http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/122012/brillSM.png

## Snow was falling, children were laughing as a fresh-cut tree was loaded onto a horse-drawn wagon driven by Dan Brill, whose respect for tradition evokes memories of a simpler time

It was like a scene from an old-fashioned Christmas card — a family in a horse-drawn wagon getting a Christmas tree, snow softly falling, clinging to pine trees and covering the ground.

But this scene played out two weeks ago at Dan and Alice Brill's farm in rural Cedar Grove.

Dan Brill, 56, who prefers a simpler life than most people, drove his team of beautiful black Percherons named Jerry and Dolly to take his son Levi, daughter-in-law Caity, their sons Wyatt, 1, and Eli, 3, another grandson Nolan, 3, and his wife to cut a Christmas tree from the woods on the farm. The family picked a large one and loaded it onto the wagon.

The Brills used to sell Christmas trees from their farm, taking customers to the woods in a horse-drawn wagon or sled if there was enough snow, but now only family members and friends do that.

Brill, who lives on the 120-acre farm that has been in the family for several generations, has always been around work horses. His grandfather and stepfather used them for various jobs

long after they got tractors.

His stepfather Ken TenPas was the last farmer in the area to sell his team in 1964.

“It was hard to find horses by then. The last team he got wasn’t strong enough to do the work,” said Brill, who was 11 months old when his birth father died. “But my dad loved having horses, so he got a riding horse.”

Brill can’t remember not knowing how to ride a horse or ever feeling uncomfortable around them. He was barely walking when he was put on a horse.

“With working horses, as soon as you could hold the reins, you rode on top of the big horses,” he said.

Brill uses Jerry and Dolly when harvesting logs from the woods, hauling manure in winter, picking stones from fields and mending fences.

“They do a job a couple times and they’re intuitive. They know when to stop and go. I don’t know a tractor that can do that,” Brill said. “They don’t tear up the ground like a tractor does.

“In the winter, I like to get into the woods with the horses as much as I can. My grandfather used to say, ‘The weather is always nicer in the woods.’ You get into the woods and it’s always pleasant.”

His relationship with the horses is a partnership of trust, he said.

“I have horses because I like them. I appreciate their usefulness,” Brill said.

“I like to work with them. That’s a little different than them working for me. It has to be a partnership. They have to do something because they

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