

Stanley Pulver is king of Winchell Mountain

by Shirley Powell

Pleasant View Farm sits high on Winchell Mountain, commanding a vista nearly unchanged in more than 50 years.

And Stanley Pulver, 84, as patriarch on the farm, could be called king of the mountain. Recently he talked about the farming life he's always known.

Q: You've always lived on the mountain?

PULVER: I was born in 1906 less than a mile away, on a dairy farm.

There were three boys and two girls.

Q: And when did you come to Pleasant View? Was that your name for it?

PULVER: We gave it the name. The view is one reason we came here. It's funny, because I was 30 years old before I ever looked at this farm though my family lived less than a mile away. We always used another road and didn't bother to come this way.

We bought the farm in 1936, in the fall. We moved here in 1937. There wasn't any barn, just the big house where my son and his family live now. We lived there, but then his family grew so we moved to this house (a smaller home on the same property). My wife died six years ago.

Q: So you had to build a barn?

PULVER: Yes, I hired a man and he brought workers. They cut 60,000 board feet of two-inch (diameter) white oak from the property and put up the barn. Finished in January of 1937.

Charged me \$14 a thousand for cutting the wood, plus they took the sawdust and so forth. It was a man who had a sawmill.

Charged \$5 a day a man, and he got \$1 a man for supervising the work.

Q: Why was there no barn when you came? Hadn't the place been farmed?

PULVER: Yes, it was farmed. The house must be about 150 years old.

A family named Hamlin had it for 75 years, and another family by the name of Holmes.

When we came, there was a slab about 30 or 40 feet long and I don't know how wide. We found one beam. People must have torn the barn down and taken off the doors and so on. I had 17 head of cattle then, and they stayed at my father's farm till our barn was built.

Q: Tell us how the dairy business has changed during your lifetime.

PULVER: Well, we used to take the milk down to Millerton every morning. In the winter we used a sleigh. We went however we could. If there was snow we might go across fields instead of by the road. There weren't any snowplows till 1925.

I remember there was a blizzard in 1920 and it took my father 'till 5:00 to get home. My brother and I were set to start the milking but the cans weren't here. My father had the milk cans, so we couldn't milk.

He never missed a day taking the

milk. That time he was one of the six farmers that made it to Millerton. And there were about 30 farmers or more that took in milk at that time.

It was for the Borden Company and it went to New York City.

We used horses. Then between about 1925 and 1930, we started using trucks.

Now we don't do the hauling, and we just have pickup trucks.

Q: How much milk could a truck take back then?

PULVER: Well, if you got on 25 cans that was a lot. That would be about 100 pounds a can; 80-85 pounds of milk and the cans weighed 15 or 20 pounds (each).

Q: You said you started here 53 years ago with 17 cows. How many do you have now?

PULVER: About 90-100. There's usually 90 milkers. And we bought another farm next door in 1948. That's 175 acres and this one is 250. We farm them as one. This one is in Dutchess County and the other is in Columbia County.

Q: What did you pay for this farm in 1936?

PULVER: (Laughing) I'd rather not tell you!

Q: That was the Depression. Were the times hard?

PULVER: Our milk check was \$200 a month. We had expenses and a hired man. We made a little money selling eggs. I don't know how we made out.

Q: How is the milk taken now?



Stanley Pulver

PULVER: We had some horses once. Morgan horses. The boys played around with them. Then when we got six or seven, we decided we'd have to get rid of them.

Q: When did you get tractors?

PULVER: I think in about 1936 we got a tractor with steel tires. We took them off and put on rubber ones. That made a lot of difference.

I remember once about 1918, 1920, a man was afraid his tractor would go through the floor of a bridge—they were big tractors then—and he got off and let the tractor go over by itself. It made it. Steam engines, they had.

Farmers used to get together to do the work, like threshing. The lady of the house had to cook for 10 or 12. But that's not the way it's done now, not for a long time.

Q: You've never seen much development here.

PULVER: I think people were afraid of the sound of the wind we get here in the winter.

Q: Ever have a big wind storm?

PULVER: I think it was 1952 we had a cyclone. Tore up the silo and a machine shed and a brooder house. I don't remember what happened to the chickens. We had to build a new silo.

The winters haven't been as snowy lately. But we have had drifts on the road five and six feet deep.

Q: When you were a boy living on Winchell Mountain, where did you go to school?

PULVER: There used to be a schoolhouse west of the cemetery (at the junction of Route 60 and Pulver Road). It had one room and six or eight grades. I don't know how one teacher could teach all those grades, but that's the way it was. And in high school I went to Millerton. There were six in my graduating class.

Q: How did you get there? It must have been three miles...

PULVER: Yes, three miles. We'd go down with the milk mornings.

Q: And walk back?

PULVER: Well, later we kept a horse and buggy in town.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

PULVER: She was a schoolteacher.

Q: Did she like being a farmer's wife?

PULVER: She seemed to enjoy it. She wasn't the kind who went out in the barn and worked. But she worked in the house. We had two sons. My younger son and his son, my grandson, are on the farm.

My grandson likes to work with cattle. So many farmers are going out now, I don't know if he'll be able to farm as long as he wants to. It remains to be seen.

There are only about a half dozen or a few more farms (in the immediate area) now. There used to be a lot more.

Q: Did you ever work at anything else, or want to, when you were a young man?

PULVER: I worked for a month down in Millerton for a dairy. That's the only place I ever worked except for my father or myself.

Q: You're your own boss on a farm. Is that what you like about it?

PULVER: I guess that's part of it.

Q: There may be development coming. Will it touch your land?

PULVER: South of here. They're working on it. It used to be Cobble Pond Farm.

Q: But for now, you're king of the mountain?

PULVER: The elevation here is 1250 feet above sea level, and I believe the highest elevation in Dutchess County is 1300 feet.

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