

A visit to Jones Farm, and to "everyone's Grandma"

A working farm still all in the family

By SHARON MACGREGOR

A simple sign lets you know you've arrived at Jones Farm, a staple in Orange County since, oh about a hundred years or so. In 1914, it's believed John Jones bought an 85-acre farm from Emily Cromwell, a descendent of Oliver Cromwell from England and the story begins. The land has been worked by family since the beginning, starting with Jones' son Raymond who married Phoebe, who then had a family of daughters.

Working alongside the men, sisters Alice, Alma and Doris



Doris Clearwater and granddaughter, Catherine, tend the daily business, and a hot cup of coffee and a Jones Farm cookie? Worth the trip!

photos: S. MacGregor

operated machinery and working pedals, sticks and steering a tractor simultaneously, plus tending their roadside farm stand. A dairy farm until the 1950's, Jones Farm then went on into the poultry business.

A multi-generational family compound sprung up when Doris married Belding "Pete" Clearwater and they had three boys, Jim, Russell and Dave. Additional homes were then built, and there are lots of fond memories of being raised in this environment not only practical, but, as Dave recalls, "Going in and out of each other's houses while growing up was wonderful. My kids had the same thing and they also realize that was special."

As times changed, the farm did

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DAVE CLEARWATER



too. The poultry business faded out, and Grandma Phoebe's bakery and country store was started in what was the main barn.

Dave's wife, Terri, found a way to incorporate her love of art into an on-site teaching business, and eventually opened the Art Gallery. Dave and Terri's two children are the fifth generation, with daughter Catherine, a Fordham University graduate, working at the farm full time; and son, Kenneth, who chose a teaching career, is in and out, during school breaks and summer vacation. Grandchildren and cousins work the counters after school and in summer, and it's very much still a family affair all around.

Doris, with over 80 years of life experience can be seen performing a wide range of tasks on any given day, taking out the garbage, filling

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ON THE FARM

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the woodstove in winter. Dave jokes, "Yes, mom has cut down a bit. She only works about 70 hours a week now." And as for Doris' popularity," he says, "She's everyone's Grandma. We've had employees who work here for a summer or two; they move on and grow to have their own families. When they come back to visit, they look for Grandma and it's great to

Regroup and rebuild

A recent devastating fire in the Clearwater's Frame Shop and Art Gallery has forced this section of the farm to temporarily close. However, Dave explains, "The process is extremely frustrating, but yes, this section must be rebuilt and reopened." The next chapter may begin with this reworking as Jones Farm and the generations who maintain it navigate ways to maintain the farm's integrity while standing in the middle of a fast-paced modern society.

As each chapter unfolds revealing the changed life on the farm, it may appear like seamless transition, but surely Great Grandma Phoebe would notice the remarkable changes and modernization. Listing ingredients and weights on baked goods, staying knowledgeable about tax laws and restrictions for agricultural land and interacting with various insurance and government agencies are all very real aspects of running today's farm.

see them." Doris has a way of interacting with the customers that's soothing and sincere with a sprinkling of frankness to keep everyone on their toes. When asked how she's doing, she may reply, "I'm standing, the electricity is on and the water is running," because she remembers times in the farm's history when that was not the case.

Visitors to the farm will see a refreshing way of life, and children will enjoy checking out the farm's famous critters: mini-horses Satinka and Ranger; goats Dixie and Annabelle; a hen house of chickens; and Miss Fern, the pig, all residing peacefully together.

