



## Grandfather's achievements memorialized by grandson

By Bill Baab

Joseph Napoleon (Joe) Bellavance may not be a name familiar to most collectors of antique bottles, milks in particular.

But Brad Routhier, one of his grandsons, is determined that the name of his grandfather, who died a day short of his 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday on July 3, 2001, will live on through a well-developed web site. What follows are excerpts from this wonderful tribute to his grandfather.



Joe was born on the Fourth of July, 1928, in East Hardwick, Vermont to Aime and Beatrice Godbout Bellavance, becoming one of 14 siblings (8 boys, 6 girls).

The Bellavances purchased what was to become the family farm in 1946, adding 125 dairy cows and in 1949 started an Aime Bellavance & Son milk route. They designed red applied color labels for both round and "square" quarts and pints,

along with paper bottle caps to match.

They delivered milk to more than 400 local households in eight surrounding towns. During that period, quarts of their milk brought 17 cents, 1 cent below the state-regulated amount, for which Aime Bellavance was hauled into court.

He also supported the local Walden School by supplying all its milk for free. His was the first dairy farm in the area to offer both pasteurized and homogenized milk.

The Bellavance Dairy remained in operation until 1957 when it was sold to another family. The "A. Bellavance & Sons Dairy" milk bottles were mostly destroyed and are considered to be among the rarest of Vermont milks, Brad Routhier said. "My family has only four of them and I'm hoping this story will result in my being able to acquire more."

After Joe Bellavance reached adulthood, he and his brother, Arthur, borrowed a truck from their father's farm and hauled a load



The Bellavance Family Farm in East Hardwick, Vt. was purchased in 1946 by Aime and Beatrice Bellavance.



In 1949 Aime & Beatrice started a Milk Route ("Aime Bellavance & Sons") where they delivered milk to over 400 local households in eight surrounding towns.



Aime Bellavance & Sons were the first farm in the local area to both Pasteurize and Homogenize their milk.



Many Vermont dairies are represented on the shelves, illustrated here is an assortment with green applied color labels.



States represented here in colorful labels are Nevada, New Mexico and New Jersey. At least one bottle from all 50 states is represented in the collection.



More Vermont milk bottles, these from Booth Bros. Dairy in Barre, Vt.



More milk bottles from Vermont. Centered is Dodd Lakeview Farms in North Hero, while the third one is from Kenolie Dairy in Newfane.







The center shelf features "Seasons Greetings" bottles from 1994-2004.



Embossed milk bottles from Vermont.



Maryland and Massachusetts bottles.



A. Bellavance & Sons, East Hardwick, Vt. sign.



Palmer's Milk



Rare A. Bellavance & Sons bottles.



The item that topped the bottles for A. Bellavance & Sons.

of granite cemetery monuments out of Barre, Vermont to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. That sparked his father's interest and soon the Aime Bellavance & Sons Trucking Company was organized.

The company has since grown into one of New England's largest with more than 100 trucks and 200 trailers that serve all the lower 48 states, Canada and Mexico.

In 1988, Joe began collecting milk bottles as one of several hobbies, including bicycle restoration and golf. Two years later, he received a Christmas present from his wife – an old milk bottle from the family farm.

From that point on, Joe had found a hobby that not only would keep him busy for the last 13 years of his life, but added yet another topic for people to remember him by.

From the age of 8, Brad joined his grandfather on many searches for elusive milk bottles to add to the collection. Main focus was on Vermont bottles, but another goal was to collect at least one milk bottle from every state.

The stories, tips and adventures throughout those years helped Joe develop a collection of about 400 Vermont bottles, 200 various non-Vermont bottles and (about 1996) a complete state bottle collection capped by the discovery of an Alaska milk bottle.

"If you knew my grandfather or crossed paths with him during those 13 years of collecting, I would appreciate it if you'd e-mail me via our web site and tell me all about it," Brad Routhier asks. "My address is routh20@hotmail.com. Our web site is www.josephbellavance.com."

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