

## Janzen Family Farms Newsletter, July 2017

Dear friends and customers,

Greetings from the Janzen family! I am Clara Janzen, granddaughter of John Janzen – who lives next to the farm with his wife Reinhild, and is current farm president – and daughter of Kristi Janzen, who operates JFF marketing and publicity and usually writes our newsletters. Having completed six weeks on the farm this summer, I am pleased to take her place for this edition of the newsletter! As a child, I felt at home at my grandparents' property and on the prairie: the tall and variegated prairie grasses, giant hay bales in need of conquering, boat trips to pond islands to steal goose eggs for breakfast. Lured by nostalgia and the desire to spend time with my grandparents, I came out to JFF this summer to work. In the fall, I will return for my second year at the University of Miami, where I study political science, religion, and art. As my time here ends, I am excited to share a bit of my experiences. But first, some farm news:

- We have a new, redesigned website! Check it out at our same address, [janzenfamilyfarms.com](http://janzenfamilyfarms.com). Be sure to look at the Gallery page, with many new photos.
- Our cattle family has grown – in addition to calves born this summer, a new bull joined the cows, who is hard at work ensuring the next years' supply of produce (we know, because, unfortunately, his diligence is frequently apparent from the kitchen window).
- The Klingenberg crew successfully harvested our 155 acres of certified organic wheat in one week, with a yield of 20-42 bushels an acre, and planted sorghum and soybeans.
- We now have an [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/janzenfamilyfarms), @janzenfamilyfarms (and please note we're not "janzen farms" but "janzen family farms." Follow us to see pictures of our family, farm life, the herd, prairie wildlife, and more! (We're also still on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/janzenfamilyfarms).)
- Visit us at the [Kansas Grown Farmers Market in Wichita](http://www.kansasgrowing.com) (21<sup>st</sup> & Ridge) on Saturdays 7am-noon, where we are selling our 100% grass-fed beef, and 5lb bags of certified organic wheat and sorghum (pictured below, left). I (Clara) operated the booth for late May and most of June, and my brother Max and cousin Henry have been taking my place in July. (My grandpa will be back most Saturdays in Aug. and Oct., with a few weeks off in Sept.) Look out for a renewed assortment of cuts from our June slaughter.



*Our organic sorghum & freshly-harvested organic wheat (in bags and bouquet) next to our redesigned brochure.*



*My Grandpa and I modeling new "LJ" logo JFF t-shirts, on my first trip to the market this summer.*

Working at Janzen Family Farms deepened my conception of its historical significance, of the necessity of sustainable farming practices, and of its importance as a family treasure. As can be explored on the “History” page of our website and in photos on our “Gallery” page, JFF has operated in my family for over a century, a tradition to which I am proud to have contributed this summer.

I arrived at my family farm and grandparents’ house in late May, greeted by the task of “hemlock eradication.” When I announced to my grandparent’s Sunday School class that I had to deal with “hemlock,” a heated argument ensued between the farmers over the proper taxonomy of this weed. In the end they upheld my grandfather’s conviction that it was the infamous hemlock, not “wild parsley.” I know my grandpa was content with that decision, for the opposite would have nullified the mini-lectures he delivered to me in the fields about Socrates’ fatal poisoning via hemlock.

Hemlock is a poisonous plant with a hollow stalk whose leaves and flowers resemble that of carrots and parsley. It is a ruthless species. It grows, with ease, to be taller than me, and one plant can carry tens of thousands of seeds. It decided to not only invade our large pond island and the banks of our fields and fences, but also disperse itself through our wheat fields. Herbicide out of the question, only one method remained: march through the wheat fields, machete in hand, and show that hemlock who’s boss. For a week, this was my afternoon task. I became cordially acquainted with the beautiful sound of a clean thwack of the lower stem. I had a more bitter relationship with those kings of the species, who required a good three, five, or ten thwacks to achieve full decapitation. An unfortunate portion of the wheat field was so overcome with hemlock that my grandpa had to fetch the tractor to mow it all down. I know he shed a few quiet tears over the bushels of pristine, golden wheat that were chopped down with it. But what else to do? If the hemlock were not eliminated now, we risked worse contamination in the future. After a week of chopping, a huge blister popped on my right hand lower index finger where I gripped the rubber handle of the machete, exposing a large patch of delicate skin. Finally, I could move on to other jobs.

An assortment of tasks followed, none quite as prolonged as the first: meat cooler clean-out, brochure and website re-design, customer relations, post-thunderstorm branch clean-up, and trips to the farmers’ market. My younger brother Max and his cousin Calvin, bursting with energy, received many of the monotonous chores I did not care for: fence painting, mowing, and grain elevator cleaning. Calvin would spend eight hours in the fields mowing the overgrown grasses next to the electric fences to ensure the electricity could get through, and then beg me to accompany him on four-mile runs in the evening. Huh?! How does he have so much energy?! This question was partly answered at meals, when the boys would wolf down loaves of bread smeared with whole butter sticks, wheals of cheese, bowls of guacamole and hummus, entire steaks in single mouthfuls...

My favorite task was photographing the cattle, the farm, the prairie, and my family. One morning I awoke to find the landscape bathed in an orange mist, woven through the herd as they enjoyed their morning graze (pictured below). I received the special opportunity to experience and capture events for which I am usually absent, including the wheat harvest, and my Grandma and cousin's shared birthday. When my little brother arrived, suddenly not the little boy running



*A misty spring morning.*



*JFF calves, one hot June day.*



*Observing a wheat field with neighbor and contract farmer Vern Klingenberg.*



*My grandpa proudly displaying wheat at Elbing Grain, a few miles away from our farm.*



*My grandma's 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, and my cousin Felix's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday, on June 17.*



*My brother Max modeling with the cattle on the four-wheeler, his favorite part of farm life.*



around with a devilish smirk and a toilet plunger, I discovered that he made a good modeling partner for the cattle (pictured above).

Finally, my stay was enriched with feasts cooked by my loving Grandma, whose polite manner betrays the beastly prowess she wields in the kitchen. Many days, the smell of JFF beef wafted through the house, foreshadowing tender, comforting meals of roasts or burgers coupled with garden fresh zucchini, mustard greens, soufflés, and other dishes. I photographed some of this food (pictured below) as I waited to eat it. I'm afraid that it has ruined me a bit though; without JFF beef, that college ritual of late-night hamburger runs will never quite be the same.



*My grandma making hamburgers in the kitchen, with the herd visible from the window.*



*Arm roast with potatoes, carrots, and garden-fresh parsley, with a side salad.*



*The garden – the herd in the background – from which some of our meals descended.*



*A portion of the Janzen family sharing breakfast on the porch.*

Best wishes to all, and happy summer beef eating!

Clara