Gratitude

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GRADITUDE
mfa exhibition
elizabeth reimer
Gratitude is a concept that has impacted my life in an enormous way. Along with being a key element in this exhibition, it blends in well with me as a person and my personal life. I am extremely blessed to have the heritage that I do from both sides of my family. Gerdy’s Community Market was built on that same family concept. The gratitude celebrated after a harvest with family and community is the foundation that Gerdy’s was built on. I wanted each of the pieces I designed to support that same foundation and highlight the culture surrounding my family’s community. Products in Gerdy’s are from local families and family farms. Each product line is designed differently to show the importance of each family and their heritage story. There is no set color scheme, typeface, or design style that ties all the products together because all families are unique. I created hand type as a main design element for each product in the store. The packaging also highlights the family and where their product originated. Even though all the packaging is different, every product has the Mountain to the Plain symbol, branding it to Gerdy’s.
Harvest during the 1950s was a time of community for the little town of Corn, Oklahoma. ABP and Bernice Schmidt were newlyweds and took over Bernice’s family farm. After every wheat harvest, the Schmidt’s would host a gathering with all their neighbors and friends, who also just finished up their harvest. Families would gather and bring food, games, and handmade goods to share. It grew into a yearly tradition and was soon called “Harvest Moon.”

Moving into the ‘60s, more and more families got word of the after-harvest celebration. Harvest Moon grew to the point that ABP and Bernice thought other people outside Washita County should get to experience what they were so blessed to be a part of. ABP and Bernice were deeply into planning, and they had everything lined up to turn Harvest Moon into a store, but there was one thing they could not come up with; a name.

In early July, after the 1965 harvest, ABP and Bernice were blessed with their fourth child Gretchen Kay, named after Bernice’s grandmother Margaret (Gretchen), also nicknamed Gerdy. Gerdy’s became the name for the store. In September of 1966, the Schmidt family opened the first Gerdy’s Community Market in Cordell, Oklahoma. By 1971 Gerdy’s had outgrown its’ little corner store, so the family opened a more extensive operation in Weatherford, Oklahoma.

In 2013, ABP was killed in a farming accident near Gotebo, Oklahoma. That was also the year Gerdy’s opened their 30th location in Alamosa, Colorado, opening three months after his accident. The opening was an emotional one for the Schmidt family, but looking back all those years ago, ABP and Bernice wouldn’t ever have imagined Gerdy’s growing as it did. Both were thankful that God allowed them to share their little piece of the Corn community with the central United States. They started from a place hardly on the map and now 15 states get to have a little taste of Corn, Oklahoma.

When ABP and Bernice Schmidt started Gerdy’s, they wanted it to be a place where their family, friends and neighbors could sell their farm-made products; produce, clothes, and baked goods. The Schmidt family saw the value in family operations and vowed not to sell products from large industrial farms. They wanted each store to have its unique products from families just like theirs. All the products sold at Gerdy’s Community Market were handpicked, made, and produced by small family operations.

During hard times in agriculture, such as the agricultural crash in the ‘80s, Gerdy’s helped hundreds of families survive the severe loss in profits. Many families did not have to sell their generational farms and ranches because of the profits made from being a part of the Gerdy’s Community. Gerdy’s are also prominent supporters of local missions of the communities they are a part of.
Welcome to Gerdy’s! We are excited that you are visiting us! Gerdy’s is a family owned and operated marketplace with a wide selection of products produced right here from small family operations. Our mission is to support our neighbors by making their dreams turn into a sustainable business, from Montana’s Rockies to Louisiana’s coastal lines. Each of our products is handpicked and made with devotion from local mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters.

Shopping with us will support local businesses in rural America and keep traditions alive.
Our logo consists of a custom-made typeface that is specific to the store. This typeface is sprinkled throughout the store's branding, it was created by a Jay Richert who was a neighbor of the Schmidts.

The sun rising in the east represents new beginnings, nourishment, and vitality. The mountains turn into the plains, which symbolizes the store's coverage in the United States.

You can see this mountain symbol throughout the store's products. Our packaging is unique to its supplier; therefore the symbol is used to brand the store products together.

BRAND TYPEFACES: OPENED GATE, Beloved Script, Calder
After each state’s harvest, stores within that state hold the traditional Harvest Moon Festival, a day filled with home-cooked food, games, arts, and community encouragement. People from all over the state come together and celebrate the end of summer or fall harvest.
During harvest time, mornings were always early and nights were always late which made for very long days.

