



MMPA Matters

I'm sitting at my computer two days after the MMPA annual meeting composing my first column for the *Messenger* as president of MMPA. This is not something I expected to be doing twelve months ago, but life is full of surprises – some good, some bad and some truly significant. This one is of real significance. I am proud to have been elected to serve as president of MMPA. I assume this role with humility and realization of the responsibility I have accepted.

To follow an outstanding president of a successful co-op is a big task. Many people contribute to MMPA's excellent performance – with our dedicated board of directors, staff and members, we will continue to excel.

It was a pleasure to serve with Elwood Kirkpatrick on the board for the last fifteen years. As president, Elwood exhibited many admirable leadership traits – honesty, integrity, foresight and the ability to get things done, to name a few. Just say the name "Elwood" most anywhere in dairy country, and people know who you are talking about. I wish Elwood the best in his retirement.

This industry still fascinates me. I love cows, calves and the people who care for them. Do you ever get

bored watching baby calves? If you weren't a dairy farmer, think of all those beautiful sunrises you would have slept through. When you take a couple of days off, do you notice how nice the barns smell when you return? It's too bad our neighbors don't always share our finely tuned senses of smell so they could enjoy the essence of contented cows like we do.

So you know a little more about me and our family's dairy operation, I farm in partnership with my brother Larry in St. Johns. We have been working together since 1974, first in partnership with our Dad. After buying him out in 1986, we formed the two-way partnership we call Nobis Dairy Farms. We farm 3,000 acres and have an 800-cow herd. We have always divided the responsibilities in our farm around our two enterprises. Larry is in charge of crops, and I have had responsibility for cows.

My wife Liz, and I have two sons, Kerry and Mitch. My older son, Kerry, works with us on the farm, primarily with me on the dairy side. Kerry is also president of the Clinton County Farm Bureau. He and his wife Summer have two children. Liz and Mitch are educators, as is Summer. Mitch is also assistant varsity coach of the

2007 State Class C Boys Basketball Champions Bath Bees.

Traditionally, the president of MMPA has worked from the main office. The responsibilities and level of commitment that the job demands have not changed, but times have changed, communications options have changed, and the geographic location of the president has changed. With computers, e-mail and cell phones, I can be in instant communication from any location with members, staff and other board members. My home is located just twenty miles north of Lansing, a place that takes up more of our time now than it has in years past. For those occasions when I need to be at the Novi headquarters, it's only eighty-five miles. The bottom line is I believe I can function efficiently from my home base and, as I mentioned earlier, I like the smell of cows.

While we enjoy our industry, we all know challenges exist. Some days, it seems they don't just exist but abound. Challenge is a part of life. It is how we react to a challenge that differentiates us. The members of MMPA react effectively by working together to solve problems, which has led to our organization's success over the last 91 years. Most of the issues we face can best be tackled by working together.

I look forward to this column being used each month to share information that is of interest to MMPA members as we use our strong base to cooperatively build a stronger future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long, sweeping tail on the 'n'.

MMPA has a rich history of service to members and the dairy industry. I think we have a bright future in the dairy industry. We have for quite some time been ahead of the curve in many ways. We've proven we can work together for the common good of all producers. The milk we produce on our farms is very high quality. Our industry will continue to evolve and improve because of the dedicated people involved in it.