



LIVING LEGACY



**DONALD A.
GARVIN**

Born: March 29, 1918
WWII
Air Force
Served: 1942-1945



The story of Donald Garvin cannot be properly explained without discussing the history of Garvin's Dairy. Garvin's Dairy dates back to the year 1889. It was started by Daniel M. Garvin, Donald's grandfather, and his wife Margaret "Ret" Kimple Garvin. At that time they had their own herd of Holstein cows. Their first location was near the Washington Farms on the G.C. & P. Road just east of Greggsville, Ohio County, WV. Delivery was made from house to house using 10 gallon cans. The housewife would come out for her milk which would be measured into a pitcher or other container brought out by her.

In 1891 they moved the dairy to what was then known as the Reyman's Farm, to an area now called Chapel Hill. In 1900 the dairy was moved to its final location, which was then known as "Ret Garvin's Homestead," the property having been in the family for more than 100 years. Before this time, milk was delivered by a horse and wagon. There were no bottles in those days, which made it difficult to handle. The sale price of a quart of milk was approximately 4 cents. In 1898 the first bottles were introduced into the dairy. Some of these bottles still exist and are in the possession of Garvin family members. The bottle had a tin cap attached to the neck. The sanitary facilities of those days were very crude by modern standards, as the culture of the day thought little of sanitation. The bottles were hand washed in the kitchen sink and filled by hand on the kitchen table. Their refrigeration was a spring house just outside the kitchen door.

In 1913 John Lemuel Garvin, Sr., the second of five children, and Donald's father, took over the business at the young age of 23. He constructed a small tile 10' X 10' building near what was then the family homestead. At this time, the equipment was a crude wooden tank that held approximately 50 gallons

of milk. The coddler was what they called an Aerator that had to be hand operated by filling with cold water for each batch of milk and still used a hand operated bottle filler. Don remembers his father as a stern man who had a no nonsense way about him. "Dad was a man of few words and was not sociable at all. He was only allowed to go to school two hours a day for two days a week. He cried because he was denied the opportunity to get an education," Don recalls.

Don continues, "My Dad said the family ran a grocery store in Sherrard and each family member took turns working in the store in addition to running the dairy business. One day a group of gypsies came into the store. Dad knew it was too dangerous to stop them as they had no intentions of paying for what they took. Dad had to let them take all the merchandise they wanted – and leave."

Donald A. Garvin was born on March 29, 1918 on Garvin's Lane in Marshall County, WV as the second of four sons to parents John Lemuel Garvin, Sr. and Bess Hood Garvin. The doctor came to the Garvin home on horseback from Moundsville for the child's delivery and decided to stay the night as young Donald was

in no hurry to be born. The four Garvin sons were born exactly 18 months apart: Jack, Don, Paul and Wayne. The Garvin family lived in a Sears & Roebuck house that the senior Mr. Garvin built in 1913 near the Dairy and processing plant on Garvin's Lane. The house cost \$2,600. The four boys enjoyed the rural Marshall County countryside and helping their parents with the Garvin's Dairy business.

Don was an inquisitive child. On one occasion he reached across the ironing board to get a cat and pulled the hot iron onto this arm. "I still have the scar from that incident," he chuckles. It is said that Don's Grandmother Hood would give him a hammer and nails and tell him to drive the nails into the back porch to keep him busy and out of mischief when he was about five years old. As long as she could hear the hammer pound, she knew where Don was and what he was doing.



Garvin's Dairy Sign.



The Garvin Brothers: 1920's
Don, Jack, Paul and Wayne

One day when Don was about eight, his father took him to Moundsville where he bought a horse. “Dad put me on the back of that horse bareback and told me to ride it home from Moundsville up to Garvin’s Lane off Route 88. My greatest fear was if I had to go to the bathroom on the way home, I’d never be able to get back on that horse. But I made it home safely.”

“I also remember my Dad driving the old milk truck and having me race alongside it carrying the glass milk bottles up to the houses and picking up the empties and running back to the truck to get the next house’s order. He would not stop the truck and expected me to keep up. He said he did this because ‘I was too slow.’”

