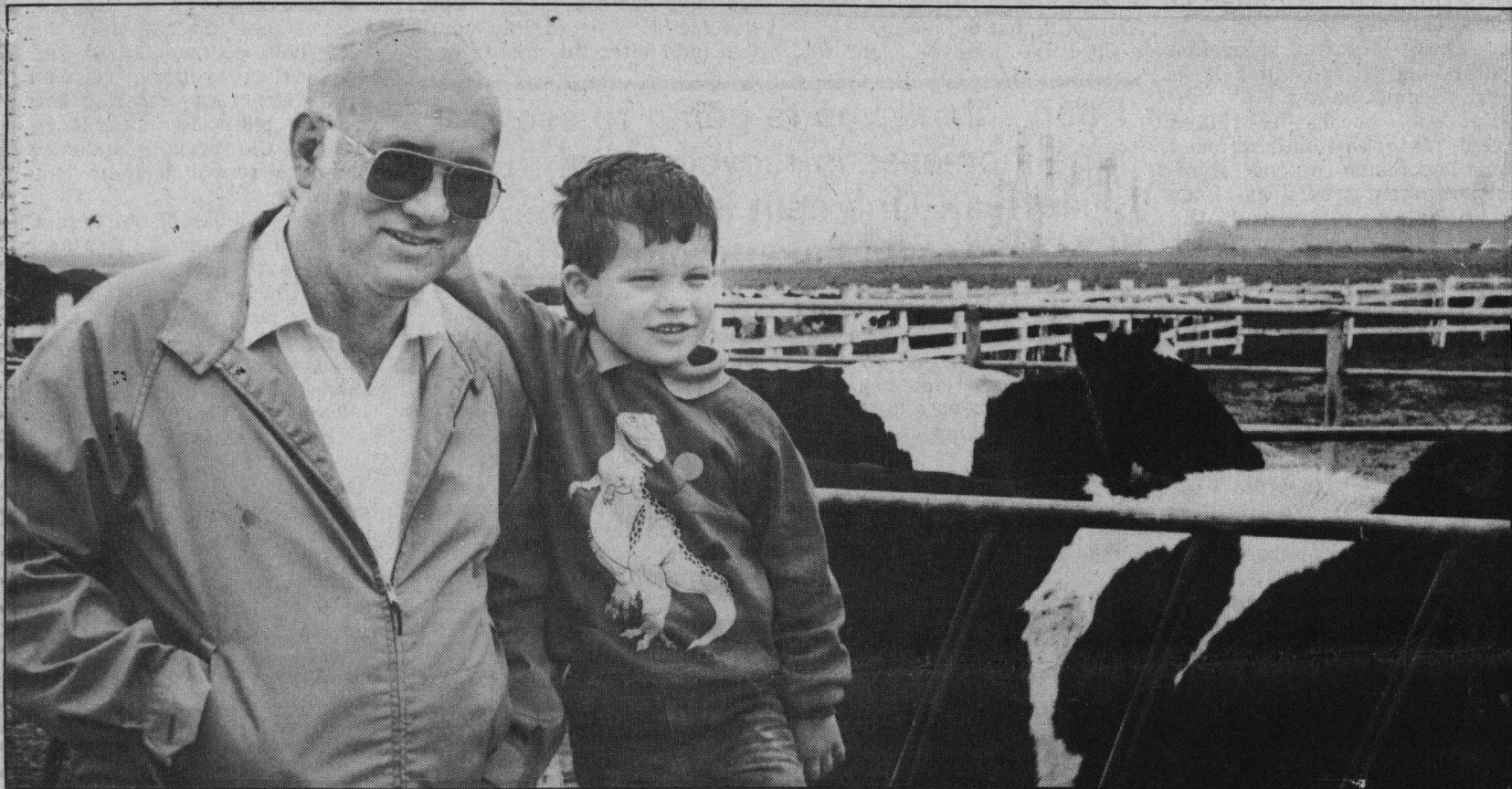


Dairy industry still lives



Louis Calcagno and grandson Adam look over the herd at Moon Glow Dairy in Moss Landing.

Kurt Ellison

Many have vanished, but three remain

By ELIZABETH SCHILLING
STAFF WRITER

If you drink Lady Lee milk from Lucky Stores or eat Precious mozzarella cheese in your lasagne, you are probably enjoying milk from cows at Louis Calcagno's dairy in Moss Landing.