The highlight of every day when you worked in the field was seeing mom (Bernice Schmidt) coming down the road in the pickup with lunch or supper. You knew it would always be good because everything she made was good. Dessert was always included. Sandwiches were rare if at all. She would spread the food out on the tailgate of the pickup. Sweet tea was served at every meal. A big pan with water was set to the side for everyone to wash their hands.

Folding chairs would be set out and you could sit and enjoy your meal. Although we did eat in shifts at times to keep the combine or tractor going. Some years, she would bring homemade ice-cream on the last day of harvest.

- Gretchen (Schmidt) Reimer
Our dairy products are within driving distance from their supplier to ensure fresh quality. Utterlicious is a company that specializes in ultra-filtration which filters out the lactose and provides the most health benefits while minimizing the sugar contents. Each bottle is made with recycled glass and is part of our exchange program. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The glass bottles are then shipped back to the dairy, cleaned, sanitized and reused.
This juice company is perfect for getting your daily quota of fruit. Pucker Up Buttercup is a juice company that strives at being as natural as possible. The labels are packed with color and flavor to match the feeling of the flavor inside. These bottles are part of our glass exchange. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The glass bottles are then shipped back to the company, cleaned, sanitized and reused.
In the spring branding of 1949, Gerald Wolfenden brought his first round of brew to share with the rest of the ranchers. It was rough tasting, but no one cared due to the high alcohol content. Every year for the next 27 years, Gerald brought the brew to each branding. By the end of those 27 years, Gerald had mastered the flavor.
Neighbors sometimes joined us for meal time in the field. They might bring a watermelon or something fresh from their garden and sometimes even a pie. We seemed to always have extra food for an extra mouth or two.

Summertime in Oklahoma can be very windy. Meal time on some days could be challenging trying to keep the food from blowing off your plate. One learned a little dust, straw or a stray bug added to your plate of food never hurt anyone.

- Buddy Schmidt
This jelly is a special recipe from the eldest of Buddy Schmidt’s children. Lacy Kay started making this jelly as holiday gifts and was soon picked up by her grandparents’ store. The glass jars are part of our glass exchange program. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The canning jars are then shipped back to Lacy, cleaned, sanitized and reused.

JELLY

Lacy Kay  RED HOT

APPLE  JELLY
This green chile company was based on a group of ladies who got together every year and did an activity together to stay in touch with one another. Each year they had different themes for their gatherings. They once had a year canning some green chiles from one of the girls' farms down in New Mexico. The theme of the weekend was “Quit Your Belly Achin’” which became the name of the product. It became so popular that Gerdy’s picked it up and is now selling it in their stores. The glass jars are part of our glass exchange program. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The canning jars are then shipped back, cleaned, sanitized and reused.
This salsa brand, called Sandy’s Salsa, was one of the first products to get put on the shelves. The recipe was shared among the first Harvest Moon events hosted by the Schmidts. It is now one of Gerdy’s most popular salsas purchased. The glass jars are part of our glass exchange program. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The canning jars are then shipped back to Sandy, cleaned, sanitized and reused.
This tomato sauce is the favorite of many customers. Made with all fresh ingredients, Mary Beth is known for her secret recipe. She would sell out almost instantly at her farmers markets. Gerdy’s was delighted to add this product to their shelves. Mary Beth cans every jar herself and uses produce grown from her green house. The glass jars are part of our glass exchange program. Customers can bring their glass products back to the store for a discount on their upcoming purchases. The canning jars are then shipped back to Red Dirt Gardens, cleaned, sanitized and reused.
Abraham Reimer had two horses, Millie and Nellie. He used them for field work, preparing for planting, planting and harvesting. He didn’t have a tractor as of yet and grew wheat, corn and cotton. Abraham’s son Jake helped with the farming. Jake’s new bride Elizabeth recalled getting married on a Sunday and being in the cotton patch on Monday morning pulling cotton by hand. She also recalled, they only had a few dollars between the two of them when they got married and Jake had to borrow money to buy a suit. Times were hard but they always had what they needed and never went hungry.
All meat is locally grown and processed right here in Gerdy’s butcher department to ensure freshness. The location of the store plays into what type of meats are sold. Going directly to the rancher ensures they get top dollar for their product without having to sell their livestock to a large company. Customers can ensure their meat is local, and the animals will be treated in the most humane manner.
BEEF

MILFORD RANCH MEATS
JAMESTOWN, NEBRASKA

BEEF
BISON
MILFORD RANCH MEATS
JAMESTOWN, NEBRASKA

BISON
I remember one evening I was studying to take the GRE the next morning. My sister Chris came to me and said we need to get to the field, one of the combines is on fire. She and I went to the field and grabbed 5 gallon buckets. We drove to a house down the road a half mile and filled them up. We could barely carry them. We each had two. Back at the field, we had to carry them through a ditch and into the field. We were amazed that other men who had stopped to watch didn’t offer to help us but just watched as these two girls struggled to carry two 5 gallon buckets of water to the fire. A neighbor who was working a field next to ours, brought his tractor over and worked the ground around the combine so the fire wouldn’t spread.