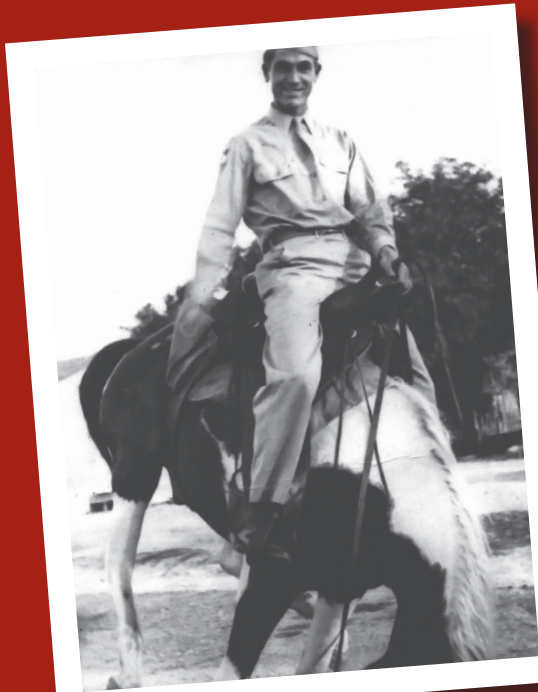
Don recalls the 1930's, "The depression hit our dairy business hard. Dad said everyone owed us and could not pay their milk bills. He went out at night after delivering milk all day and tried to collect. One day he came home and said he just threw the overdue bills off the Suspension Bridge because there was no way for the people to pay their bills."

In 1934, the four sons of John L. Garvin, Sr.: J.L. "Jack" Jr., Don, H. Paul, Sr., and Wayne Garvin, took over running the dairy. Jack stayed behind to keep running the dairy while his three younger brothers, Don, Paul, and Wayne, went off to war during WWII immediately after Pearl Harbor was attacked. By this time, 1941, there were a total of 13 routes.

Don went to Sherrard Elementary and Sherrard High School playing basketball all four years of high school. He graduated in 1937. "There were 17 members in my graduating class and I don't think any had the incentive to get off the



Bess Hood Garvin and her sons: 1930
Jack, Don, Paul and Wayne



Don clowning around while stationed in Lubbock, TX.

farm and get an education. My parents took me to West Virginia University to start my freshman year of college. I went to my chemistry class and it had 260 students. We were not allowed to ask questions nor approach the teacher. To say the least, I was quite overwhelmed as I'd never had any science courses that prepared me for chemistry. I returned home at the end of the first semester and said that I didn't want to go back. My mother asked what was I going to do and I responded, 'I guess I'll just hitchhike.' She replied, 'Well then, why don't you.' So I hitchhiked to Texas and worked a variety of odd jobs.

"One person who inspired me to go west was my Uncle Clarence. He had gone west at the age of 16 and lived by the adage 'Go West Young Man – Go West!' Uncle Clarence amassed ownership of 20,000 acres in Washington state by capitalizing on the demographics of the era. By the time folks had moved that far west, they were broke and jobless. So Uncle Clarence would ask for \$50 and give them a job. He had large flocks of sheep and needed help with keeping mountain lions, bears and eagles from attacking his herds. He was an astute business

man and I admired his business savvy and drive. He influenced me very much when it came to running our dairy business."

Don continues, "One job I had in Texas paid \$11 a week and involved candling the eggs. Eggs are candled to determine the condition of the air cell, yolk, and white. Candling detects bloody whites, blood spots, or meat spots, and enables observation of germ development. Candling is done in a darkened room with the egg held before a light. The light penetrates the egg and makes it possible to observe the inside of the egg to see if it is edible. The Hunt Brothers owned all the land outside of Houston and had several business enterprises started. I watched how they developed their businesses and did a lot of thinking. I wanted to make something of myself. I noticed how the small Texas towns all used their school houses as community centers. The towns didn't have much money, but they had socials and programs at all their schools to engage all the townspeople. I also noticed how nice the people were and how all kinds of people worked together to make the towns successful. It was quite an education for a boy who had never ventured out of the Ohio Valley before."

