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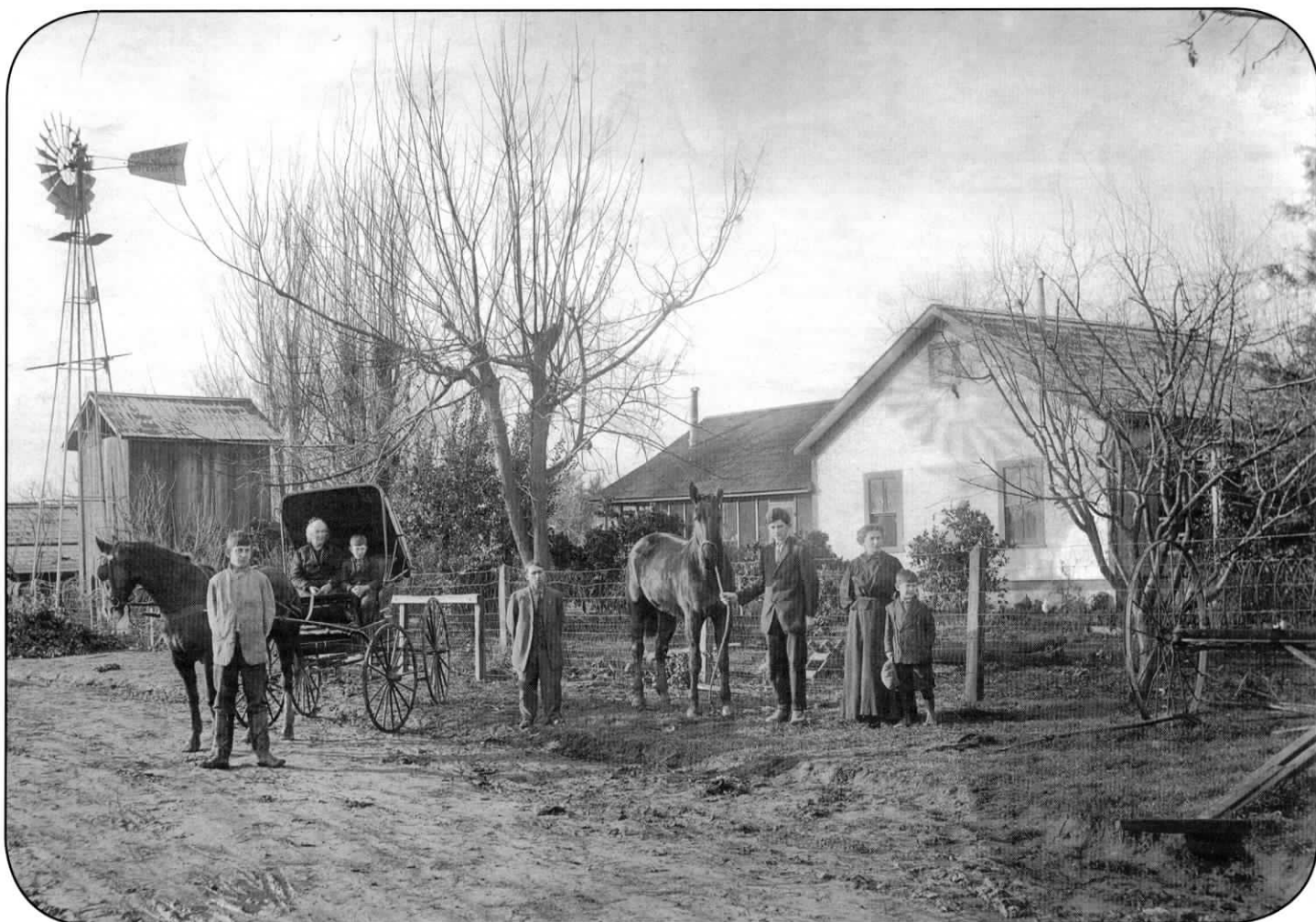
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The Kiddy of Modesto



On November 11, 1911, Margaret Keller welcomed her widowed sister Josephine and her four sons to Modesto. The family stayed briefly with the Kellers in this house on Blue Gum before moving to a house on Adam Avenue on the east side of town. Left to right: Clarence, Margaret Keller and Milton (in buggy), Pete Keller (a cousin), Hubert, Josie and Herman. (There is a family debate that the boy in the buggy might be Herman, and Milton is the one next to Josie.)

