

Chapter 5

1965-1968

Not a lot happened during this year in the Tulare County dairy scene. We had just moved up in 1964 and had gotten a real estate license after a year or so of buying dairy heifers and beef calves to ship to Southern California. The buying territory stretched all the way up to Orland, California where many springers were purchased from small dairies that had a surplus.

This, however did not keep me busy enough so I decided to apply at Security National Bank (or was it Security First National Bank?) for the position of an appraiser. After an interview at the Fresno headquarters I was hired to begin in two weeks. A few days before I was to report for work, the Fresno office called to check if I was involved in a cattle partnership. I told them that my brother Tom and I were partners in a feeding operation and buying and selling of dairy cows. Since I was not willing to give up the partnership, I got fired before I began work.

Fortunately for me things soon seemed to be opening up a bit and it appeared that some land sales could be made.

I made my very first land sale (for a dairy) to John and Willy de Jong. It was a 275 acre parcel between Visalia and Hanford. This was virgin land and sold for just over \$400 per acre. Tony and Betty de Groot purchased a parcel north of it and both are still in the same ownership 50 years later.

Shoerd and Alice Lanting had sold some land and facilities in the Artesia area in 1966 and purchased 60 acres just north of Tulare where they built their home. In addition in 1967 they bought a 40 acre parcel on Caldwell Avenue west of Highway 99 where the dairy was built.

In 1968 Charlie and Rhonda Boomstra purchased a 60 acre parcel northeast of Tulare. It had a home on the property which Charlie and Rhonda and their family occupied for a number of years. All this was purchased for under \$900 per acre.

When the Lantings and Boomstras bought land, the Milk Pool legislation had not been passed but it looked somewhat promising. This made the financing for the dairies rather difficult to obtain. More on this later.

Tom and Grace Byl purchased a 40 acre parcel just northeast of Tulare. They got an ideal location but had to really pay for it by making a deal at \$1,200 per acre – unheard of for farm land at that time. Only Lantings 60 acres at Cartmill and Demaree – near Highway 99 cost more: \$1,750 per acre, but then it had a small grove of big Valley Oak trees as a setting for a home site.

Kees and Helina de Jong were one of the first to build a new facility. It was the very first dairy with a lagoon and mounded corrals. This family gets the credit for a total liquid run-off and water disposal system. It began a new era in dairy construction.

During this time two brothers from Escondido owning Visser Brothers Construction purchased a 100 acre parcel north of Visalia with the intent of building a new dairy and making it available to a dairyman as a rental. This was in the neighborhood of \$700 per acre.

This was a period of time when buying a herd of cows or selling a herd of cows was very difficult. The processors had the upper hand. Each milk contract had a 30 day termination clause and at various times the processors would not transfer a milk contract from seller to buyer of a herd. I remember well having a herd of cows listed and after finding a buyer (at \$285 per head) Dairyman's Cooperative Creamery Association (DCCA) would not allow a transfer of the milk contract. The dairyman, an older man wanting to retire could not sell his herd!

This was also a time when some under the table kind of deals were made between the producers and processors for getting a larger contract (more shipping rights). One example was a processor owning some worthless land and selling it to the producer at a high price. The sale of course included not only the land but additional "shipping rights".

Very few new dairies were built in Tulare County during the sixties. It was a quiet time compared to what was to come. During this time the Dutch community grew and almost all of the social activity centered around the church which became finally established. Land was purchased for the church (4 acres on south Linwood in Visalia for \$25,000) and plans were made to build.