Don came home after a little more than a year but instead of hitchhiking home, he purchased a Greyhound bus ticket for \$18. "My parents were excited to see me. The Warwood route needed a driver and I asked Dad for the job. Within two months, I'd doubled the route's customers and sales. Dad said to me, 'You make too much money. Your brothers are complaining.' I reminded dad that he had set the incentive by putting up a sign that read, 'Dollar for every new customer!' Dad walked out when I reminded him of

stars

this because he was angry.”

One day a dog ran up behind Don and bit him as Don was delivering milk. Later that evening, the dog’s owner, Mr. Snider, called and told Don he’d need to get the rabies injections as the dog had rabies.

Don enrolled in business courses at West Liberty State College for the next two years. “We knew that war was approaching so all of us of a certain age were just waiting for the war to spread to the United States for our chance to serve our country. Following Pearl Harbor, my youngest brother, Wayne, and I went to Pittsburgh to the recruiter’s office to sign up as cadets in the Army Air Corps. On July 10, 1942 we both entered the Enlisted Reserve Corps.”

The United States government had just initiated a new program for men to learn to fly airplanes. Don and his brother, Wayne, took flying lessons on their own time at the Glen Dale Fokkar Field in Glen Dale, WV. “I’d never flown before and I’ll admit I was a little scared. The instructor strapped me into the back seat of the cockpit and took off. He said, ‘I’m going to do a loop. You are not allowed to do a loop.’ Then he proceeded to take the plane into a sharp loop. Next he said, ‘I am going to roll the plane. You are never to roll the plane!’ Then he proceeded to roll the plane. He stated, ‘Airplanes can fly themselves, but you must watch me to learn.’ I fell in love with flying that same day.”

Don was sent to Slippery Rock for more hands-on instruction. “I hadn’t flown much when the instructor told me to take the plane up by myself. It was a 240 with an open cockpit. From the waist up you were flying outside the aircraft – and I loved it! When I came back from my first 30 minute solo flight, my instructor was drunk. He started yelling at me and I told him I didn’t have to put up with him in his drunken condition. The Army fired him.”

“We had two instructors from Elkins, WV who taught both Wayne and me to fly. They both were risk takers and raced their two planes towards the runway at the same time on one occasion – one plane over top of the other. They miscalculated and crashed the planes,” Don recalls.

Don received a letter dated March 6, 1944 informing him that he was to report for Aviation Cadet Training. Don was indoctrinated for active duty at Fort Thomas, KY on April 10, 1944 and assigned to the 2509th Army Air Forces Base Unit. Eventually, Don was stationed at the Lubbock Army Air Field



Don in a 240 plane at Slippery Rock in 1943.

stars

near Lubbock, TX. Construction of the Air Corps Advanced Flying School began in August 1941 on land located about 10 miles (15 km) west of the city of Lubbock. Designed for training large numbers of flying cadets, Lubbock Field consisted of three 6,500' asphalt runways arranged in a triangular (N/S, NE/SW, E/W) pattern. It also controlled several auxiliary landing fields. The school name changed to the Lubbock Army Flying School before the first class of aviation cadets reported. Construction continued for over two years of base facilities, being finally completed in mid-1944. "All at once, the U.S. Army stopped all of our training. We were left to play cards and perform KP work. I'll never forget the day I was assigned to peel potatoes all day. It was the longest day of my life. We had been told that we were all to be made rank of 2nd lieutenant. But that didn't happen."



"THE BOYS" of Barracks 1204
Lubbock, TX - 1944

Don recalls a time when he was hitchhiking near San Antonio, TX in his Army uniform. A tractor trailer driver stopped and said to hop in. "After about 100 miles, the driver announced we had reached our parting point. I got out and saw that it wasn't a town but just a crossroads in the middle of nowhere and it was pitch black. The driver left me with these words, 'don't tramp on a rattlesnake!' I had no idea how far I would need to walk to find any houses, but all at once the coyotes started to serenade one another across the two mountain ranges. I couldn't see them but I sure could hear their howling. It was a very eerie feeling and one I've never forgotten. After several hours of walking, a model T pick-up came by with a young couple and their baby. They offered me a ride. The young woman said that I looked tired and they took me to their home and let me get a good night's sleep and gave me a good breakfast the next morning. I'll always regret that I lost the paper where I'd written their name and address as I wanted to properly thank them, but since I lost the paper I never got to tell them how much I appreciated their kindness."

