

COVER STORY

It's tradition. The search for the ideal Christmas tree

should take you over snow-covered country roads, under arched trees, past frozen ponds behind ice-capped fences.

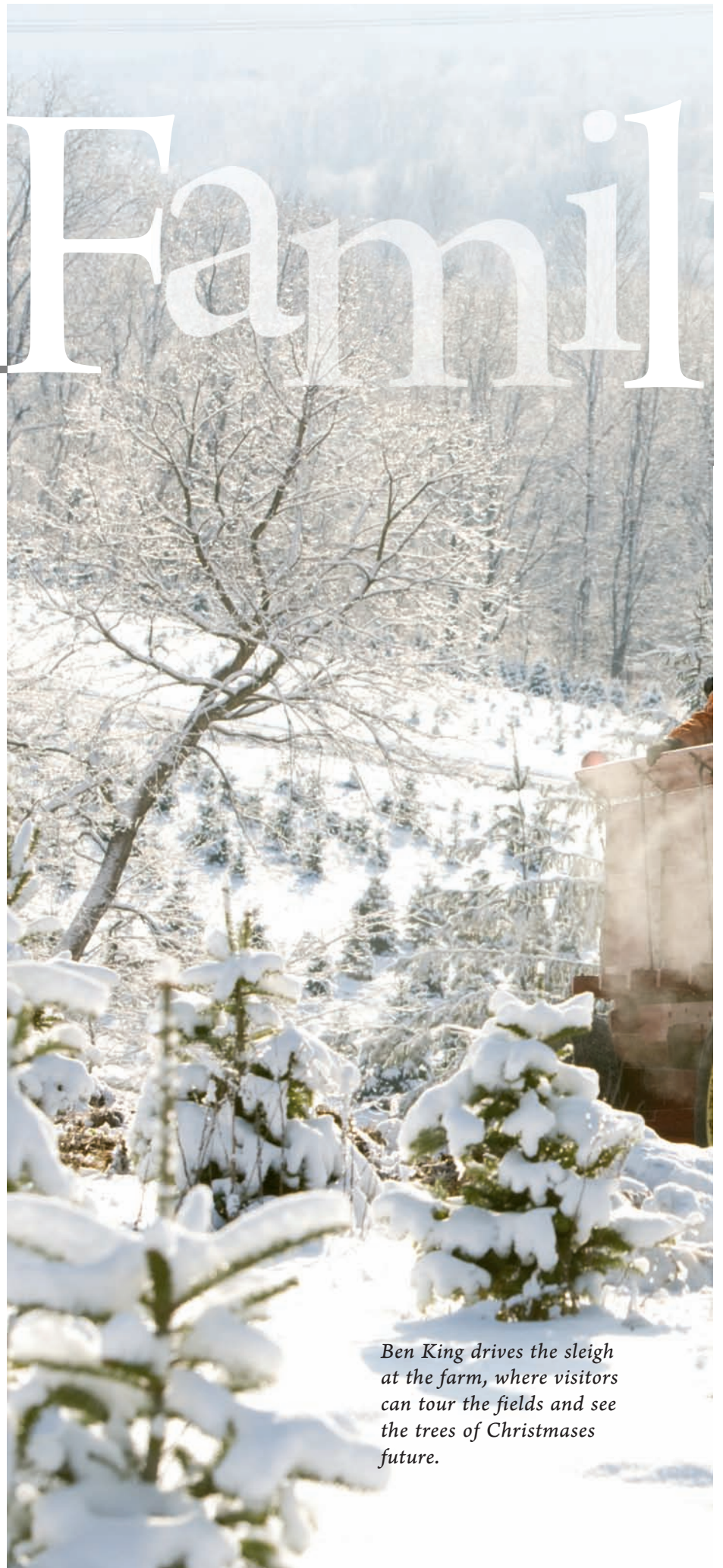
For families who live near Indiana, Pa., that idyllic search has led to Fleming's Christmas Tree Farm for decades.

Here, bundled-up families can pile into horse-drawn wagons to be whisked off to Christmas tree-covered hills. With 30,000 trees in seven varieties spread over 500 acres, they're sure to find just the right one. As adults sip hot cocoa and stroll through the orderly rows of Fraser firs, Scotch pines and Colorado spruce, kids scamper in the forests of green, poking and smelling, before finally flopping down for a snow-angel break. Soon—almost too soon for the adults taking in the winter wonderland scene of pristine white hills—sights are set on the ideal tree.

Once cut, the tree is loaded by “elves” clad in Santa's hats onto a wagon and hauled by the Flemings' Massey Ferguson tractor through frosty fields to a processing area where it is shaken to remove loose needles and baled for the trip home.

If you think this sounds like the stuff great family memories are made of, then the farm's co-owners and brothers J.D. and Randy Fleming are doing their job. They're continuing the tradition passed on by their father, who started the farm back in 1945.

STORY BY SUZANNA LOGAN
PHOTOS BY RENEE ROSENSTEEL



Ben King drives the sleigh at the farm, where visitors can tour the fields and see the trees of Christmases future.