

Amy MacheMer, American Farmer



I AM AMY MACHEMER AND I GUESS WHAT I AM IS AN AMERICAN FARMER, A FRUIT GROWER AND I AM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MY MOTHER, SUSAN MACHEMER, AND WE OWN AND OPERATE OUR FARMS. WE DO A LOT OF THINGS WITH THEM THAT ARE MAYBE A LITTLE BIT UNUSUAL. WE ARE FRUIT AND FLOWER GROWERS AND WE HAVE 20 ACRES OF FLOWERS AND 100 PLUS ACRES OF BEAUTIFUL FRUIT AND WITH THAT WE SHARE OUR YIELD IN A MYRIAD OF WAYS THROUGH OUR SMALL CANNERY WHERE WE MAKE ALL KINDS OF GORGEOUS PRODUCTS AND SHIP THEM ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND SELL THEM HERE IN OUR RETAIL STORES TO OUR BAKERY WHERE WE MAKE THE BEST PIES. AND OUR FLORAL WORK IS BOTH SOLD WHOLESALE AND RETAIL HERE AND SPECIAL ORDERS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS AND SO THAT'S WHAT I DO. I PULL ALL OF THAT WORLD TOGETHER AND I AM A FARMER.

THERE'S SOME HISTORY OF THAT IN YOUR FAMILY.

A LITTLE BIT, YES, YES. I THINK OUR FAMILY CAME HERE, THE FIRST PART OF OUR FAMILY CROSSED THE GENESEE RIVER BY RAFT JUST AFTER 1800 AND SETTLED IN WHAT IS NOW HOLLEY AND BUILT LOG CABINS, FELLED TREES AND BUILT LOG CABINS. IN FACT THERE ARE WONDERFUL STORIES ABOUT THAT. THEY GOT TO THE FIRST WINTER AND ACTUALLY IN THE YEAR OF 1820, 1816, THERE WAS A FROST I THINK IN EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR AND IT'S KIND OF A FAMOUS YEAR, AN AGRICULTURAL RECORD AND OUR FAMILY HAD BUILT THESE LOG CABINS AND HAD BIG STUMPS IN THEIR GARDENS BECAUSE OF COURSE THERE WERE NO BULLDOZERS TO PULL STUMPS OUT AND SO THE STUMPS STAYED UNTIL THEY DETERIORATED AND SO THEY WERE ABLE TO BUILD FIRES IN THE STUMPS AND KEEP THEIR CROPS ALIVE THROUGHOUT EACH OF THOSE FROSTS. IT'S KIND OF INCREDIBLE TO THINK ABOUT A FROST IN MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER. CRAZY. AND MY GRANDFATHER, LELAND HURD WHO WAS BORN IN 1900 AND HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD MEMORY, EVERY YEAR OUR LOCAL NATIVE AMERICANS FROM OUR RESERVATION HERE IN NEW ORLEANS COUNTY WOULD BRING VENISON AS A THANK YOU FOR KEEPING THEM ALIVE DURING THAT YEAR. SO EARLY EARLY GROWING THINGS.

AND THEN OUR FAMILY CONTINUED TO BE FARMERS WITH MANY OTHER PROJECTS AS WELL INCORPORATED INTO THEIR BUSINESSES. CONCENTRATED REALLY ON FRUIT GROWING BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND SPECIALIZED EVEN MORE IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND OUR FARMS ARE ACTUALLY FAIRLY LARGE. WE HAVE ABOUT 1,000 ACRES AND OUR FRUIT IS GROWN ONLY ON OUR MOST BEAUTIFUL SOIL AND HERE WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW ON OUR FARM LOCATED ON RIDGE ROAD THE SOIL IS VERY VERY SANDY AND BEAUTIFULLY WELL DRAINED SOIL AND CLOSE ENOUGH TO LAKE ONTARIO THAT OUR WINTER IS TEMPERED AND OUR SPRINGS ARE LATER AND WE CAN GROW ALL KINDS OF GORGEOUS MORE TENDER CROPS LIKE PEACHES AND APRICOTS AND WONDERFUL CROPS LIKE THAT. SO BY THE EARLY PART OF THE TURN OF THE CENTURY WE WERE REALLY SPECIALIZING IN FRUIT AND REALLY USING THAT BEAUTIFUL SOIL FOR THAT. SO YES THERE'S A LONG HISTORY OF FRUIT GROWING IN OUR FAMILY.

MOST OF THE FAMILIES WHO HAVE BEEN HERE IN THIS AREA A LONG TIME STARTED OUT AS FARMERS BUT VERY FEW STILL ARE. WHY IS YOURS?