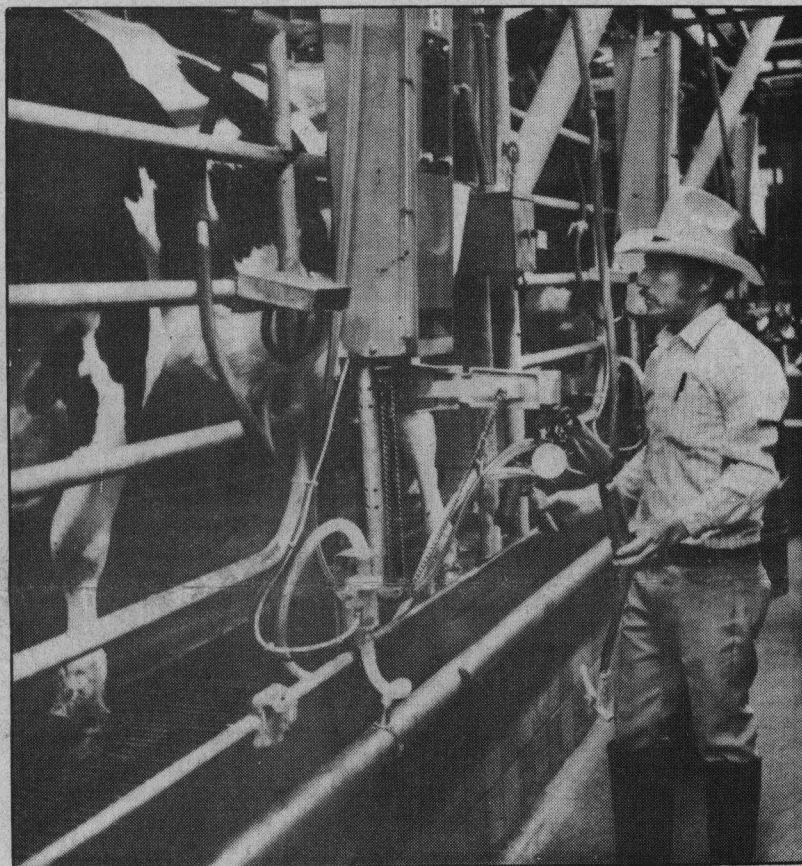
Not so long ago, Calcagno's Moon Glow Dairy was one of several dozen small commercial dairies between Santa Cruz and Salinas.

Today, only his and two others remain. Monterey Bay Academy operates one on its campus on San Andreas Road, and the old Cardoza Ranch on Harkins Slough Road, now run by Tony Amorim, is still operating. The Monterey Bay Academy dairy produces about 2,300 gallons a day, Amorim's operation about half that.

The rest of the dairy-herd owners hung up their milk pails for the last time during the 1960s, as demands for higher technology, greater efficiency and better marketing grew. But those challenges seem only to have increased Calcagno's determination to stay in the business.

Moon Glow Dairy is tucked between the PG&E power plant and Elkhorn Slough. Transmission towers loaded with powerlines dominate part of Calcagno's land. Calcagno thinks that's unfortunate and says if he knew then what he knows now (he's a member of the Monterey County Planning Commission) he would have lobbied hard to force the power company to run the power lines underground.

Born 51 years ago just 30 yards from where he lives today on his 400-acre Dolan Road ranch, Calcagno said cows have always been part of his life.



Andres Quintero operates milking machine at dairy.

emy and Amorim dairies belong to the same cooperative.

"If it wasn't for cooperatives that compete with big corporations, the consumer would pay more for milk," he said. "The producer would be controlled by the big guys and so would the consumer."

A truck from the cooperative picks up Calcagno's milk every morning at about 10. This daily distribution of about 3,200 gallons is the last step in a long process of work.

Cows are milked by machine twice a day after being rotated through a series of corrals and feeding lots. Only one man is needed to operate the machine that can milk 150 cows per

inside. Each cow goes into one of 10 stalls in the barn. Their hooves are hosed, each teat is squeezed once to clean out milk that may carry dirt from the feed lot, then four metal hydraulic pumps are attached to the teats.

The machine pumps vigor-

"By joining together we had power, and you've got to have strength in this business," he said.

ously for three to five minutes

the creamery the next day.

Although the Calcagnos have seen times change, their eyes focus on the future much more than the past. Carol Calcagno is learning computers and keeps up with inspectors and government regulations while her husband crisscrosses the country as chairman of the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board.

Louis Calcagno sees bigger changes on the horizon. The day will come soon, he believes, when genetic engineering will allow him to select the sex of an embryo and when hormone stimulants will allow him to get more milk from each cow.

"The future looks good for those who can survive the changes in scientific management, bio-tech and genetic engineering," Calcagno predicts. "But you have to be willing to keep up with the industry or it will get away from you fast."

More markets will have to be found for increased production, he says, so some of his energy goes into diminishing barriers to international trade.

"Two words are gold in agriculture," Calcagno said, "and they are 'California' and the 'Monterey Bay.' Anything from here sells itself."

Dairying is Calcagno's primary concern, but two by-products involve him in other parts of agriculture.

