



ERICA GOKEY PHOTOS The Independent-Register

The Piggly Wiggly storefront on First Center Ave. in Brodhead.

Piggly Wiggly under new ownership



Alicia, left, and Justin, right, Campbell.

By Erica Gokey
CORRESPONDENT

As of December 3, 2017, the Brodhead Piggly Wiggly came under new ownership, Justin and Alicia Campbell assumed the reins from long-time owner, who retired last year.

The decision had been in the works for the past few years. "It takes years of experience. There was a trial period to see, is this going to work or not? Because it's not something that you can just delve into. It takes time to see if you can do it or not," said Justin.

Justin started working at the Brodhead Piggly Wiggly intermittently for the last 13 years. He first started working in the meat department, and decided to keep working and learning about the business.

Alicia has also worked at the store and has other employment. Justin said former owners Tom Sheridan and Dan Palan are great resources and continue to be involved in the day-to-day operation of the store.

The former owners still own the building and the land, and the Campbells lease both.

The Campbells said they been preparing to take over ownership of the store for a couple years now, and has been involved in important decisions in its recent past. "I added the alcohol a few years ago, I got rid of the

big display of greeting cards, now we have what we need. We've done the changes and we've set the store," Justin said.

Alicia said she decided to bring Redbox to the store. The Campbells were approached by Piggly Wiggly and Redbox several times about bringing a Redbox to the store before they decided to give the service a try.

The Campbells managed to elude the halls of business school before owning their own business, instead learning through hands-on experience and relationships. The business was not just handed over, however, as Justin was tasked with presenting a proposal and a plan for the store's future like any other potential purchaser.

Justin said Piggly Wiggly will not be changing the way it does business. "To be honest, we're going to run the store the way we run the store. We're going to take the groceries out and be a part of the community. We're not going to change the things we do here."

Between part-time and full-time positions, Brodhead Piggly Wiggly is populated with around 40 employees. Justin said Piggly Wiggly has always had an open door policy with the employees and he intends on keeping it that way. The Campbells aim to hold a grand opening this spring.

Cattle drive thoughts past, present from Guinea to the Midwest in New Year

By Tony Ends
CORRESPONDENT

Each night before the sun goes down, each morning in mist and dew, a trio of little boys, sometimes with I presume their father, marches tethered cattle in rows soundlessly past where I live.

My Guinean host family's compound adjoins a row of shops. The handful of one-room enterprises that help support the extended family face a dirt road at this regional capital's eastern edge.

Running roughly east and west, the road toward Kissidougou's central business district resembles more a hilly, winding trail than a street. Out here on the city's outskirts, the rutted pathway and the West African countryside feel more like home than Kissi's bustling downtown.

I only witnessed the little cattle parade four or five times in my first three weeks among Kissidougou's more than 100,000 residents. An old white man easily catches the parade's human eyes. My hands upturned convey my innocent curiosity about their destination.

"About eight kilometers' distance," the smiling father calls out to me in French. I nod in honest understanding. I have memory back more than 40 years of a spare, unchanging West African landscape where shepherded animals forage away from dwellings.

Where these returning cattle, little boys and daddy shelter at night, I do not know. In a land where 8 in 10 people are said to derive income from agriculture, I'm sure they find welcome somewhere, even in sprawling Kissidougou.

As they moved off silently the last time I saw them, another sort of cow herd plodded into memory. Dairy cows from a pasture and

woods I roamed in my youth spiritually lifted into my heart a much-loved place of 50 years ago.