From Civil War Tennessee to Modesto, 2011

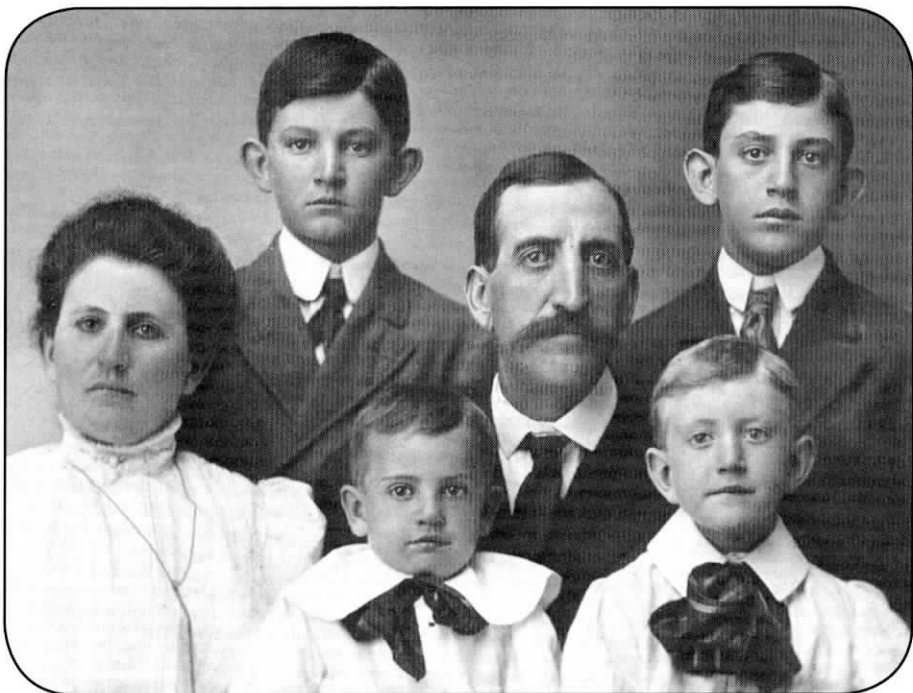
By David Milton Kidd

On November 11, 2011, the Kidd Family cousins will be getting together in Modesto to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the arrival in Modesto of our grandmother, “Josie” Kidd, and her four sons. The path to Modesto was not straight or without hardship and loss, but Josie and her boys persevered and built a good life in Stanislaus County.

The story began in Maryville, in eastern Tennessee. Josie’s future husband, Marshall Burnsidess Kidd, was born the 6th child of Edmund and Margaret French Kidd, a farming family, on December 12, 1863. By many accounts, the Kidd family descended from a John Kidd who emigrated from England to Virginia in the early 1600s. Some of John’s descendants made their way to Tennessee and to Maryville, near Knoxville, and today the region still has a large number of Kidds. The problem genealogists have with early Kidd ancestry is that all of the early Kidds were named John. Sort of like John Doe. Makes you wonder if they had something to hide.

While it is always hard to judge the level of influence these factors have, when you are born, where you are born, and even the name you are given can greatly impact the kind of person you become. Marshall was born into the crucible of the American Civil War. Four of Marshall’s uncles fought for the Union. Only two survived to return home to Maryville.

Marshall’s middle name, Burnsidess, will be recognized by Civil War buffs, but the uninitiated may require a short explanation. Maryville was a small community in eastern Tennessee, a few miles south of Knoxville. Though the State of Tennessee had seceded, at the time of the Civil War Maryville was for the most part a Union town. President Lincoln recognized not only the large number of Union supporters in the region but also its agricultural bounty and the fact that the area controlled the railroad connections between Chattanooga and Virginia.



