



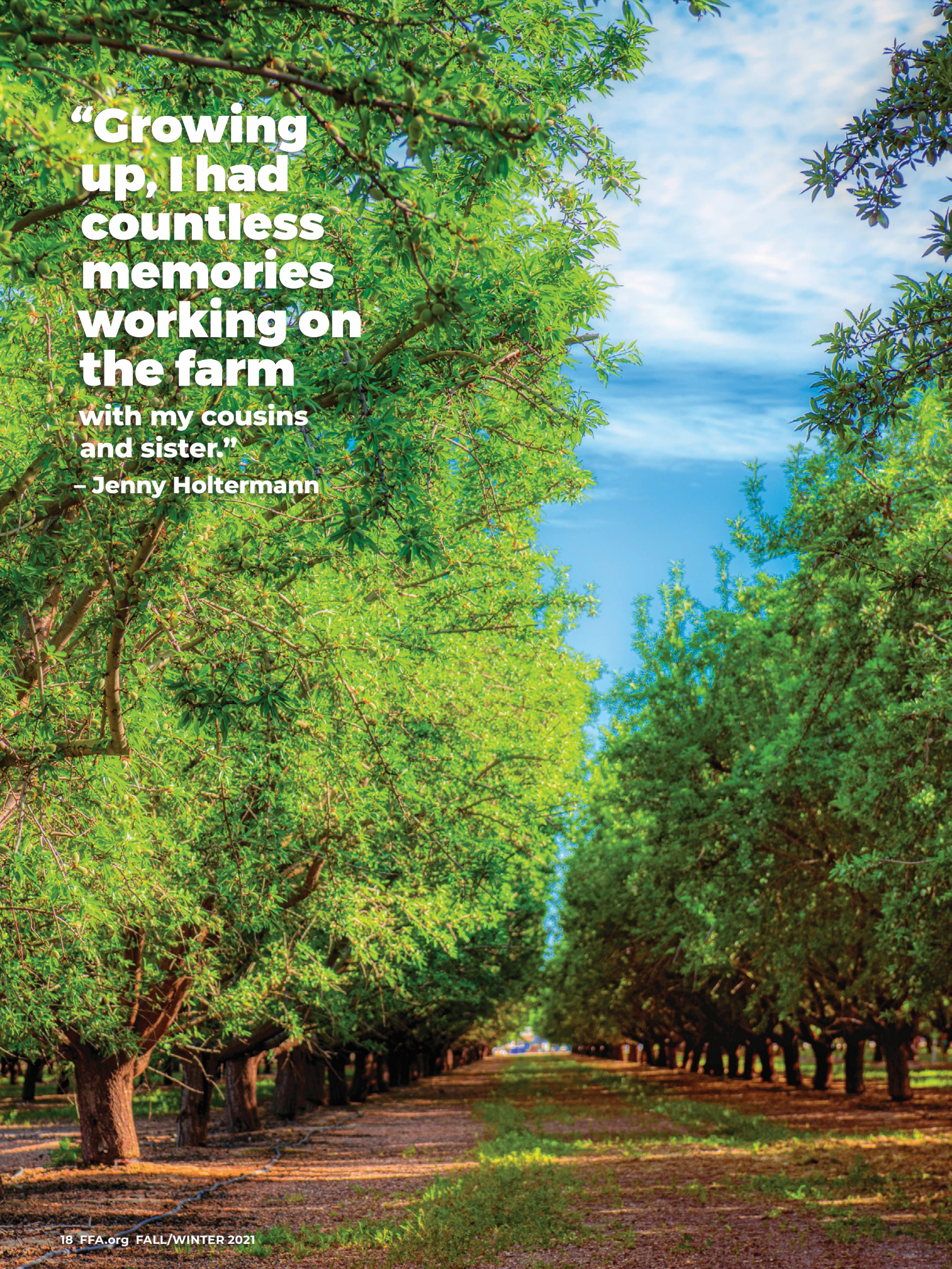
What's Up With Almond Girl Jenny?

As a female farmer, Jenny Holtermann has found success in leadership roles advocating for the industry and raising the next generation of agriculturists.

By Bev Flatt • Photography by Jeff Noble



**Almonds
growing on
Holtermann's
California farm**



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– Jenny Holtermann



More than 100 years ago, a young man made his way to the Central Valley of California, determined to put down roots. His dream of owning his own farm lives on for the Holtermann family.

“My husband and I are both fourth-generation farmers,” says Jenny Holtermann. “Both of our great-grandfathers started their farms in the early 1900s, and now the fifth generation is active on the farm today – our son and daughter as well as our niece and nephew.”

Nearly a century after the family’s first plants made their way into the ground, Holtermann shares her story of living and working on the family almond farm

through her online presence, Almond Girl Jenny, an advocacy stage that was built out of a lifetime of agricultural experiences and a love for the National FFA Organization.

