



Mac takes a break with sidekick Spero. *Photo: Richard Miller*

## Mac Bryant: KP Teen Talks Farm Tour and Farm Life

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

McHardy “Mac” Bryant, 17, might look like a typical teenager, even if he does carry his New Zealand grandmother’s maiden name as his first. He’s in his junior year in high school; he plays baseball and basketball; he likes dirt bikes, fishing and hunting, and wants to try snowmobiling. But he also works seven days a week at his family’s Kaukiki Farm in Longbranch.

“I’m just a hand right now, my parents are the big farmers,” Mac said. “I worked here all summer driving tractors, tedding hay, bucking hay, building some fences. Jack, my brother, helps out on the sheep, dealing with all the breeding. I do all the hard labor.”

Mac also served for years on the KP Farm Tour Council, helping to plan, organize and execute the annual autumn event.

“I was 12 or 13 and my mom said, ‘We need a representative on the farm council and I want you to do it,’ so I went,” Mac said. “I was a little out of my element; everybody else was in their 50s or older. By the second meeting I was the secretary because I was the only one who had a good computer.”

Mac worked as secretary for two years and spent a third year helping plan the Farm Tour before the increasing demands of high school led him to resign.

“I really wanted to keep the agricultural focus of the Farm Tour, really make sure it stayed what it was billed as, which was to expand education to people about farms,” he said.

The Bryant family moved to the 70 acres that would become Kaukiki Farm from their “little 20-acre farm” in Olalla when Mac was 5, he said. Kaukiki expanded to 140 acres a few years later.

Mac’s mother, Janice, grew up on a farm in Iowa and his father, Warwick, was raised on a 7,000-acre sheep station in New Zealand. Kaukiki was the name of the highest hill on the station. The Bryant parents both have full-time jobs in addition to the business of running the farm, which has become a popular destination on the Farm Tour.

“More and more people show up on the tour,” Mac said. “The last time we were in it we had 1,200 people, but generally we get 200 or 300.”

He spent most of this year’s Farm Tour guiding visitors on a walk around the property to admire the cattle herd, horses and sheep, and the grass-covered hills and shining ponds that irrigate them.

The farm raises about 100 sheep and 30 head of cattle, which are mostly sold privately for meat or livestock.

“All the animals here are raised off of our grass their whole lives, they don’t have anything else,” Mac said. “We irrigate

everything from our own ponds; we’re a completely self-sustaining farm, and that’s not as common anymore.” Kaukiki also sells thousands of bales of its hay to KP customers.

Mac said he thinks that’s one of the reasons Kaukiki gets so many visitors.

“Beauty is one reason,” he said. “Everyone brings their kids to see the animals. But I think it’s also to learn how a farm works because there are fewer and fewer farms, and that makes this one more unique and iconic.”

But Mac may not stay on the farm much longer. Though Washington born and bred, after high school he is considering

training to become a mechanical engineer or journeyman electrician.

“I want to go see the rest of the world,” he said. “That’s one of the reasons I’m looking at those careers because I can go and get a job anywhere.”

He and his family have already done a bit of traveling, having visited New Zealand, England, and 30 U.S. states during a four-and-a-half-month long RV trip a few years ago.

“We circumnavigated the U.S.,” Mac said. “We went all across the northern border up to Bar Harbor, Maine, and all the way down to Key West, Florida, and then we cut across to Texas all the way to California, then up through Yosemite and back up to Washington.”

“I loved it. There were a couple of places I want to go back to. I love Montana. It has everything that I’m interested in out there. I’d rather go off and live in a small town than in a big city, and that’s what that would give me.”

But would he miss farm life on the KP?

“It was the best way to grow up. Definitely I’ll miss it, but I hope I can do the same for my kids when I get to that point.”