Dear High School Class,

In 1959, Neil and Gert Viss packed up their household and five kids to move from Chino, CA to Glendale, AZ. Neil thought there was an opportunity to start his own dairy in Arizona after working for other dairymen in southern California. Neil and Gert are my parents, and I am the oldest of those five kids.

We rented an old, small dairy that came with a 2 bedroom house. The herd began with 50 cows. No, we didn’t milk by hand, but at first, we used bucket machines. The milk had to be poured from the bucket machines into 3 milk cans that sat on a cart. We pulled the cart into the milkhouse adjacent to the barn, then dumped the milk into the milk tank. Vintage milk cans are so popular now! I didn’t care for them at 7 years of age, lifting them up to dump the milk in the tank! It wasn’t long before Dad had a pipeline installed which brought the milk from the (new to us) milk machines straight to the tank!

3 Viss kids at the Glendale dairy, riding on a horse named “Old Smokey”
There was a lot of work to be done, and we had no employees. My parents were very hard workers and taught us kids a good work ethic. The cows had to be milked twice a day, starting at 2:00 am and 2:00pm. The barn and milkhouse needed to be cleaned after each milking. The cows needed care in between milkings - fed, hooves trimmed, calves birthed, and anything else that came up. Dad enjoyed keeping a close eye on his herd. There were also repairs to be made on the old place.

Us kids worked before and after school. In the summer, if the milking and cleanup got finished on time, we were in for a treat! We all piled into the station wagon and headed to the canal for a swim!

There are 8 years of good memories on that place. Four more children were born there. Yes, there are 9 of us! We enjoyed other animals besides the cows - dogs, cats, horses, pigs, chickens, a goat and for a short time, a lamb.

On February 1, 1967, we moved to a brand new dairy that my parents built. That was a big day! The barn and house had all the modern conveniences of the day, and we could milk more cows. It was way out in the country, at 75th Avenue and Broadway. We were surrounded by farms and had very few neighbors. There was still plenty of work to keep the whole family and some employees busy.
At the new place, we could drive a vehicle all the way around the dairy. When we would come home from church or somewhere else, even before going to the house, Dad would drive the car around the pens to check the herd and talk to the cows, “Hello, girls! I missed you, girls!”
A few years later, the dairy down the road came up for sale, so Dad and Mom bought that one too.

Things have changed a lot since those days, but one thing has not changed. Dairymen have always cared for their animals and their land. My dad always said, “Take care of the cows, and the cows will take care of you.” I’m sure other dairy kids heard the same thing!
What the cows eat is very important, and dairymen have always paid close attention to this. When I was growing up, cows ate hay when they were in the pens and grain in the barn, fed by hand at the Glendale place. Today, nutritionists help dairymen find the perfect ration of hay, different kinds of grain, and other kinds of food that are mixed together and fed to the cows while they are in the pens.
These days, every cow is monitored and tracked by a computer so the dairyman knows when she had a calf, how much milk she gives, and much more. The health of each cow is something we are always aware of. If a cow has a problem of some kind, we can usually take care of it ourselves, but we can always call a veterinarian if necessary.

What about our extremely hot summer days here in Phoenix? Of course, the cows have shade, and we also provide them with misters and big fans under the shade. It is about 20 degrees cooler under the shade!
You may wonder where the milk goes when it leaves the dairy. Well, before it goes anywhere, it is tested to make sure it is safe. Then, a big tanker truck takes it to its destination. In our case, some of it goes to our creamery, where we bottle it in returnable glass bottles. It is then distributed to grocery stores around Arizona. The rest of it, along with milk from other dairies, goes to our dairy cooperative. From there, it is made into many delicious and nutritious foods. Do you like ice cream? It is a dairy product, along with butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, sour cream, and the cheese on your pizza and tacos!

You may have seen our products in the grocery store or at home! We bottle our milk in returnable glass bottles, including several flavors.
Danzeisen Dairy - continuing the legacy...

There are many other aspects of the dairy business that I haven’t mentioned. We at Danzeisen Dairy look forward to answering any of your questions.

Sincerely,
Gail (Viss) Danzeisen