

## CALIFORNIA

### Joe Lunny, 90

Undaunted.

Joe Lunny started life as a San Francisco city kid. By age 17 he was working on a Point Reyes dairy ranch; by age 30 he had inherited it. Dairying gave way to beef ranching, Point Reyes became a national seashore, and along the way the family rescued the local historic oyster farm, only to have it unjustly shut down. But Joe is still ranching. At age 90, he has no complaints. "I've absolutely loved every part of it," he says.

Joe's dad, Joseph Lunny Sr., was vice president and general manager of the largest steamship firm on the West Coast, Pope and Talbot, when he cosigned a loan to help his brother-in-law purchase a ranch on Point Reyes. The brother-in-law didn't know ranching and had purchased an unsound herd of dairy cows. He soon backed out, leaving Joseph to pick up the pieces.

Joseph left his job in the city and moved his family to the ranch. He brought in experts to analyze his herd. He improved its genetics using artificial insemination, which was then a new technique not yet embraced by other dairies. Neighbors told him he was making a mistake, but within the decade they would follow suit.

Joe loved working with his dad on the ranch. He finished high school in Tomales, near Point Reyes, and he kept up with his friends from St. Ignatius, his San Francisco high school, joining them for dances on weekends in Rio Nido on the Russian River. It was at one of these dances that Joe met the love of his life, Joan Gawley. ("The first time I wrote to her, I spelled her last name wrong," Joe remembers, laugh-

ing. "I had been taking Latin, so I spelled it Galli!")

Joe says he knew right away that Joan was the one for him. They were married in 1951, when he was 20. Joan left college and moved to the ranch. "I was surprised her parents let her," Joe says, "but it worked out pretty good."

That is an understatement. Joe and Joan were inseparable for

volunteering at church, she worked side by side with Joe as much as possible. She rode horseback, drove the tractor, and even operated the post-hole driller.

Joe coached Little League baseball from the time his first son, Joe Lunny III, began playing, and for years after that. He says, "The 60-somethings, when they see me today, still say 'Hi,

neighbors as well as custom farming on some neighbors' ranches. Then when beef prices suffered as a result of commoditization, Joe led the way in becoming the first certified organic and grass-fed beef rancher in the county.

The ranch continues under Joe and his son Kevin. Despite the efforts of anti-ranch activists, new management at the Point

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LUNNY FAMILY



FROM TOP: FROM TOP: Joe and Joan on their 65th wedding anniversary. ► The Lunny family, at a Christmas gathering from left: Bob, Kevin, Joe III, Joe, Joan, Chris, Carol, and Ginny. ► Joe and Joan in 1948, before they were married; on the back of this photo, Joan wrote: Movie Date in '48. ► Joe as a child with his father, grandfather, and sister Ruth. ► Grandpa Joe, Joe's dad.



Reyes National Seashore appears to be supportive of its agricultural community.

Joe's heart was broken when Joan died in 2018,

but he still remains active. He zips around the ranch on a four-wheeler and travels frequently to Tennessee to see his youngest son, Bobby. His memory remains sharp, and all six children, 21 grandchildren, and 27 great-grandchildren are enthralled by tales of his rich past.

"I can still tell stories the kids have never heard before," he says. "Because you can't tell them all." —Sarah Rolph

the 67 years of their marriage, and Joan loved the ranching life as much as Joe did. The couple raised six wonderful children and Joan was always proud to mention that all went to college. In addition to keeping house, feeding the help, raising her kids, and

Coach!"

In the early 1970s, onerous environmental regulations and unfounded accusations of pollution led to an EPA directive to upgrade ranch operations that were simply unaffordable. In tears, Joe sold the dairy herd. To make ends meet, he expanded his small beef herd and began producing silage for sale to