Marshall Kidd family of Garland, Texas, circa 1910. Left to right: Josie, Hubert, Herman, Marshall, Milton and Clarence.

In 1862 and 1863, the President urged several Union commanders to liberate the area from Confederate “deprivations and control.” These efforts, however, were either not initiated or abandoned when the Union generals confronted the daunting task of getting an army south through Confederate forces at the Cumberland Gap in Southern Kentucky.

Then in March of 1863, a somewhat unlikely liberator emerged in the form of General Ambrose Burnsidess. In December of 1862, General Burnsidess, commanding the Army of the Potomac, had suffered a devastating defeat in the Battle of Fredericksburg at the hands of Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. Thus it was that, under orders from President Lincoln to occupy Knoxville, General Burnsidess arrived at Cumberland Gap in the fall of 1863, according to one of his contemporaries, with a chip on his shoulder and something to prove.

Having learned the risk of frontal assaults at Fredericksburg, Burnsidess probably said to himself, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” He flanked the Confederate soldiers at the Gap and marched his army into Knoxville virtually



In 1939 the Kidd brothers Hubert (in white) and Herman (leading bull) represented the Holstein Breeders Association in the Modesto 4th of July Parade. Kidd Farms bull sported the slogan, 'Pulling for Holsteins' and Hubert's children, John, aged 2½ and Margaret, almost 5 (on float), wore Dutch costumes that signified the origin of the breed.

unopposed. His arrival was a day of jubilee, with Union Knoxville residents waving flags and cheering. Perhaps not as big as a Tennessee football win over Alabama, but it was big.

General Burnside is revered to this day in Eastern Tennessee, by descendants of Unionists at least. As a footnote: portraits show General Burnside with facial hair that reached from his temples down the sides of his face, sort of an early Elvis look. At some point, Burnside's manly style became known as sideburns. Now you know.

With his middle name that of a war hero, and with the Kidd family's active support of community education and worship, young Marshall had some big shoes to fill. One of our Tennessee cousins, Alma Kidd Hall, and her family are members of the Maryville Baptist Tabernacle and provided the following information.

In 1871 the Mount Tabor Presbyterian Church was organized at the Kidd School. Shortly after that, the school property was donated by the Kidds to the Presbytery and the church was built on that site. In the mid 1960s the Presbytery sold the church to a Baptist congregation. The Baptists used the church until 1993, when they found they needed a larger facility. While

planning to enlarge the church, the building was discovered to be so termite infested as to make expansion or remodeling impossible. Thus, the present church, the Maryville Baptist Tabernacle, was built across the street on property that had been donated to them. The old church building was given to the fire department for a practice burn, and a parking lot for the church and the cemetery was eventually built on that site.

With the general's name, and a church-and-school family, Marshall Burnside Kidd grew into a man who was regarded by friends and family as a person of exceptional high character, honesty, and a belief that hard work was its own reward.

The Civil War ended with Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox in the spring of 1865. That year, when Marshall was two, the citizens of Maryville began the work of healing the wounds in a community divided by war and getting back to the business of commerce and farming. Two years later, Marshall's future wife, Martha Josephine Wilkinson (later called Josie) was born on November 15, 1867 into Maryville's more peaceful environment. She was the second daughter of Edward Scott Wilkinson and his wife Nancy Jane (Janey) Carpenter Wilkinson. Janey was known by

friends as a true lady of the South in dress, demeanor and strength of personality – a steel Magnolia of her era. Her influence was not lost on her daughter. Josie remained a gentlewoman all her life, despite the hardships she endured and the hard work she was required to do.

Similar to Marshall Kidd's ancestors, both of Josie's parents were descendants of families that had emigrated from England, settled in Virginia, and then worked their way to Maryville.

In contrast to the farming Kidds, the Wilkinsons were teachers and merchants. However, like the Kidds, they were leaders in their church. In about 1826 John Wilkinson, Josie's great grandfather, donated land for Peck's Memorial United Methodist Church on Wilkinson Pike, on the east side of Maryville.

