

Pioneer Farm Family: Tradition continues

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Jobmans keep land in the family more than 100 years.

Modern technology has taken much of the hard physical labor away from the farm and has changed some aspects of day-to-day work.

Pivots replace irrigation tubes and chemigation eliminates the extra step of spraying.

“We even have technology now that will drive my tractor for me,” Tom Jobman says of GPS devices.

And while the original two-row combine has long since been replaced with a much larger, more efficient machine, one thing remains unchanged with the Jobman family.

Love of the land is as strong now as it ever has been.

Adolph Kuhlman and his bride Cornelia purchased land northeast of Gothenburg from Lizzie Thelin, widow of Louis Thelin, in 1909.

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Although Kuhlman owned the property, Lizzie continued to live on the land until Kuhlman's son Edwin married Mabel and the couple moved to the farm in 1932.



Three Kuhlman children were born in the small original farm house that was expanded by connecting an old school.

In the late 1940s, the Kuhlman couple moved to a home across the section where another child, Rhonda, was born.

“Dad didn't let us girls drive the tractors,” Rhonda says, “but we still did chores. I swear he kept the pigs around just so we'd always have chores to do.”

Rhonda's sister Pat and her husband Gene lived in the original farm house for several years but taking over the family operation was not what Pat wanted to do.

“I've always wanted to live on the farm,” Rhonda says. “I can't imagine being anywhere else.”

Rhonda married Tom Jobman, her high school sweetheart, and the couple moved to the farm in 1970.

“My dad ran a furniture business in town,” Tom says. “It was either farm or furniture.”

Since Tom and his brother had experience with a haying business, Tom leaned toward farming and joined his father-in-law in the operation.

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“When I started we had a two-row combine,” Tom said. “When we got the four-row, that was really big.”



The family had one of the first 12-row planters in the area, Tom says, as well as one of the first self-propelled sprayers.

The farm included approximately 440 acres when Tom started working with Ed Kuhlman.

“That was when a family might be able to get by on 80 acres,” Tom said. “Now it takes at least 1,000 acres.”

Over the last 40 years, Tom and Rhonda have raised three children on the farm.

Jeff Jobman, 41, is married with four sons and has worked the land his whole life.

Daughter Amber McNew took a different life path and is a high school teacher in Witchita, KS, with two children.

“She’s still very much connected to the farm, though,” Rhonda says. “She loves to come home.”

Son Josh, 33, went to college for a year but found himself drawn back to the farm. His 8-year-old son is learning about the business as he grows up.

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“I think my grandparents and my parents would be very proud to know the land has stayed in the family,” Rhonda says.

Tom says each time another child has come along, the family has expanded the farm a few more acres.

It’s been a good living, the couple says, but it hasn’t always been easy.

In the 1980s when people all across the agricultural industry were going broke, Tom says his banker encouraged him to find another profession.

Instead, Tom sold his herd of cattle for \$324 per head and held fast to his crops.

“It was an extremely difficult time,” he says, “but we survived.”

After both of Rhonda’s parents died, ownership of the farm transferred to the Jobmans. The operation now has approximately 2,500 acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa.

Just this spring, Tom moved from the man in charge of the operation to the “gopher.”

Jeff and Josh have taken over Tom Jobman and Sons, Inc.

“We never pressured the boys to come home,” Rhonda says. “It was totally their choice.”

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That means the land will likely stay in the family a good long time, the Jobmans say.

“We really don’t know about the grandkids,” Rhonda says, “but the odds are pretty good one of them will carry on the family tradition.”

Tom and Rhonda had their three children and all of their grandchildren with them when they received their Dawson County Pioneer Farm Family Award Saturday in Lexington.

It was a proud moment for the Jobmans, especially Rhonda.

“This is our heritage,” she says, “and I hope it continues long into the future.”