

## Summer Vacation on the Farm

*By Hap Hansen*

Here is an example of a summer vacation for me when I was about 14 years of age. Nearly 70 years ago. Vacations then consisted of an occasional Sunday visit at my grandparents' home. Before we could make a visit to my grandparents' home, we had to do the chores that needed doing every morning.

The old folks sat visiting on the front porch, while the youngsters took turns grinding the handle on an ice cream maker. The old folks came to help when the homemade ice cream started to freeze and the handle got harder to turn. There was never an overnight stay because we had to get back to the farm to milk cows, slop hogs, feed chickens and do other things that had to be done on a daily basis. We had to be back by six to do the evening milking.

Milking cows was a chore that the whole family engaged in. There were no milking machines in those days, so all milking was done by hand, with the cow's head in a stanchion to keep her from moving and a gutter at the other end to catch the manure. It seemed to me that the cows always waited until milking time to defecate, somehow knowing that I would have to clean out the gutter! About once each week, the gutter had to be scooped out through a hole in the side of the barn. Then it was shoveled into a manure spreader to be hauled and spread on the wheat and cornfields for fertilizer. Guess who got to do that job?

Commercial fertilizer did not exist then. I think the first cliché I ever heard came from my father. We were standing and visiting with a neighbor in his barn. He had stalls that would accommodate 25 or 30 cows. I recall saying, "Dad, it sure stinks in here!" Dad said, "Son, that is the smell of money!"

The milk would be stored in a cool root cellar before being taken to market in ten- or fifteen-gallon cans. We drank a lot of whole milk then, after it had cooled in the cellar. In those days, I drank milk every day. It had high cream and butterfat content, and after cooling the cream would rise to the top, which was eventually scooped out by my mother to use for cooking and to put in our really strong coffee. Today, I cannot dream of drinking milk full of cream and butterfat. I only drink milk now, skim milk by the way, on an occasional bowl of cereal.

Mom would also gather and sell eggs she had collected from the hen house along with the cream we did not need. Mom called this her "butter and egg money!"

I enjoyed those old days, but I do not want to go back to milking cows and slopping hogs twice a day! I am fortunate, at my age, to be on a permanent summer vacation!