John Wilkinson was of Scots-Irish origin and, like most of the Scots-Irish, was raised a Presbyterian. However, he married a Methodist lady who longed to worship in a Methodist Church. He built a one-room log cabin so that his wife "could worship in a church of her own denominational persuasion" (Wilkinson, Catharine, in *History of Peck's Memorial United Methodist Church*, July 1986). John Wilkinson, called General Wilkinson, was the attorney general for the area.

I don't want to get too far into the weeds of the issues surrounding the Civil War and religion, but it is interesting to note that the Methodist Conference in the Maryville area remained united until 1865 when the differences between the Union and Confederacy required the splitting of the Methodist Conference into the Methodist Episcopal Church North, and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Peck's Chapel was part of the Southern Conference. At the end of the war, carpetbaggers attempted to take possession of Peck's. Northern "church carpetbaggers" wanted to make Peck's part of the M.E. Church North. However, whether by accident or intent, the Church had never been deeded to the M.E. South Conference and had remained in the Wilkinson family name. It remained until the threat of Northern confiscation was past and it was considered safe to transfer the property to the M.E. South Conference. Peck's has been rebuilt several times and today is a lovely stone building in a grove of oaks.

Not a lot is known about the courtship of Josie and Marshall. What is known is that Marshall was a

farmer and Josie attended Maryville College and was a graduate of Tennessee Normal School in Maryville, where she trained as a teacher. She taught in Maryville for several years. Additionally, the Kidds had been Union supporters during the war and there is some evidence that the Wilkinsons had been supporters of the Confederacy. Somehow the two of them from distinctly different backgrounds found each other, fell in love, and were married at her parents' home on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1893. (Note: in 1797 a British publisher issued "The Young Man's Valentine Writer", which contained scores of romantic verses for young swains. It is doubtful that Marshall had access to that book. But, but by the late 1800s mass produced Valentines were available and he may have popped into the local general store for an appropriate card on his way to his nuptials.)

The newlyweds did not let any grass grow under their feet. Only two months after marrying, Marshall and Josie left Tennessee and moved to Waxahachie, Texas, where Marshall's older brothers, James, Michael, and Riley, had moved before them. (Elbert, the eldest son, remained a farmer in Maryville for the rest of his life.) Part of the allure of Texas to the brothers was cheap land and good cotton crops, but part of it was also that a family farm frequently could not sustain all of the extended family. The younger males were expected to strike out on their own.

Marshall's younger brother George also moved to Texas, but after two years he returned to Maryville, as his wife was reportedly "so unhappy." The story has it that George cared for his ailing father after returning from Tennessee and inherited their father's farm. George's two granddaughters, Alice Kidd Best, and Alma Kidd Hall, still live in the Maryville area. Alice and her husband Harold still farm the Kidd acreage, which includes Kidd Springs Park, the site of an annual Tennessee Kidd family reunion.

In a letter to her sister postmarked May 4, 1893, Josie was already extolling the virtues of Texas. She said she felt healthier than she had in some time, and that the land was cheap and the soil was good: "It will never wear out in your lifetime." A real Texas booster.

For the next seventeen years Marshall and Josie farmed cotton and raised a family, starting with the birth of Margaret Blanche Kidd, who was born and died on January 2, 1894. Their next child, Hubert Edward Kidd, was born on July 23, 1895. Clarence



In their late teens and early twenties, dressed for church, Herman, Milton, Clarence and Hubert pose with their mother.

Wilkinson Kidd was born October 19, 1897. Hazel Elizabeth Kidd was born on December 1, 1901, but died a few months later. Milton Lee Kidd was born on August 21, 1904, and the last child, Herman Marshall Kidd, arrived on October 13, 1906. Hubert, Clarence, Milton and Herman are the four brothers who eventually made their way to Modesto with Josie.

In the late 1800s there had been a boom in cotton and then a fairly quick slide down. While Marshall and Josie arrived a little late for the dance, they seemed to have thrived. After their children were born, the family moved from Waxahachie to Garland, near Dallas (about 1909), and bought and farmed 105 acres of cotton land in that area.

