

This I believe by Norm Sills

My past experiences in this church, (which we joined in 1954) are different than most of you. I was a deacon (twice, 20 years apart), and a member of the historical committee of the Conference for a number of years. Nancy, of course, was much more active. Among other responsibilities she sang in the choir for 50+ years and supervised the kitchen for untold years. She was also a deacon and President of the Upkeep Society.

I was a dairy farmer for 25 years and before and after that I helped maintain the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut until we moved to Noble Horizons. I also helped redesign, as well as hiked it myself, the whole Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia.

For the first ten years I worked alone on my own (leased) farm, with a neighbor, or at a part time job. Nancy was busy raising our five children, doing all the cooking and housework and keeping a large vegetable garden. As the kids became older, maybe in their early years at Salisbury Central School, they took interest in the young calves and each "adopted" one to feed and nurture. None aspired to become farmers (except my oldest son, Jeff, who does now have his own farm in Hillsdale, NY), but all were willing to help "Dad." We had a pony for the younger children and two horses for the older ones, given to us by Doris Walker before she became Mrs. Walker. We kept a pony for them to ride and that was part of their education that they didn't get in school. Around the age of seven they joined 4-H and still showed their calves, now heifers, at the 4-H fair in Litchfield.

They still went to Sunday school, and Peggy was a junior leader in the high school class. The younger ones still went to Sunday school, but not the boys once in high school. Both are members, though, and sometimes go to church.

When my two boys were in high School (at HVRHS) they learned to milk by machine, and helped me to the extent that I was able to take a vacation. I have pictures of them doing man's work even before we had a hired man. But in high school they also participated in sports, Jeff in soccer and Mark on the wrestling team.

However farming was not all work and no play. Nancy and I learned to Square Dance and spent many years at this activity, which we loved. We went to meetings where they had pot luck suppers and also other forms of entertainment. A telling moment came just before her Alzheimer's got much worse when Nancy confided to someone that she was glad we had had five children. Imagine that!

This all explains why I never considered farming – or hiking – to be one-gender activities. Nancy and I loved to hike and to ski and we often took one or more of our kids with us. We taught them all to ski, to snowshoe and to climb mountains, and some of them outdid their parents. Mark and his wife also ski, hike and mountain climb in Idaho and Ginny and Peggy who go skiing with their husbands, will also agree "this I believe" is our way of supporting the church, our family, the land, and the animals (cows) that depend on us.