

# Stone Ridge Dairy

The expansive fields of central Illinois are better known for corn than cows, but in the past five years, Stone Ridge Dairy has made cows a bigger part of the picture! The 3,700 cow dairy is currently the largest in Illinois but the owners, George and Kara Kasbergen of Mansfield, IL, are also becoming known for their recent investments in Registered Holsteins and recent forays into the show ring.

Their Midwest story actually begins in the dairy communities of southern California. George's dad emigrated from Holland with a friend and \$100 between them. They arrived at Ellis Island, eventually made their way to the Chino, CA, area and started a 100-cow dairy in partnership in the early 1950s. He eventually married a young woman from Holland and raised a family of four children (all of whom are still involved in dairying).

By 1980, a 20-year-old George owned 150 cows in partnership with his father. He continued to milk cows in the Chino area for a few more years before moving to Mira Loma and by 1994, he was milking a total of 3,000 cows on three different dairies. During this time, he met Kara at a family outing (her sister is married to his cousin) and they were married in October of 1995.

George already had central Illinois on his mind in 1995 - a time of \$5 corn and \$9 milk. The availability of feed in the Midwest combined with the urban encroachment in southern California made the thought of moving east very appealing. In 1997, he downsized his own herd to 1,700 head and used the proceeds to start Spring Grove Dairy in Brodhead, WI, in partnership with his brother Cornell Kasbergen and Dan and

Mary Monson.

He began the search for suitable property in Illinois, but the trips were not fruitful. After one or two false starts, George recalls that in March of 2000 he thought, "This is the last trip to Illinois. If I don't find anything, I'll build in Tular." Sure enough, on that trip he found the land that would eventually be the home of Stone Ridge Dairy. Driving to the acreage, he passed through the little town of Bellflower, which coincidentally was the name of Kara's California hometown - a positive sign! He ended up purchasing 640 acres and applied for the appropriate permits in October, 2000.

There was some initial resistance to the construction of a large dairy in the area, but with positive communication, the permits were approved on September 11, 2001 and construction began immediately. By October 1, 2002, they were milking cows in the impressive new facility.

A licensed therapist, Kara admits that the move and transition was a hard adjustment for the family. They went from living next door to George's parents to living in an area where they have no family and where there is no real dairy community to speak of. They have five children - Carson, 11; Grant, 9; Brooke,

7; Garrett, 4; and Reese, 3.

The kids are at the heart of their venture into Registered Holsteins. George mentioned several times that, as hard as he works, family is priority #1. He wants to spend time with his children and to enjoy life a little bit. Diversifying into the breeding stock side of the business provides them with the opportunity to travel, to get to know more people in the industry and to spend time together as a family at shows and sales.

George had shown cows in southern California and loved the competition and camaraderie. He found that as his kids were getting older, they really didn't have the opportunity to discover the show ring for themselves. George wanted them to learn the work ethic and the lessons that come from working one on one with cattle - something hard to manage in a 3,700 cow dairy.

In March, 2006, they purchased their first calf - Mil-R-Mor Roy Kashana - from the Illinois PDCA Calf Sale. Consigned by Bob Miller, Kashana is a potential 7th generation Excellent who traces back to the EX-97 Jan-Com Matt Matilda cow. Fresh in early April, she looks quite promising. From there, the Kasbergens were off and running!

George's parents came to visit in June, 2006 and they all went to the Carrousel Dispersal where George bought seven head. Those cattle were sent to Me-Do Meadows, owned by Doug and Melanie Nifong, which had the advantage of being only five minutes from the large dairy at Brodhead, WI.

George had decided that buying the best individuals from the best cows was critical to marketing genetics down the line. He continued to purchase animals from high profile families and to learn from Doug and Melanie in that first year.

A show barn was built right next to the big dairy in Mansfield and completed in the summer of 2007. The kids now have the opportunity to work with their project animals every day. George has instilled the idea that they have to do the work to enjoy the rewards. In the same way a basketball player has to be



The team at Stone Ridge Dairy: George Kasbergen holding Quality-Ridge Spirte Anita, Kara Kasbergen, Jackie Florent, show barn manager, holding Regancrest Babydoll-ET, Julie Butler Hemp of M&J Heifer Care.



The show barn at Stone Ridge Dairy built adjacent to the big barns.

dedicated in practice before enjoying the thrill of a game, the kids have to get to the barn and do their chores everyday before the pleasure of entering the show ring.

