



Ursuline Sisters
of Mount Saint Joseph

“Around the Farm”

January 2016



A monthly feature on the different aspects of the farm in Maple Mount, Ky.

LEFT: *Some of the farm staff in the 1970s. From left: Joe Riney, farm manager; Mike Stelmach, who now runs the slaughterhouse; Mark Blandford, current farm manager, and Mark’s brother Jack who was assistant farm manager. CENTER:* *Brothers Bruce, left, and Mark Blandford in 2008 when Bruce was farm manager. RIGHT:* *Farm Manager Mark Blandford drives a tractor in 2010.*

Eleven men have carried the title of “farm manager” at Maple Mount, but for the past 83 years, only two families have filled that role – the Rineys and Blandfords.

In December 1933, Gerald Riney, his wife and four children arrived at Maple Mount in a car and two horse-drawn wagons to begin managing the farm. When Gerald Riney retired in 1962, his son Joe Riney took over, a job he continued until his own retirement in 1990.

Bruce Blandford, by then a 15-year veteran of the Mount farm, became the farm manager in 1990. When his health forced him to step down in 2009, his younger brother, Mark Blandford, took over and continues as farm manager today.

None of the current Ursuline Sisters has ever spent a day with anyone as farm manager other than a Riney or a Blandford.

The Blandfords’ great grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Aquila Blandford, greeted the Ursuline Sisters when they arrived in what is now Maple Mount in 1874, and a Blandford has been at the Mount ever since. “It made me real proud to be named farm manager,” Bruce said. “It made the whole family proud. We’ve had a long history.”

Shortly after he became farm manager, Bruce started an orchard on the premises, and it’s the legacy of which he’s most proud. “I’d find trees growing in a fence row and I’d move them until they got 5 or 6 feet tall, and then replant them

around the grounds,” he said. “I planted several hundred trees, mostly maples, cedars and pines.”

The heritage of the Mount farm is one of its most endearing qualities, Bruce said. “People can’t believe the sisters are still running their farm.”

That role now belongs to his brother Mark, who said he never dreamed he’d be farm manager when he started working on the farm in 1974.

“It’s a challenge,” he said. “We’re a small farm now compared to everyone else. We were the biggest farm in the area when I started, but everyone else has expanded. Farming has always been in my blood.” Now 60, and with no relatives in line to succeed him, Mark said he’ll likely be the last Blandford to work the farm at the Mount.

Joe Riney died in October 2015, but in 1991, he was interviewed by Sister Jamesina Spain about his time as farm manager. “I’ve always considered the Mount ... home to me,” Joe said. “I learned to work early in life. I learned to enjoy and appreciate my job. I am proud of my accomplishments here. I did have a lot of compliments on the way the farm looks and the premises.”

Joe was 9 when his family moved to the Mount farm. He met his wife Sue when she was a student at Mount Saint Joseph Academy, and they married in 1944. Six weeks later he was drafted into the Army and spent a year in the service during World War II. He came back to Maple Mount in 1945. The couple had eight children. ❀