Eventually, Don and the others in his outfit were given glider pilot training. Don explains, “You sat in the tail of a C-47 and pulled a lever to release the five pound hook at the end of the glider rope. It was supposed to hook into the next plane to pull the next glider up. One instructor let his nylon rope go across the next plane in the wrong location and the plane crashed. That five pound hook sliced the instructor in half and he never knew what hit him. One instructor said, ‘I’m only 40 years old, but I’m already an oldie.’”

When asked about his Army friends, Don recalls his friend Red Jefferson from Moundsville, WV. “Red was on a flight over Germany and the pilot gave orders to bail out. Red woke up on his back in a field with four German soldiers pointing their rifles at him. They took him to a German hospital where he passed out. He woke up and all the German nurses were making over him because of his flaming red hair!”

Don’s best friend was Esslinger from Tennessee. Don remembers Esslinger standing at attention one hot morning and passing out as he had not eaten his breakfast and was standing in 130 degree Texas heat. “Esslinger married his best friend from Tennessee but did not want to tell her parents that they had gotten married. He wanted to keep it a secret,” Don recalls.

Don was also sent to school in Aberdeen, MD for 12 weeks in August, 1945 to become an Ordnance Parts Clerk. He was honorably discharged on Nov. 19, 1945 at Patterson Field, Ohio. For his exemplary service and dedication to his country, Don was awarded the following: American Theater Ribbon, World War II Victory Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

During the war, in 1942, the dairy’s barn burnt down. The decision was made to sell off all the Jersey Cows, and begin buying milk from the surrounding farmers in the area. After the war, the brothers, Don, Paul, and Wayne, returned from their military service and took part in the active management and growth of Garvin’s Dairy.

Once he returned from the war, Don married Corrine Augusta “Patty” Schaffer in 1943. Over the years, they had six children. However, three of the children died at very early ages: Carol Ann died at birth; son, Douglas lived three days ; daughter, Peggy Lee, was four months old when she died. Don recalls Peggy’s death, “She was very sick and we took her to the hospital. She kept reaching out for me, but the nurse on duty told me I couldn’t



The Garvin brothers prepare for a T.V. Commercial for the Henny Penny Egg Nog product. - 1950's

hold her due to her critical illness. She died that night and I never got to hold her. That fact still bothers me today and I can still see her reaching out to me with her outstretched arms. I should have just taken her and held her. But that was many years ago now. I'm blessed to have three lovely grown daughters: Sylvia, Mary Beth and Donna."

In 1946, Garvin's Dairy merged with Marshall Dairy, in Moundsville, West Virginia. That operation was across from what was then the State of West Virginia's Maximum Security Penitentiary and the Adena Indian Burial Mound. Later, they also bought Purity Dairy of

2nd Street in Moundsville, which took in a lot of territory with routes south of Moundsville. At this point, the business became known as Garvin's Jersey Farms, Inc., Isabel Marsh Garvin, a relative, took care of the accounting at this time. Plant production was managed by Ben H. Flowers, who held that position until the late 1970s. Don and brother, Paul took care of building and maintaining the routes. Brother Jack ran the processing plant and Wayne worked in the office.

The big snow hit in November, 1950 crippling the entire Ohio Valley. Don received phone calls from Dr. Ashworth and Dr. Benson stating that there was a critical shortage of milk for infants in Moundsville. Don contacted a local Dairy Route Salesman, Gene Dakan, who lived in Moundsville, and asked him to try to make it to the dairy on Garvin's Lane so that a truck load of milk could be taken to the Marshall Dairy on 10th Street in Moundsville for distribution. Dakan made it as far as route 88 in his car and then got hung up in the snow. He had to walk back Garvin's Lane through five foot snow drifts. Don Garvin also braved the same snow drifts on foot from his home and together they made it to the dairy and drove a loaded milk truck out the lane and to Moundsville. The milk was rationed to those who had certificates from the town doctors stating they had an infant that needed the milk. Don spent that night at Dakan's home in Moundsville after working the entire day passing out the milk to those who needed it most – free of charge.