The show barn allowed them to bring a number of their purchased animals home to Mansfield. With this group carrying a significant dollar value, George realized he needed someone to work with and watch over the lineup. "I spent a lot of money on cattle and to do it right, I really needed to have someone here with expertise." Enter Jackie Florent, an Illinois native who had worked for Carousel Farms and had been the Semex representative in the area for the past two years.

Full of enthusiasm, Jackie says, "It's fun to work for someone with big goals and big ideas." She laughingly acknowledges that George can be a "demanding" boss but in a very positive way. "He has high expectations and I wouldn't want to work for someone who didn't want the best."

Jackie enjoys the involvement of the Kasbergen children and the interest they are displaying even at a young age. She thinks you have to keep working with youngsters to keep them involved. As George says, "Kids will cost you money if you don't have something for them to do." He and Kara acknowledge that

running the dairy is hard work every day of the year, but it's rewarding to be able to share time throughout the day with their children – something not possible with a 9-5 job.

Another valuable member of the team is Julie Butler Hemp of M&J Heifer Care in Chebanse, IL. Julie and her husband Mike care for a number of the Kasbergen heifers at their facility about an hour north of Mansfield. George had met Julie at a few of the shows in 2006 and when he went to the 2007 Pennsylvania Convention Sale and bought eight head with no place for them to go, he called Julie. She also relishes the Kasbergen kids' involvement - at their first Illinois District show in 2007, George, Carson, Grant and Julie all had cots and camped out in the barn with their half dozen heifers.

Julie and Jackie communicate regularly and decide on the matings for the elite group of Holsteins. They confer with George, especially on the flush matings, but each woman's opinion is highly valued, especially for the individuals they each work with every day. Mating and service sires currently include Damion, Fortune, Aspen, Jasper, Goldwyn, Advent and some Shottle. Showing is a priority, so high-type bulls top the sire list.

Though relatively new to the business, the family already has had some success in the show ring. During a 2006 visit

to Me-Do Meadows, Doug Nifong told George about a good young red cow at the Engel family's Luck-E Holsteins operation in Hampshire, IL. George went to look and bought Luck-E Advent Kite-Red on the spot. She went on to place 9th in the Jr. 2-year-old class at the Grand International R&W Show that fall. Kite gained greater recognition in 2007 by winning the Jr. 3-year-old class and being tapped for Reserve Intermediate Champion of the Grand International R&W Show. She later was named the 2007 All-American R&W Jr. 3-Year-Old.

Other prominent purchases include Arethusia Goldwyn Velour, the only Goldwyn daughter of the 2007 All-American 125,000-lb. Cow, Ernest-Anthony SC Vivian (2E-96); Bondvale Goldwyn National, the 2007 HM All-Canadian Summer Yearling and Regancrest Babydoll-ET, a 2-year-old Dundee daughter of Regancrest-PR Barbie-ET (VG-89), who was fresh in March with a beautiful udder. Cows owned in partnership include Swiss-Acres Morris Ubi D-Red (EX-90), the 2007 Reserve All-Canadian Red & White Junior Cow and 1st Sr. 3-year-old at the 2008 NY International Spring Show and Vons-Hillview Stormat Sandy (EX-92), the HHM All-American Sr. 3-Year-Old in 2007.

They have bought into a number of exceptional families and their goal is

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## A SALUTE TO THE QUEEN!



### GOLDEN-OAKS CHAMP RAE-ET (EX-92 EX-MS)

3-10 219d 23,293 4.5% 1044 3.0% 700 (Inc.)

Champion daughter out of Beauty Rae (EX-90) with 33,710 4.7% 1595 3.5% 1179. Next dam is Jubilant Rae (EX-90-DOM) with 38,880 4.1% 1608 3.4% 1329. Rae is an 8th generation Excellent. She has a lovely August '07 Talent daughter and transfers by Goldwyn and Shottle.



### PFAFFS-WO DURHAM REPLAY

This potential 8th generation Excellent is out of Pfaffs Gibson Rally (EX-92 EX-MS) with 33,490 3.1% 1218 3.1% 1044. Next dam EX EX-MS Progress with 32,990 4.6% 1529 3.1% 1012. Replay is due in July to Affirmed and has transfers by Shottle and Pronto.

The two individuals above are just a sample of the tremendous impact the "Roxy" family has had on our herd. If traveling through the Midwest to get to this year's convention, stop in and see Champ, Replay and their herdmates. Our doors are always open!

