

Life on the Ford Farm

Grace (Bryan) Ford was born in Landenberg in September 1921 as the oldest of six children. She lived her entire life in the Kennett/Avon Grove area with the exception of the years she spent at West Chester University learning to be a teacher. For 29 years she taught first, second and/or third grade, first at North Bank School then at Kemblesville Elementary School when it opened.

On September 20, 1949 Grace married Andy Ford and they established their home at the Ford Farm on Appleton Road.

Over her lifetime Grace kept a diary, which she typed into a memoir called, "Life has been Good to Me." Details of life on their dairy farm are scattered throughout. A few excerpts are below:

1949 (after her marriage): I learned to do all kinds of things. I helped Andy milk most of the time. My help consisted of changing the straps on the cows and carrying and dumping the milk...Periodically I went with Andy in the middle of the night to get brewery grains in Wilmington. They smelled terrible but the cows seemed to like them....

1960: The men got really busy the spring of 1960-- putting in a milking parlor. It cost a fortune even with their doing most of the work. It wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be to get the cows adjusted. As soon as they discovered there was feed in there they cooperated. The first time they just had the cows walk through. The next time they walked through with the machinery all running. The third time they actually milked the cows. That was on June 8, 1960 and Andy was really tickled.

One chapter of her memoir is called "The Cows and I." Here's a few of her experiences:

In my diary I note that in April 1959 we chased cows home from Vannoys in a pouring rain. In August 1960 Andy, Tom and I chased a heifer up and down the road. She could not see the lane. In July 1964 we had some really wild heifers. They were always leaping fences and we would have to round them up.

In July 1977 Lois and Jim Smith were here for supper and ended up helping us chase cows. Some guys working on the silo had left a gate open. Later that same evening we had to chase Mackie's bull. That happened several times after that. In fact several bulls from Mackies visited our cows. For a long time we didn't even know how they got into our field. When a bull would come up with the cows at night we'd yell "Go home, Bull!" He would turn around and go back out the meadow. We thought they had to be jumping the fence. Then one day someone caught one on his knees crawling in the creek under the fence. That sex drive is a powerful thing.

In February 1980 we chased cows in the rain, about 25 of them headed for Kemblesville. On June 4, 1980 I helped Andy drive cows out of the cornfield and fix the fence. On Sunday, October 25, 1981 we had just gotten cozy when there was a knock at the door and the telephone rang, both with the same message, "Your bull just walked out the lane."

At 6 a.m. on June 28, 1985 a bunch of young heifers got out. Andy yelled for help so I ran out in my pajamas. We rounded up 7 in the garden and 6 over in Thomas' field. One came home on her own. We were still missing one. Two weeks later on a Sunday morning Lakes, our neighbor, called to say there was a black heifer down by the cornfield. Andy, Daryl, and I went down in the jeep, but one of the Lake boys was the real hero. He grabbed the heifer by the tail as she ran by him and hung on. We brought her home in the jeep.