In 1951, having already completed homogenization and pasteurization milk processing, the dairy installed its first Pure-Pak machine, which used a paper milk container bottler, a rather new concept in the dairy business at that time. It wasn't too long after that, they added several more milk bottling machines just to keep up with the business which had grown rather large by that time. That same year they bought



The Garvin Family - 1953
Don, Mary Beth, Silvia, Patty and Donna

their first refrigerated truck. Up until this point, the drivers, after loading milk into their trucks, would use shovels of crushed ice, from the “ice house” to chill the trucks and their loads of processed/packaged milk and dairy products. By 1958, the dairy’s truck fleet was 100% refrigerated.

By 1953, the plant was equipped with the latest modern equipment available for dairies at that time. With this, and the dairy’s modern laboratory, it made the dairy one of the finest and most modern dairies in the Ohio Valley. This was also the year that Garvin’s Dairy expanded to the Clarksburg, Fairmont, and Morgantown area, with a distribution location in Fairmont, WV. The routes numbered in the mid 30’s, these now being mostly wholesale in nature, with deliveries to supermarkets, stores and restaurants. Home delivery continued to be very popular at this time too.

By 1955, Garvin’s Jersey Farms, Inc., was credited with another first for dairies in the tri-state area. They were the first to use stainless steel farm bulk cooling tanks for further control of the quality of the raw milk that was received from the farm producers. By December 1957, Garvin’s had completed transition from 10 gallon milk cans to bulk tanker trucks and at that time was the only dairy in the area to receive 100% of its raw milk in this manner.

Don explains, “I was in charge of all the dairy routes. I liked working with people and hired the best people I could to become our route salesmen. I knew the success of the business depended upon the quality of the product and the service we provided to our customers. We sent our dairy route salesmen to school to learn how to deal with the public. We used the Elmer Wheeler Sales Training Institute out of Pittsburgh as a cornerstone of our public relations training program. Mr. Wheeler was a terrific motivational teacher for the route salesmen. He stressed ‘Sell the sizzle, not the steak!’ I was very proud of the fact that every



Left:
Don’s beloved
mother, Bess
Hood Garvin.

Right:
Don and
Patty Garvin
celebrate their
50th wedding
anniversary in
1993.



route doubled in size regarding its business and sales under my leadership. I was also proud that we had annual Christmas parties for our employees and their families as well as picnics for the employees and their families.”

Don loved and respected his dear mother, Bess Hood Garvin. “Mother was well educated and had two degrees from West Liberty State College. She was a teacher at Wheeling High School and drove herself using a horse and buggy to school each day. Back then, a woman was required to resign from a teaching position when she married. So when mother married my father in 1913, she had to resign from her teaching job. She was 27 years old at the time she married. In later years, I would visit her on Sunday evenings and watch the Lawrence Welk Show with her. She loved to watch Bobby and Sissy dance. During those times she would talk to me about our family history and the lively stories of my ancestors. I cherish those talks with mother very much.”

In 1962, a newer, much larger plant was built and new dairy processing equipment was brought in on train flat cars. One of the pieces of equipment was a 10,000 gallon refrigerated milk holding tank, making it the largest in the state at that time. At the time the new plant was built, it was the only producing dairy in the United States that had an electronically filtered air system, which was made in Canada. The steel, piping, and duct work was all made by local steel manufacturing companies. Construction was done by local contractors. It included the largest “Cold Room” for storage for its day which could hold all the milk produced in the area, as well as loading docks with powered forklifts for loading wholesale trucks and tractor trailers.