WHY IS OURS? THAT'S A WONDERFUL QUESTION I GUESS. WELL I KNOW WHY I AM STILL HERE AND THAT IS BECAUSE I THINK THAT THERE'S A RICHNESS TO WORKING WITH THE EARTH AND CARRYING ON A FAMILY TRADITION AND A FAMILY FARM AND I THINK IT'S A VERY UNIQUE AND A VERY SPECIAL OCCUPATION. IT'S A BASIC OCCUPATION THAT IS ELEMENTAL TO OUR HUMAN SURVIVAL AND NECESSARY AND TIMELESS AND SINCE THE EARTH BEGAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TENDING AND TILLING THE EARTH SO THERE'S A SENSE

OF DIGNITY TO OUR WORK. THERE'S ALSO A LOT OF FUN BECAUSE WHAT I GUESS THE CHALLENGES WE HAVE NOW INCLUDE BEING AS CREATIVE AS WE CAN ABOUT MARKETING, AND ABOUT POSITIONING OURSELVES ECONOMICALLY SO WE CAN SURVIVE AND THAT ENDS UP MEETING THOSE CHALLENGES ENDS UP TAKING US IN A LOT OF NEW DIRECTIONS WHICH IS FUN SO THERE'S A BIG ELEMENT OF CREATIVITY THAT'S EXCITING AND KEEPS US HERE AND I THINK OUR MOTHER WHO IS THE NEXT GENERATION. I'M THE 7TH GENERATION ON OUR FARM. AND I THINK MY MOTHER AND BUSINESS PARTNER SHARES A LOT OF THOSE SAME SENTIMENTS AND I'M SURE SHE WOULD ECHO THAT. AND MY GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER LELAND AND BETTY HURD I KNOW WERE VERY REVERENT OF THE WORK THAT THEY DID. MY GRANDFATHER LELAND HURD ALWAYS SAID YOU COULDN'T BE AN ATHEIST AND BE A FARMER BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH GIFT AND BEAUTY AROUND YOU AND I THINK RESPONDING TO THAT IS SOMETHING OUR FAMILY HAS DONE PROBABLY THROUGH THE GENERATIONS AND THAT HAS PROBABLY KEPT US HERE.

IT TAKES A LOT OF WORK TO BE HERE AND TO CONTINUE BEING FARMERS. I THINK THE DAILY MAKEUP, THE MAKEUP OF OUR DAYS, AND HOW WE SPEND OUR TIME IS CHALLENGING AND FUN AND ALSO CAN BE VERY STRESSFUL. THERE'S A LOT, IT TAKES A LOT TO BE A FARMER ON A LOT OF LEVELS. FROM MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE, WORKING WITH THE EARTH AND ALL THE VAGARIES OF THE WEATHER, THE HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE AND ALL THAT CAN CHANGE IN THAT FROM NEW VARIETIES TO NEW DISEASES THAT WE HAVE TO CONTEND WITH. WORKING THROUGH ALL OUR REGULATORY AGENCIES, WORKING ON ALL OF OUR MARKETING PROJECTS. AND SO SOMETIMES WE FEEL AS THOUGH WE ARE ACTUALLY RUNNING MANY MANY BUSINESSES AT ONCE. SO IT DOES TAKE A GOOD AMOUNT OF DEVOTION TO KEEP US HERE. WE ARE PURPOSELY MAKING THAT CHOICE.

I TOLD THE STORY THAT A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, I HAD FRIENDS OVER THE BORDER IN TORONTO THAT I WANTED TO GO AND VISIT AND I WAS WORKING, WORKING, WORKING, AND IT WAS IN JULY AND WE WERE IN CHERRY SEASON AND WE WERE PACKING LOADS OF CHERRIES AND THE WORK WENT ON AND ON AND THAT SOMETIMES SEEMS LIKE OUR DAYS ARE, NOT JUST THE ORGANIZATIONAL PART OF OUR DAYS, BUT THEN THE ACTUAL DOING, YOU KNOW THE CHERRIES HAVE TO BE PERFECT AND THE RASPBERRIES HAVE TO BE FRESH AND THE FLOWERS HAVE TO BE FRESH AND SO WE WERE WORKING, WORKING, WORKING. IT GOT LATER, LATER AND LATER, SUDDENLY IT WAS 10:00, IT 10:30, AND THEN IT WAS 11:00 AND I STILL WASN'T GONE AND I STILL WASN'T GONE AND WE WERE STILL WORKING AND FINALLY I WAS ABLE TO GET AWAY, FEELING VERY SORRY FOR MYSELF. AND SO AS I DROVE UP TOWARDS THE BORDER, PAST OTHER FRUIT FARMS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE THE SAME LONG FAMILY HISTORIES THAT WE DO, I SAW THE NEXT FARM. I SAW THE LIGHTS ON, AND TRUCKS BACKED UP AND PEOPLE WORKING AND THEN THE NEXT FARM I SAW THE LIGHTS ON AND TRACTORS MOVING AND WAGONS BEING MOVED AROUND AND I THOUGHT, AH OK, THIS IS THE WORLD THAT I AM A PART OF.

SO YES, WE WORK A LOT OF VERY LONG HOURS. AND IT IS SEASONAL AND THE HEIGHT OF OUR SEASON REALLY IS FROM OUR PLANTING TIME IN THE SPRING. REALLY APRIL AND MAY THROUGH FOR US BECAUSE OF THE KINDS OF MARKETING THAT WE DO THE END OF DECEMBER SO THAT'S OUR ON SEASON. THAT'S A LONG ON SEASON AND THOSE, WE WORK 7 DAYS A WEEK, JUST ALL THE TIME, AND WE HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF A LESS RIGOROUS SCHEDULE IN THE WINTER BUT IT'S STILL A LOT.