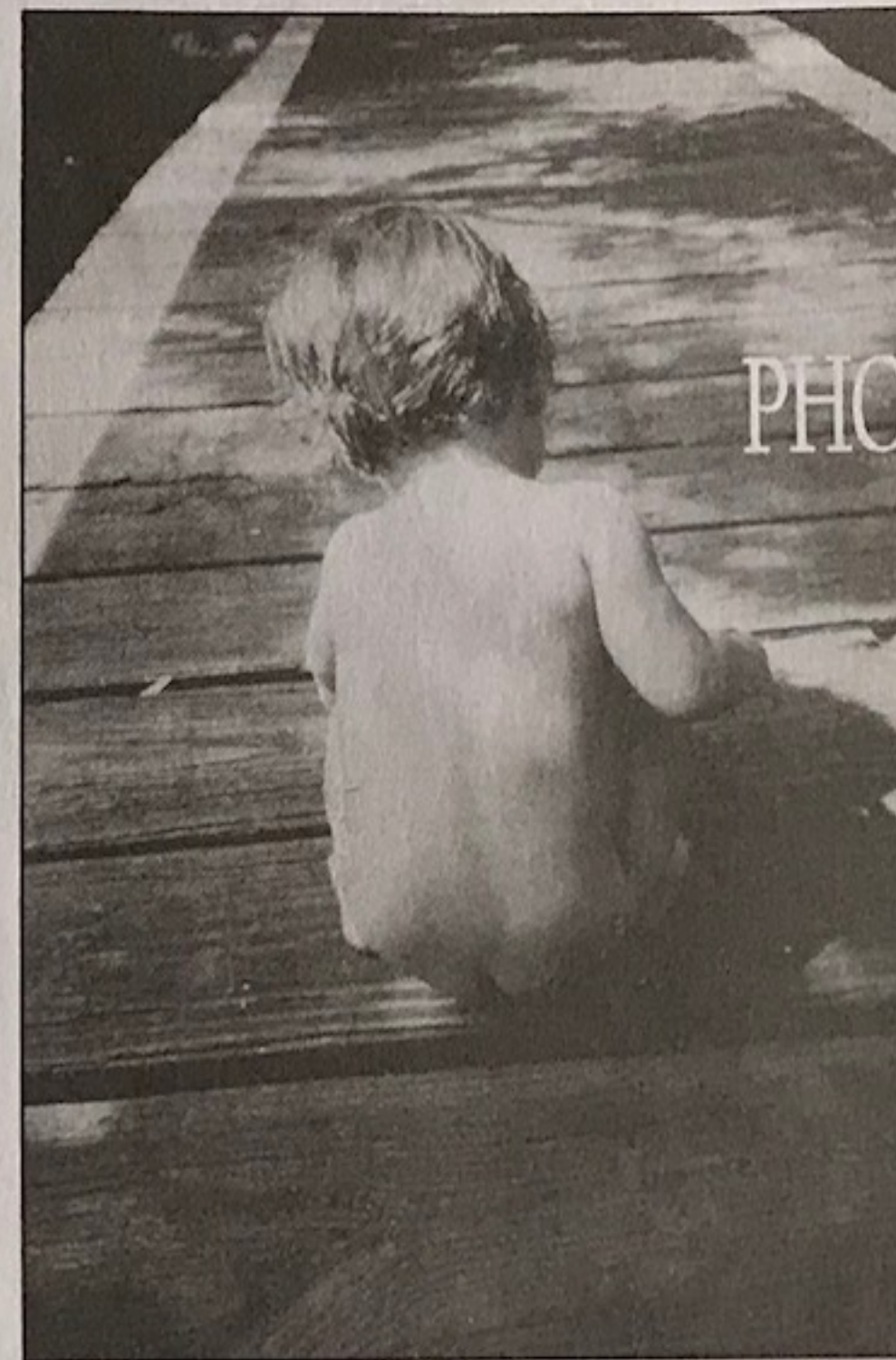
Inside, kids can visit a working beehive (behind clear glass), and watch donuts or fudge in the making. But just mention "carrot cake" and eyes will roll. It's the number one seller and many loyal fans call ahead and drive from as far away as Brooklyn to buy several. There are seasonal events throughout the year, including a fall festival with hayrides and plenty of apples, and a rhubarb celebration in spring. To keep current, a coffee station and WiFi has been added to encourage patrons to sit a spell in their garden area.

While some may find it challenging to work with family, seeing Catherine, Dave and Doris working side by side, combining their grounded sensibility of helping the customer first, makes the idea seem very appealing and comfortable.

Sharon MacGregor is a freelance writer and columnist living in the Bloomingburg area with her husband and 2 sons.

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