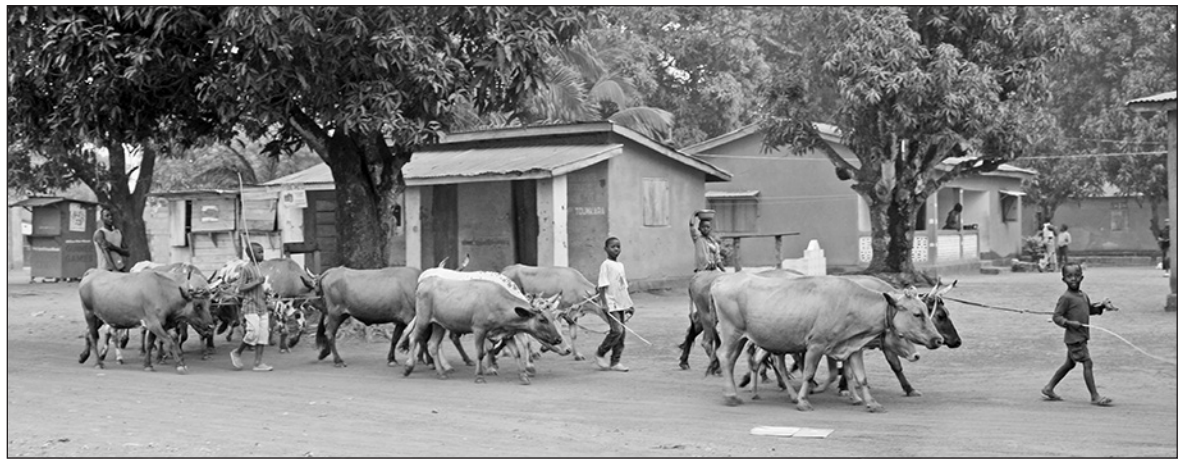
Up till shortly past that time, the small herd was my classmate Bobby DuVoisin's charge. His family tenant farmed within view of my parents' home. Gradually, eventually, the way almost all American farms seem to go, the cows were sold out of production, the landlord died, and Bobby's father quit farming.

In much of the world outside of the United States, especially for me here still in West Africa, a culture of farming persists. Guinea's palm, banana and coffee plantations in forested lands meet savanna herding cultures in this Kissi region where I live. And along rivers and streams expanses of the rice staple in Guineans' diet is being cultivated heavily. Roaming animals along streets and trails feed my memory of the DuVoisin pastures near my childhood home.

Bobby's docile herd would follow any boy who might lead them to milking. When those cows trailed me to the slight opening of a barbed wire fence, I remember feeling such guilt looking back at them. Their eyes conveyed confusion, even betrayal as I left the 800-acre property for my parents' little house on West River Street.

Years later, my own boys would at times tug at the same soft fabric of my heart. Gently, they begged me to get some cows whenever they came home from helping Brodhead High School friends with milking chores.

Our pasture so tiny, unable to support more than sheep and goats, we just couldn't feed any dairy cows. We could usually keep vegetable crops alive on small corners of rented land, but not livestock



TONY ENDS PHOTO The Independent-Register

A herding family drives its cows to pasture past the Guinean home of Wisconsin Peace Corps Response Volunteer Tony Ends on a morning in December 2017.

distant from our own hydrants and barns.

Herding sentiment drives thousands of years more deeply and intimately into the psyche of many ethnic groups across much of Africa. My sentiments of 63 years bridge American feelings being rapidly now lost to generations removed further and further from green pastures and still waters.

Cities as sprawling as Kissidougou and Guinea's much larger capital Conakry noisily herald crowded global trends toward urbanization. Yet financial monitors of exploitative and investment potential, do not explain Guinea's heavy human – if not national – reliance on agricultural income in Guinea.

Trade statistics do not lie. They demand significance and interpretation. The mind of a Peace Corps Response witness who swore in coming here to walk beside Guinea's people, searches in the data for solutions to rising food problems.

Total value of little Guinea's ex-

ports in 2016 climbed above \$3.2 billion. Ores and precious metals together, just two trade categories, dwarfed more than 85 other export groupings combined, by nearly 6 to 1.

From coffee to tropical fruits, rice to cotton, leather hides and skins, and scores of manufacturing categories – Guinea's export income capacity lies deep under its topsoil – in its mines. Caring for a population that has tripled since my first 1970s Peace Corps service near its border with Senegal deeply concerns me. It should concern all of us.

Guinea's annual rainfall is twice what my farming neighbors enjoy in southern Wisconsin. Its coldest average monthly temperatures lie in the 40s. The same two months for those lows – January and February – are also typically the hottest, in the 90s.

With areas of soil far more fertile than I've found in other West and Central African nations, one would think Guineans quite capable of developing agriculture to feed their

people. Yet from Conakry to Kissidougou, Guineans have been worrying about that aloud to me.

Ores and precious metals lure American, European and Asian investment and loan interests to Guinea. Dark work in its bauxite ore and gold mine draws Guinea's strong young people away from farming and herding.

In the time inevitably coming, when the Earth's geological treasures below Guinea's landscape are mined away, its population is poised to double again. Will wisdom drawn from sustaining West Africa's families by herding, hunting, gathering and farming practices, be there when mining areas become ghost towns?

In the darkness of night now, as I write of that trio of little boys with their young father, I remember the backs of the big-horned cattle moving farther and farther out of sight. Are they following America's dairy herds of my youth? Is our culture disappearing with them? In Guinea, I keep looking to answers in a New Year.