

Serrans know Ben Zarda as a valued member of our Club and as the person who generously supplies the meal (picnic) each year, for the last twenty eight years, for several thousand 5th grade students of Catholic Schools who attend the annual “ 5th Grade Vocation Day”. Serrans help out each year to help this event flow smoothly.

What made this poor immigrant family’s transition to the United States ultimately successful was grit, determination, foresight, courage to dare, and a deep and abiding Catholic faith. Ben tells the story of his father getting up at 1:30 A M to milk the cows and never miss going to daily Mass. His father instilled in all his children the stewardship to give back to the community and their church. That stewardship continues today.

Ben’s grandparents lived in Bavaria and times were difficult. It was Ben’s grandmother who wanted to bring the family to America. The grandmother scraped up enough money to buy three cows. She delivered the milk and cheese to neighboring families and with her grit, determination, foresight, and courage made enough money to allow the family to emigrate to America in 1913.

After arriving in Shawnee, Ks. They started over with three cows and gradually built the largest dairy enterprise in Kansas with major installations in Kansas City, Wichita, and Missouri. They had 23 stores along with local hospitals, all the major hotels, area schools, and most of the major restaurants. They competed with other major dairy enterprises by paying attention to customer needs and adjusting their production and selling methods to meet those needs. They pioneered the convenience store concept by adding popcorn, gasoline, and other spontaneous needs for their customers. The Zarda Dairy was in business for 28 years before it was sold in 1988.

During the hard times and good times the Zarda family continually contributed 10% of their net income to the Catholic Church.

In addition to the 5th grade vocation day Ben’s family are major supporters of the” Annual Snow Ball” and since 1981 the “Ben and Betty Golf Classic” has raised nearly \$25,000,000 to support Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas.

Twenty eight years ago Ben Zarda decided the Catholic youths attending the 5th grade vocation day need to have a proper picnic: pure beef hot dogs, buns, condiments, chips, milk, and ice cream. This gift of Ben continues to this day at a current cost of about \$2,000 each year. It is the desire of the Zarda family that they will continue to support this event for many years. In recognition of Ben's generosity to this event, the Serra Club of Kansas City in Kansas has approved a proclamation naming the 5th grade Vocation Day luncheon “ The Ben and Betty Zarda 5thGrade Vocation Day Luncheon".

All this started with 3 cows, hard work, guts, and a deep love of their Catholic faith.