Since cows give birth to bull calves 51 percent of the time, Calcagno also has a busy beef business. He raises about 800 steers from birth to 1,500 pounds. The cattle are fattened in a piquant-smelling feed lot where a unique menu is served: leftovers from Cara Mia Artichokes, apple pulp from Martinnelli's, whey, almond hulls and alfalfa hay.

And since all these cattle

commission; he would have lobbied hard to force the power company to run the power lines underground.

Born 51 years ago just 30 yards from where he lives today on his 400-acre Dolan Road ranch, Calcagno said cows have always been part of his life.

"When you're hooked, you're hooked," he said.

As a boy, while his other Italian relatives were planting artichokes and brussels sprouts, Calcagno was tending cows. When he went off to college at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo he loaded his 15 cows on a truck and took them along. In between studies he cared for them at the school's cooperative and after graduation he returned home with a handsome herd of 30.

Today, he and his wife, Carol, have worked that number up to 750 Holstein cows. Their operation pulls in about \$1 million annually, 60 percent of which is paid out in feed bills alone.

As vice president of the California Cooperative Creamery, his markets are more secure today than they used to be when it was every dairy for itself. During his early years, Calcagno sold to Sego, Pet, San Jose Cheese and others, but finally the several dozen dairies in the area joined together to become a major part of what is now the cooperative, headquartered in Petaluma.

"By joining together we had power, and you've got to have strength in this business," he said.

The industry has become more centralized and a co-op offers the only market for smaller dairies, he said.

Both the Monterey Bay Acad-

emically picks up Calcagno's milk every morning at about 10. This daily distribution of about 3,200 gallons is the last step in a long process of work.

Cows are milked by machine twice a day after being rotated through a series of corrals and feeding lots. Only one man is needed to operate the machine that can milk 150 cows per hour. Such technology is one reason why dairies grow in big leaps. Many cows must be added to the herd to justify expansion of one more milking machine and one more man, Calcagno said. In 1960 the average size of a dairy herd in California was 80. Today it is 450.

The cows come willingly to the milking barn because a bucket of grain is offered

"By joining together we had power, and you've got to have strength in this business," he said.

ously for three to five minutes and takes out between 20 and 30 pounds of milk at each milking. The machine automatically shuts off when the supply dwindles.

Milk is never exposed to the human touch or the environment as it is pumped from the cow, through pipes, and into 2,000-gallon metal cooling tanks. It leaves the udder at 102 degrees and is cooled to 39 degrees before being sent off to

Calcagno also has a busy beef business. He raises about 800 steers from birth to 1,500 pounds. The cattle are fattened in a piquant-smelling feed lot where a unique menu is served: leftovers from Cara Mia Artichokes, apple pulp from Martinnelli's, whey, almond hulls and alfalfa hay.

And since all these cattle generate a lot of manure, Calcagno runs a third business — selling fertilizer. Such organic, longer-lasting fertilizer is in high demand right now with farmers looking for ways to cut down on the use of chemicals on the farm.

"Look at the cow, she is an important part of agriculture," said Calcagno. "She converts the leftovers from all the other industries in agriculture."

A look back at the old days

Dairying is still a part of local agriculture, but not like it once was, when door-step deliveries of raw milk and the sight of cows were as common as today's convenience stores.

The old days of dairy ranches and creameries is the subject of a fascinating display that opened this week in the Pajaro Valley Gallery in the Porter Building on Main Street in Watsonville. The exhibit is sponsored by the Santa Cruz County Historical Trust, the Agricultural History Project and Friends of Wilder Ranch. It will run until Nov. 13 Tuesdays through Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m.

Between 1860 and 1960 more than 100 dairies operated at different times in Santa Cruz

County and North Monterey County. Dairies were an integral part of early agriculture; at one end of the cycle cows ate leftover crops and at the other end they provided manure that fertilized the first strawberry and lettuce fields.

Not only were dairies successful but so were processors. At one point, four creameries on Main Street in Watsonville were busy processing local raw milk into bottled milk, butter and cheese.

Monterey Jack cheese gets its name from early dairies near Elkhorn Slough. Prior to the 1920s, milk and cheese were shipped from North Monterey County via the slough and Hudson's Landing near the

present Kirby Park to markets in San Francisco.

The evolution of the dairy industry is presented through the stories of individual ranches. The display includes photographs, equipment, early dairy advertisements and toys and kitchenware relating to the dairy theme.

An opening reception will be held in downtown Watsonville tonight in coordination with the Farmer's Market on Main Street. Goat-milking demonstrations and a chance for the uninitiated to try their hand at milking will take place from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Plaza. Refreshments will be served from 7 to 8 p.m. in the gallery at 280 Main St.

—Elizabeth Schilling