Thanks to Cousin Lee Wilkinson of Maryville and Cousin Marsha Kidd of Modesto, we have a few letters from Josie to various relatives, including her sister Margaret in Modesto. (Josie's older sister Margaret is a real enigma. No one knows how she found her way from Maryville to Modesto. Perhaps Divine guidance led her to the Promised Land.)

In the letters, Josie seems to be content with Texas, her husband 'Marsh' and her growing boys. A big family outing was to take a wagon from Garland to Plano for a block of ice to take home to make homemade ice cream. Today it would be to drive to Arlington for a Dallas Cowboys' game.

Herman Kidd told his daughter years later that when he was 4 ½, in April of 1911, they had a "northerner." The mules got out and Marshall went to fetch them back. In doing so he got a chill. A few days later he died. The cause of death was most likely pneumonia. Shortly after, the man of the house was resting in peace in a cemetery in Garland. Josie Wilkinson Kidd, at age 43, was left with 105 acres to tend, and four children, the youngest under five. Who do you turn to? Family.

There is a letter to Margaret from Josie, telling of Marshall's death. Beyond that we do not know what may have been communicated between Josie and her sister. However, it seems doubtful that on November 11, 1911, after a train ride of 1,700 miles, Josie and the boys yelled, "surprise!" when they knocked on Margaret's door.

Much of the following is from an oral history by Herman to his daughter Marsha Kidd, and a Kidd family timeline written by Milton's wife, Dorothy Kidd.

Shortly after arriving in Modesto, Josie and her four boys moved to a house on Adam Avenue on the east side of town, where they stayed for about two years. Then, in 1913, they spent a few months living with Aunt Margaret while waiting to move into a house on 20 acres on Blue Gum Avenue in Wood Colony on the west side. By this time they had purchased two horses and had about 20 dairy cows. In 1915, Josie sold her 105 acres of cotton land in Garland. Now having a little extra money, Josie started looking for a larger piece of property and a place to build a home for her and her boys.

Sometime between 1917 and 1919 (Herman's and Dorothy's accounts do not agree on the precise date), Josie sold the Blue Gum property for a profit, according to Herman, and purchased 110 acres of farmland west of Modesto on Pauline and California Avenues. The property had a large red barn and a hand pump for