Leadership Through FFA

“**G**rowing up, I had countless memories working on the farm with my cousins and sister,” Holtermann says. “During summer months and school breaks, I was usually found helping out on the farm with whatever needed to be done: checking irrigation pipes, painting walnut trees to prevent sunburn, managing pests and rodents, and taking care of odds and ends around the family farm.”

Holtermann took her love of living and working on the farm with her into high school and joined the Chico FFA Chapter in Northern California. While she loved working in the orchards, she pursued a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) in raising sheep and hogs. She

held various FFA leadership positions and competed in events such as parliamentary procedure, job interview and floriculture. However, her favorite FFA memory came after a short break from wearing her blue corduroy jacket.

“Having the chance to go to Indianapolis and receive my American FFA Degree was the icing on the cake for my FFA career,” Holtermann says. “I had recently moved away from the farm to pursue an agriculture business degree from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Calif. So, taking that trip with my parents, who I didn’t see all the time anymore, was a great experi-



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About Almond
Girl Jenny.**

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ence. All that hard work had paid off and it was very humbling.”

After bringing home her gold key, Holtermann returned to college and put her FFA knowledge to the test by working at a florist shop and on the university farm to help pay for college. It was there she met her future husband and began to make plans for life after graduation. She made the difficult decision not to move home upon gradua-

Top: The Holtermanns (from left to right: Hazel, Jenny, Henry and Tim) enjoy a ride through the almond orchard.
Inset: Jenny Holtermann holds a bag of almonds from the family farm.

Earn Your American FFA Degree

Holtermann's favorite FFA memory was receiving the American FFA Degree. Do you have what it takes? To learn more about how to earn your American FFA Degree, check out FFA.org/American-FFA-Degree.





Above: In addition to growing almonds, the Holtermanns raise chickens for farm-fresh eggs. **Below:** Checking trees in an almond grove is a family affair. **Opposite:** Holtermann shows off her American FFA Degree.

tion and instead followed her heart to California's Kern County to start a new farm life with her husband. Today, Holtermann works full-time off the farm, manages the farm books and finances, and raises two young children.

Leadership After FFA

Her FFA leadership positions were just the beginning; she now serves on several agriculture boards.

"I became involved in different leadership positions through the Farm Bureau after college," Holtermann says. "I've been the chair for the California Young Farmers and Ranchers and currently sit on the California Farm Bureau Board of Directors. I also serve on the Global Communications Committee for the Almond Board of California as well as participate locally on the Agriculture Advocacy Committee for Bakersfield College."

Holtermann was also recently selected to represent California in the Partners in

Advocacy Leadership program through the American Farm Bureau Federation, a two-year executive-level leadership class.

Advocacy has always been a big part of Holtermann's life, and that passion turned into her thriving blog and online storytelling platforms.

"About seven years ago, I started the blog Almond Girl," she says. "So much information is available on the internet and you can find whatever you want, but it's not always accurate, especially for farming. I started the blog to highlight and share what life on the farm looks like and who a farmer really is. As we had children and our leadership roles progressed, the blog morphed to reflect how my life was changing. I began to talk about raising children on the farm, how the weather affects us and how regulations affect us. It's a way for me to share what a farmer looks like, what our farm looks like and testify that family farms are still alive."

More recently, the Almond Girl blog has become much more than a simple way to reach the masses. It has become an essential part of the farm's marketing strategy.

"Last year was the tipping point for us and is why we started our direct marketing efforts," Holtermann says. "The price of almonds went from \$4 a pound to \$1.50 per pound to the farmer. You can't quickly diversify when you grow almonds. The trees are there for 20 to 25 years. The infrastructure and equipment are really specialized. In 2020, we started selling our almonds direct and it worked out well because of COVID-19 supply chain challenges. Consumers were looking for a tie to their food. The grocery store shelves were empty. The supply chain was inconsistent. The average American wanted to know where their food was coming from and wanted a connection to that. We were able to help fill that need."

"Making My Own Success"

Although marketing, sales and blogging are a passion for Holtermann, a career and life six hours from her childhood home wasn't always the plan. Being open to new opportunities is the greatest piece of advice she feels she can offer to anyone.

"I had my mind set on what I was going to do after high school and after college. And it's not what I'm doing

now. That's OK!" she says. "It's OK to let life lead you down alternative paths. I thought I was going to go home and farm with my father after college, and it took me a while to realize that wasn't what I was going to do after I met my husband. I am making my own strides and I'm making my own success. I started my own business and my own path into leadership positions in a part of the state that was completely foreign to me. That wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been open to opportunities. It's OK to follow your heart because it might lead to bigger and greater success."

Today, the Holtermann family takes nightly strolls in the summer to check irrigation, and Holtermann uses her weekend time to tend to anything that needs to be done around the farm. Instead of sheep and hogs, she now raises chickens, and her free time is spent chasing down an active farm boy and sassy little farm girl.

But in the quiet moments between all the work, she still finds time to grab her camera or write down her experiences to share with the world, thanking her blue and gold past for preparing her for life as the Almond Girl. •