-Gretchen (Schmidt) Reimer
Produce is packaged according to where it originated. All materials being used will be biodegradable to help reduce waste, and the container is made up of recycled paper pulp. The packaging will showcase the family’s story to build a personal connection with the customer.

TOMATOES
REMPHEL FARMS
COLONY, OKLAHOMA
CARROTS
GOMEZ PRODUCE
KNICKERBOCKER, TEXAS
Carrots
I was newly married, so I always looked forward to taking meals out to the field to my new husband. I brought a card table along to eat on to make the meal just a little more special.

- Chris (Schmidt) Loewen
Wacky Cake is a Schmidt family favorite and it is especially one of the favorites of Gretchen. Every year for her birthday, Gretchen requests this cake made with caramel icing on top. Open up the package and there are icing recipes inside that pair nicely with this cake. Wacky Cake, also known as war cake, was a cake that was popular when dairy products and eggs were scarce during the depression or war times. This recipe takes no dairy products or eggs and still tastes delicious.
Zwieback is a German sweet bread that was a staple in the Schmidt residence. Bernice could hardly keep up with making sure the zwieback container was full. This dry mix allows customers to experience what the Schmidt family loved so much. Pull off the bottom package and you get a measuring cup to measure all the liquid ingredients needed.
Bernice’s mother used to make homemade egg noodles every time chicken noodle soup was for dinner. Bernice found that the bakery in Monte Vista, Colorado used the same recipe as her mother, and she had to have them in the store! These egg noodles provide a special memory for the Schmidt household and they hope they will make great memories in your family.
Janice Reimer was notorious for her delicious biscotti. If you’ve ever been around for breakfast or a coffee break in the Reimer household, it’s likely you have become acquainted with the fine art of “dunkin’.” She got into the habit of dunking her favorite treats from her grandpa Ed, who she was very close with. All kinds of sweet treats can be dunkable in Janice’s book -- but Biscotti has become one of her favorite homemade treats to accompany a cup of hot coffee. The family always knows where to find something to “dunk” when needed — in the cookie jar beside the stove in Grandma’s kitchen. Biscotti are a classic and well-loved sweet treat often made by Janice to be enjoyed by many.

This product was made in honor of my grandmother Janice Reimer, she was a very important and well-loved person in my life. She definitely contributed to my “dunkin” habit I have today. Love you Grandma!
In many of the early years during the harvest moon festival, we always had several stock tanks for the kids to swim in. The younger kids would use the tanks while the older ones made a slip and slide out of big tarps. Another very popular event was mud volleyball. A long shallow pit was dug and filled with water, so it was a muddy mess. A volleyball net was hung over the pit. There were other water games and plenty of water hoses to get cleaned off afterwards.

Relay competitions were held for all ages, like the gunny sack race, three legged race and the wheelbarrow race. There were tables full of food and drinks. It was the highlight each year for our community.

- Gretchen (Schmidt) Reimer
Soral is a company that strives to have home products made by natural materials. It all started by being a 4-H project and has turned into a thriving business. Their ingredients remain natural and special to the location of the family’s farm. The products are made with the family’s bees and extracts from flowers grown in their garden.
The Mennonite Quilting Sisters are a group of women that spend their retirement stitching quilts. Each blanket is handmade in Goessel, Kansas and holds much value. When you purchase a quilt, it comes with a quilt box that can be used to pass the quilt down to important loved ones or can be placed beside the bed or couch to store multiple quilts. The box is made out of recycled pallets from local farmers that the women’s husbands make.
It never failed, whenever it was excessively hot, something would break on the equipment. A parts run would be made and one of the guys would make the repair. I could have a break during this time because I only occasionally did a repair myself. I mostly pulled what we called a chisel working up the fields where the wheat had been harvested. To this day, one of my favorite smells is freshly turned dirt in a field.

- Eileen (Schmidt) Thompson
I could not have made it through this program without the help of Karrie Simpson Voth, Chaiwat Thumsujarit, Erica Bittel, Travis Schlitter, Tobias Flores, my grad classmates, Tom and Gretchen Reimer, James Starr, Sia Joung, Meredith Johnson, my family and Coors Light.

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