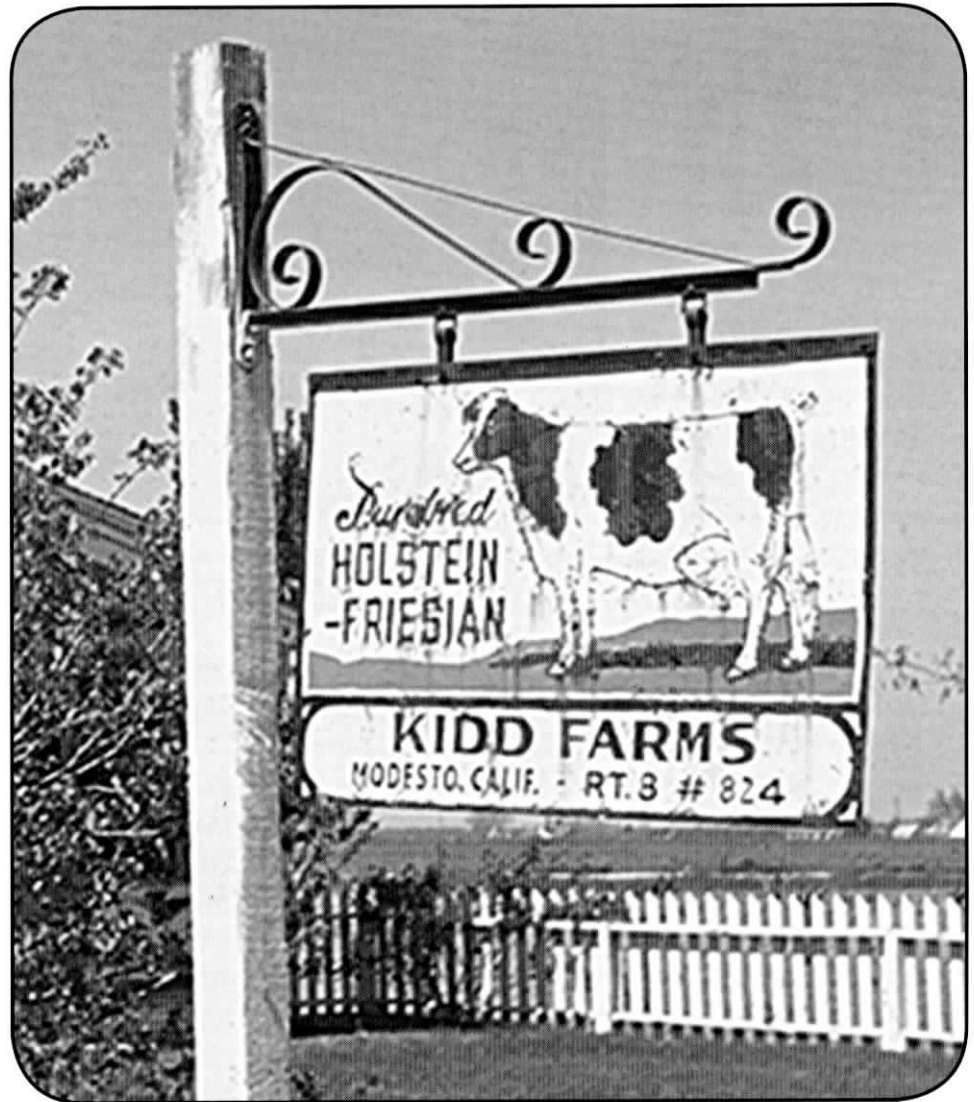
a well. Josie then bought a prefab house and built a windmill, tank house, garage, and wooden silo. The house was purchased from either Sears Roebuck or one of the other companies in that business. The lumber was pre-cut and shipped to Modesto via rail, then to Pauline Avenue via freight wagon or truck. Nearing its own centennial, the house at 1679 Pauline Avenue is still standing and occupied to this date. Those were the days before planned obsolescence.

As her sons grew, Josie purchased purebred Holstein cows, slowly building a fine herd. The boys, before leaving for school, would get up by six and milk up to 30 cows by kerosene lantern, then again in the evening after school. Fortunately for all of them, the house had come pre-wired and in 1923 electricity arrived on Pauline Avenue. It didn't make milking any more fun but did assure there would be no Mrs. O'Leary's Cow incident on Pauline. (Legend has it that Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over a kerosene lantern that started the famous and tragic Chicago fire of 1871.)

In 1928, Clarence, Josie's second son, was married and attended college at Southern Methodist University in Texas. Upon completing his studies, he was ordained a Methodist Minister and served in several California churches including in Point Arena, Tranquility, Lakeport, and Tuolumne.

A year later, in 1929, Hubert, Milton, and Herman purchased forty acres on the corner of Stone and Paradise Avenues. In a sense this was the completion of the evolution from Josie and the boys to the Kidd Brothers' dairy, as the property was purchased by "Kidd Brothers."

In 1934 the brothers purchased seventy acres on the corner of Stone and California. They replaced the wood silo with a cement block silo and built a con-



When the Kidd Brothers started their Holstein dairy on the west side of Modesto, it was given a rural route address. The sign remained even after the house address was changed to 1679 Pauline Avenue.

crete milk barn. That same year the brothers bought two registered Holsteins from E. E. Freeman and registered them in the name of Kidd Brothers. These two animals and their progeny were important in the growing quality of the herd.

The following year, 1935, the brothers took a few head to the Stanislaus County Fair. That was the beginning of a long history of exhibiting their cattle at county fairs and the California State Fair, interrupted only by WWII. Also, in 1935 Milton was elected to the Modesto Irrigation District Board of Directors, for District 5, a post to which he was repeatedly re-elected and held until his death in 1971. Hubert's son John continues the family's tradition of public service in Modesto and is currently the MID Director for the

same district.

