

Tom was born on March 31, 1966 (and for those of you who just did the math, yes he is hitting a big one this year) in Rochester, MN to Chuck and Elke Austin. His mom came to America at age 21 from Germany to stay for a year but met his dad, and stayed for good! I for one am sure glad she stayed! Tom has one younger brother, J.J. Austin, whom they adopted from Korea when he was 5 years old; Tom would have been 12 years old at the time. He grew up and lived in Rochester all of his life but spent a lot of time in Lanesboro, MN where his Grandpa Truman farmed. Tom loved going there to spend time with his Grandpa and hang out at the farm. That is where, I believe, farming got into his blood. Unfortunately, not one of Truman's 3 sons wanted to keep the farm so it was sold and not kept in the family. When Tom graduated from John Marshall high school he worked for Stadvold Landscaping where he installed sprinkler systems. I know he says he did not do much actual landscaping, but he has an incredible gift for that. He did an awesome job landscaping our yard at our home in Rochester and wanted to do more with our yard here at the farm. But with building a house, kids, babies, animals, starting and running a farm/business, and just life in general, what he did do out here has not been well maintained and unfortunately not up to the standard he would like it to be. "Future project" I tell him. We will get there. After that job, Tom worked for IBM where he made computer discs and after that he worked for McNeilius making and building cement and garbage trucks. At the age of 29 he decided he wanted to go back to school to get his degree in Civil engineering, and he did that with little Shane in tow and working full time. Not easy or fun, but well worth it. Tom started working for MNDot in 1998 and is still there to this day. Yes, he works full time off the farm as well as on the farm! He does an excellent job at MNDot and is one of the more valuable employees there! He would not say that about himself, but I am writing here so I will :) Tom and I met in 1998 when I was up here for an 18 month Cardiac Sonography program at Mayo. We met at a church in Rochester and a year later we were married. He says it was love at first sight, and I concur. We lived in Rochester for the first 3 ½ years of our marriage and then headed out to move where we are at now. It was not easy finding land when we started looking. We both wanted to move to the country and were looking on the north side of Rochester at the time for a few acres but the price was way more than we could afford. We decided to look south of Rochester. Chatfield was actually looking to start a new subdivision at that time so we were looking at buying a plot of land for that but still didn't feel right about it. So we were at a stall for a little bit. MNDot at that time was actually looking at straightening out Hwy 52 where our turn is up here on the Nelson Hill, and so Tom was out here with some other coworkers looking at this section of the road one day. The farmer that we ended up buying our land from came out to chat with them. Somehow he and Tom got to talking about land, and he told Tom, "bring your wife out here, I will sell you 5 acres or so of land". Well, enough said. We didn't just buy 5 acres, we bought 40, and here we are. We bought bare land; no running water, nothing. When we moved out here, we had 3 walls up on our shed, a camper we pulled into the shed that was to be our home for the next few months while WE finished building our house, and I was pregnant with Sami, Ha! What a summer! We called it the summer of love. We moved out here in May and I was told it would probably take a couple of months to finish the house. Well, it was a little more than that. By October, I just wanted running water and a shower installed because I was outgrowing the one in the camper. Honestly, there were days and times where we were both like, what the heck have we done?!?! I think we bit off way more than we can chew! Once we got into our house, got settled in with little Sami and Shane, and this city girl here adapted to country life (it took a while, lol, poor Tom) we started talking about how to use our land to raise a few animals for our family. Well, that got Tom reading and learning and reading more and learning more. He read a lot of books by the Grass-fed/pasture raising guru Joel Salatin and learned

tons, and it also stirred his pot to start thinking about, maybe if we just raise a few more animals than what we need, we could sell just a few to make ends meet. Well again, enough said, once that happened we haven't been able to keep up since. After a lot of learning from reading, experience, failure, and friendly advice from those who have gone before us, here we are today.

Tom loves farming and loves his engineering job at MNDot, but I am pretty sure farming ranks above. He loves his family, wife, and what he does. He is a family man, farmer, my best friend, wonderful father, Christian, awesome cook, builder/designer, very creative, a dreamer, and passionate about what he does. When he is inspired to do something, he does it with fervor and he does it well. He is passionate about what he does and how he does it, and I hope that shows in the quality of our meat.