Jack Bingham, Consultant  
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Farm located 1 mi. north of Wauconda on Route 12 and 1/2 mi. west on Bonner Rd.

fully commit yourself to the project. The partners agree that this side of Milk Source is not just a hobby. Their plan is to eventually merchandise live cattle and embryos from this elite herd and build it into a fully functional "arm" of the entire corporation.

The team has successfully purchased some exciting young cattle this spring. At the Butlerview Parade of Perfection Sale, they bought a first choice Goldwyn from Alicia's clone; as well as live cattle including Finline-Vu Durham Lady (EX-90), Ms Goldwyn Ashley-ET (a 1/08 Goldwyn x Vital-I Integrity Anastasia 2E-95) and a pair of Durham full sisters from Pfaffs Gibson Rally (EX-92), both born 12/07. At the March Madness Sale, Budjon-Dannys DD Alora-ET was purchased. Alora is 9/07 Dundee from Rhineland Durham Amy-ET, the EX-92 All-American Sr. 3-Year-Old from 2006. They also took home two first choice packages, one from Stone-Rise Durham Lizzy (2E-95), the HHM All-American 125,000-lb. cow in 2007 (choice by MAS or Talent); and a first choice Jasper from Brigeen-C Integrit Robin-ET (2E-95).

The goal of the new registered group is to build on great cow families in the breed and within one year, start to develop a marketing program. At this stage, Milk Source is still in the acquisition mode, filling the barn with merchandis-

able cattle. But the flush program will help to quickly accelerate their "base" of animals on the dairy. With early flushes, members of the commercial dairy were used as recipients.

There will be 50 milk cows in the new barn, with a brand new heifer facility completed in time for National Convention visitors! The new barn has its own milking parlor, but cows are kept in tie-stalls for greater visibility when visitors come. There are also several large boxstalls for heifers. "On the commercial side, we are able to buy many grade springers to fuel our growth, but with the registered side, each purchase is carefully calculated. The return on investment will take a very long time, but it will be worth it!"

It's an ideal situation, really - a growing, successful commercial herd that also houses an exciting young registered herd. The impressive parts of Milk Source are obviously the rock-solid genetics that they've acquired, but also the business savvy that the partners share and their enthusiasm for this industry. It will be exciting to watch the trio apply the same skills they have in developing the commercial herd to the registered herd. They've got the talent and they've got the animals. It's time to watch a love for the registered Holstein blossom in Kaukauna. ■

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to keep building those pedigrees and maintain the outstanding lineages already developed by other breeders. Their goal is to have consistent success in the show ring and to eventually breed some superior individuals from the Stone Ridge herd.

Being "new blood" in the industry can be a challenge. There are some ups and downs, but they have found a number of people whose advice they trust. George says it's easy to get caught up in the hoopla at big sales and big shows, but he reminds himself to think of the basics: to work hard, be consistent and to be scrupulously honest. Faced with a setback, he thinks of his father's saying, "When you make money, you never learn anything, but when you lose money, you always learn something."

Would they do it all over again? The relocation to Illinois and their involvement in the Registered business? Absolutely. It hasn't always been the smoothest path, but Kara says that George likes the challenge of the bumps in the road! They're always conscious of the example they are setting for their children - both with work and play - and hope to prosper in the dairy industry for years to come. As Kara says, "We're here for a good time, but we're also here for a long time!" ■

**EXCELLENT Genetics!**

MaKenzie Alberts, Reagan Schimek, Grace Norling and Trey Alberts  
Congrats Eric & Angie, Laura & Grant on your growing families.

*Pine-Shelter's future is in good hands!*

**AL-SHAR LJ SUNJET EX-90 2E**  
Sunjet's daughters in the herd include a VG-87 Mr Gerbil and a young Durham heifer. Pregnancies are on the way sired by Rubens and Durham. Transfers and embryos sired by Roy.

**Ashview Holsteins**  
The Norling Family  
Jeff, Jane, Tom, Katie Norling  
Ted, Molly & Gracie Norling  
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We have Trish's EX full sister!  
**Sipka Durham Topanga**  
EX-90 EX-MS  
@ 3-04

**SIPKA TRISH DURHAM EX-94 98-MS**  
3-8 365 40,243 3.3 1308 3.1 1234  
1st Aged Cow & Best Udder  
MI Spring Show '06  
6th Generation Excellent  
Topanga has a Rubens daughter and pregnancies sired by Linjet. She also has embryos and transfers by Roy. Topanga continues to be flushed - inquiries welcome!