In 1937 the Kidd Brothers made their first trip to the California State Fair. As the brothers continued to exhibit their Holsteins, the recognition of the quality of the herd increased. In 1939 they exhibited a few head at the World's Fair on Treasure Island in San Francisco. After the war, in addition to exhibiting at county fairs, the family took a full show string to the 1946 Grand National

Livestock show in the Cow Palace in San Francisco and brought home almost every top award.

For the next 15-plus years, Kidd Farms competed against the best-known dairies from across the US, including Curtis Candy, Adohr Farms and Carnation Farms. The Kidd animals always brought home their fair share of blue ribbons. Kidd Farms Holsteins were recognized nationally as one of the best herds in the country. Not bad for a woman and four boys who arrived at Aunt Margaret's with no father and only a few dollars.

For the Kidd Brothers, life in Modesto wasn't all about the dairy business. For many years they were active in the Methodist Church, The Grange, the Farm Bureau, FFA, 4-H, and a number of Modesto's civic organizations. They were all sports fans and, with Milton as the lead, they donated and helped raise funds for local athletes who otherwise might not have the money for a pair of football cleats or track shoes. Modesto had been good to them and they gave back to the community.

Josie had attended Maryville College and Clarence had been able to attend college. Milton spent some time at Modesto Junior College, and Hubert completed Business School, but due to their responsibilities on the farm, a four-year college degree had eluded them. Hubert, Milton, and Herman were determined that their children have the opportunity for education that they had not. The brothers were most proud that we seven cousins — all of their children — graduated from college.



Kidd family home at 1679 Pauline Avenue. Purchased by mail order and assembled by the brothers in about 1919, it housed three generations of Kidds and in 2011 is still occupied.

Milton's son David was the last to graduate due to travels from college to college and perhaps some inattention to the academic side of college life. When he called home to announce he had finally made it, the brothers undoubtedly gave each other the 'sixties equivalent of a high five.

Josie died in 1952 at the age of 85. Clarence passed away in 1960 at the age of 62, Hubert in 1970 at the age of 75,

Milton in 1971 at the age of 66, and Herman was 83 when he died in 1989.

All seven of the Kidd brothers' offspring are alive and well. Clarence's son Eldon Kidd taught school for many years and is farming almonds near Modesto. Hubert's daughter Margaret Kidd Taro is a retired Modesto City Schools teacher and is raising almonds on her ranch on the Westside. John Kidd, Hubert's son, for a few years had a dairy on the seventy acres on Stone Avenue. He is now farming walnuts there as well as serving as an MID Director. Milton's daughter, Mary Jo Kidd Corbett, is a retired Sonoma County School teacher and spends her time in Novato, CA, when she isn't at her family's cabin at Tahoe City. His son David is retired from Hughes Aircraft and says he now spends most of his time hanging around the beach in Southern California. Herman's older daughter Marsha is retired from teaching at MJC, including having served as Athletic Director for three years. She has the fortune of living next to her daughter, and two houses down live her son and daughter-in-law and their kids. That makes it oh so convenient to take care of two very active young boys when Mom and Dad are at work. Herman's younger daughter Bette Kidd Narbaitz is a retired school teacher living in Chico, though from my observation she spends more time on the road than at home, as she and her husband love to travel.

In recent years, Marsha Kidd has hosted an extended family get-together at her home in Modesto, usually in September. In addition, many of the cousins and

their families have attended at least one Kidd family reunion in Tennessee. The Kidds' Tennessee reunion has been held at Kidd Springs Park in Maryville on the last Sunday in June every year for the past 50-plus years. The November 11, 2011 California Kidd celebration is a result of discussions at Marsha's family party in 2010 when someone realized that 2011 was the 100th Anniversary of Josie's arrival in Modesto. For those of us who have not lived in Modesto for years, these family occasions are a special opportu-

nity for us to reconnect with our hometown and all it meant to us as we were growing up. For the children and grandchildren it's a chance to hear the stories, and sometimes tall tales, about the place at least one of their parents knew as a kid, and why it was so important to all of us.

Modesto has changed a lot over the years, but to those of us who grew up there and were blessed by all it had to offer, it will always be home.

