

Short Essay by Whitney Barefoot

I grew up the daughter of a part-time farmer, granddaughter of a part-time farmer, and great-granddaughter of a farmer. What an honor to be born into such a rich legacy. My great-grandfather, Will Ferguson, raised dairy cattle on his farm in Gastonia, NC, where he farmed with a 1948 McCormick Farm-All M. He sold milk to Sunrise Dairy, also located in Gastonia, North Carolina. My parents raised my two brothers and me, to be proud of our heritage and appreciate hard work. Some of my best childhood memories are being propped up on my granddaddy's knee feeling like I was on top of the world as we would ride to the familiar hum of his tractor. I loved exploring our family land with my daddy and hearing stories of days gone by. In a world that has lost appreciation for farmers and agriculture, I found great joy in the simplicity of living in the country, bailing hay with my daddy, and feeding cows with my granddaddy. My great uncle still farms with the original Farm-All tractor that great-granddaddy Ferguson bought so many years before. Wanting one for their own, my father, Chuck Ferguson, and grandfather, Charles Ferguson, purchased the exact same tractor five years ago to continue farming the Ferguson land with a piece of farm machinery that had, over the years, become a family heirloom. So naturally, when it came time for my wedding day, I had to include an honored guest. Our 1948 McCormick Farm-All tractor was posted on a hill right behind the large oak trees on the Ferguson farm where my husband and I took our vows. It had been my dream for as far back as I can remember to marry on family soil. The day was perfect in so many ways; one being the flood of memories past that the old, red tractor brought back to mind. Another - the wonderful new memories that were made on May 30, 2009.