The four Garvin brothers:
Jack, Don, Paul and Wayne

Garvin's Dairy evolved into one of the largest full process producing dairies in the tri-state area. It made not only milk, but cottage cheese, sour cream, ice cream, butter, buttermilk, and a full line of other dairy products. Its area of distribution ran from north of East Liverpool, Ohio; south to near Charleston, WV; east into Pittsburgh, PA and Oakland, MD; and west into Columbus, OH. Garvin's Dairy had bought Deed's Dairy of Columbus, OH, as a distribution center. Truck and tractor trailer loads of milk were going out from Garvin's Lane, 24 hours a day, six days a week. At its height, the dairy employed 300 plus people with three major distribution points: Wheeling, WV, Fairmont, WV, and Lancaster/Columbus, OH.

Don and his family relocated to Fairmont to build the business in that part of the state. “Patty was in total agreement that we should go and reestablish our home in the Fairmont area. I enjoyed the challenge of building the routes and expanding the business. And Patty supported me throughout my entire career.”

In June 1984, it was decided to close Garvin’s Dairy after 95 years of operation. The cost of operations had become very cost prohibitive because of governmental regulations in conjunction to being located far out in the country, and the cost of relocating because of low profit margins, took that option out of the question. It became obvious that they could no longer be competitive and stay in business. This was during a time in U.S. economic history when inflation was running rampant and the price of gasoline was going way up. Garvin’s Dairy had become so large that it took three other major dairies to buy the business, thus closing down a Marshall County landmark business/operation.

Don in front of
his 1913 Sears
& Roebuck
home where
he was born in
1918.

Age: 95



After the Garvin’s Dairy business closed, Don began to invest in stocks and bonds, and using his business expertise, was able to make a lucrative living from his investments. He recalls, “Patty and I had moved back to Wheeling and enjoyed going to dances and social functions with our group of friends: the John Halletts; the Kenny Remke’s; the John Hunter’s; and Dr. and Mrs. Isminger. The ladies would get dressed up and we’d all go out for dinner and dancing. We certainly had some good times and made many good memories.”

Don is very proud that he and his grandson, Donald Michael Pollack, went on a two week trip to Alaska in 2000. They flew out to the west coast and traveled to near Anchorage to enjoy fishing for King Salmon. “On one occasion, we saw a very large grey-black wolf dead alongside the road. I couldn’t believe how large it was!” Don recalls.

During his life, Don enjoyed a passion for planting trees. He planted trees all over his 200 plus acres on Garvin’s lane: oaks, maples, walnut, and Colorado blue spruce. Don feels the pin oak is one of the best trees to plant. He is proud to show a very tall oak tree in his yard that he planted in 1945. “The sapling

was only six inches tall when I found it in the woods and brought it home to plant in the yard of our 1913 Sears and Roebuck house. We moved the house from its original location on top of the hill as we needed to modernize the plant. We moved the Sears & Roebuck house to its current location at 100 Garvin's Lane in 1958. Patty and I moved our family into it at that time. To plant the sapling, I dug out four feet and filled the hole with plenty of manure and gave the sapling a good start. It didn't disappoint me because look at it now! We raised our family in this same house and I planted that sapling in 1958 when we moved into the house. Now, my daughter, Mary Beth Pollock, owns the home and I reside with her and her family. I lost my beloved Patty many years ago, but still enjoy seeing my family grow and flourish." Donald is very proud of his extended family: three daughters, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren plus their spouses: 1) Silvia Weiss and husband, Donald. They have a daughter Kristen Weiss Anderson (Keith) Kristen and Keith have two children, Samantha and Sarah. 2) Mary Beth Pollack and husband, Richard. They have three children: Son, Donald Michael Pollack; daughter, Amber (Andrew) Berti. They have a son, Alex; and daughter, Elizabeth (Jeremy) Richter and their four children – Faith, Wilson, Emaline and Beckett. 3) Donna Garvin. Don is quite content in reliving his memories surrounded by family in the same beloved Sears and Roebuck house where he was born on Garvin's Lane almost a century ago.

(Written October, 2013.)



Valley Hospice

Caring. Living. Healing.



Don with his Garvin's Dairy memorabilia.
Age: 95

