

# YON Family Farms

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## A Time to Be Thankful

It's been some time ago when my niece, then a preschooler, was here for a visit from suburbia and was helping me check cows on a warm sunny afternoon on a 4-wheeler. Eyes wide in disbelief, she said, "You get to do this EVERYDAY for your JOB??!" My quick reply was yes, I sure do, but it isn't near as much fun during a thunderstorm, an ice storm, or frigid temperatures. Nor is it fun when the fence is down, the cattle are out, or the water isn't working. True, but after thinking it over numerous times over the years, she really is right. Where else would I get to see first hand the intricate weaving of spider webs glistening in the Carolina pines, displaying brilliant jewels as the warm sunlight hits them. Most days you can take in spectacular sunrises and sunsets on the horizon that many go on vacation for the opportunity to experience. Where else can you breathe in deeply the fragrance of plump, ripe blackberries, abundant on the vines, a refreshing rain on newly tilled earth, or the smell of a freshly cut hay field. All cattle people know the satisfaction in seeing a newborn calf take in that first breath, or seeing a group of calves scampering across a pasture as if in a race. What we see and hear and smell and touch in a days time, should make us all reflect on just how blessed we are and how few actually have the opportunities we do. I recall at our first job, I was so amazed that I was actually getting paid a salary for working with cattle. Much older and some wiser now, there are a lot of days that I'm not getting paid much at all since we're on our own now, but I still have that same feeling. It is so easy to fall in the self pity trap of whining about long hours, uncooperative weather, repair after repair, low return on investment and the list goes on and on. My hope

for you all during this holiday season is that you capture all the opportunities that we often miss because we aren't looking, bottle them up and keep them in your head, and reflect on them when you need a lift. We truly are blessed to be American cattle people, something I am sad to say that I take for granted way too often. May we never forget that the "Cattle on a thousand hills are His" and may we never forget the sacrifices our forefathers and current servicemen are making for our families. Together these two realities are a huge part of the blessings we enjoy.

I think Phil Yon (Kevin's father) summed up a lot in this piece he wrote, published in our State newspaper in the Summer of 2005.

### Young Soldier (by Phil Yon)

When I was very young, my family and I attended the nearest church in our rural upstate community. My father is buried in the cemetery at that small country church, along with a number of my other relatives. When I visit my father's gravesite, I am always drawn to a nearby small tombstone, where a young soldier was buried during World War 2. Vaguely, I can remember Thomas attending the church, although I was a small child at the time. I recall him being a tall, shy, and quiet young man. His birth date and date of death are prominently displayed on the tombstone, and what initially drew my attention was the fact that he was killed in France in June, 1944, exactly one week after his twentieth birthday.

I was aware that the young man, like many others in the church at that time, grew up in a share-cropper family. I know something of the hardships of that time. The difference is, I had the opportunity to experience the good things in life, and

have enjoyed God's richest blessings. Thomas's life was cut tragically short, and I am sure that the only time he even traveled away from home was when he left to enter the Army.

What always strikes me, and makes me sad, is the very bad lot that Thomas drew in life. His life consisted of a hard childhood, then ended before he had a chance to earn a salary, own a car, marry, or experience so many things we all take for granted. From his age, and place and date of death, I am sure he was a replacement soldier in a combat outfit. Like many others who had no special training or education, he probably was assigned to a rifle company and fed into the lines, scared, and being a replacement, without friends. I have read that the combat veterans did not want to become friends with the replacements, because their life expectancy was so short. So he died, in a foreign land, without loved ones, or probably with anyone who even knew him.

This was all through no fault of his, but simply because he had the misfortune of being born at that particular time and place. He had no control of the circumstances, yet paid the fullest measure. His life consisted of the short dash between his date of birth and his date of death on the tombstone, and forever, he will be barely out of his teens.

So the next time, we feel sorry for ourselves because of some minor slight, lets remember this young man, and the huge price paid by him, and others, so that we can enjoy our freedom and blessings.

Thomas, we can never repay you, but we remember you, and honor you.

Thomas, we salute you.

