exciting and informative work in progress about French and German settlers coming from western Switzerland and north-eastern France to the Wayne County area around Mount Eaton.

These families, part of the Calvinist reformation, migrated here between 1825 and the late 1860s. Their ancestors are still an important part of our local community – surnames such as Schaffter, Amiet, Guerne, Grosjean, Merillat, Menez and Parrot among them. The majority of the people were farmers but they also brought with them specialized skills as watchmakers, furniture makers and storekeepers.

David says he has been working on his book for six or seven years and is constantly finding new clues to add to the material for the book. When published, his extensively researched book

will be of great interest to all of us.

Ron, David Kline and Linda have had their books published by The Wooster Book Company, a splendid resource and all-purpose independent bookstore in downtown Wooster. You will find their books available there. It's going to be a long winter (so *The Farmer's Almanac* says) and these good reads are just what a person needs to keep us company during the season of rest and renewal.

We thank our good friends for sharing their stories and insights with us.

Maryanna Biggio, President
KWLT Board of Trustees

Sage advice

"How does a man save a special piece of land, a stretch of landscape still touched by wildness? By becoming part of it, knowing it, letting it get under his skin, completely."

Harry Middleton

"On the Spine of Time:
An Angler's Love of the Smokies"
Copyright 1991, Simon & Schuster

Find great resources at www.killbucklandtrust.org

The Killbuck Watershed Land Trust web site features valuable information for people who have an interest in supporting land conservation.

The Documents tab on the home page (www.killbucklandtrust.org) has sample documents including a Deed of Conservation Easement and a Deduction for a Conservation Easement, as well as IRS Form 8283 for Noncash Charitable Contributions.

To better understand the need for land conservation advocacy and action, view the PowerPoint presentation "Walking the Land With Your Uncle." Find it in Documents.

The KWLT Board of Trustees is currently working to make the website more useful to those who go there in search of information. Watch for improvements, coming soon!

Your KWLT membership helps to conserve area lands

Your membership in the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust helps to maintain the rural atmosphere that has made our area a desirable and unique place to live. Your 2014 membership dues will be used for:

- Conservation education
- Public outreach
- Land acquisition and management
- Legal action to monitor and maintain conservation easements

Annual membership levels are:

- Friend, \$50
- Steward, \$100
- Conservator, \$250
- Protector, \$500

To become a new member or to renew your membership for 2014, write a check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. Mail it to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, 133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691. Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations are tax deductible.