Two New “Historical” Awards presented at Brown Swiss National Convention

A Brown Swiss Historical Society was formed in 2006-2007. Included in its goals was to preserve and honor the past history of the breed.

At the National Brown Swiss Convention held June 30-July 3 in Louisville, Kentucky, the Historical Society honored the first two winners of its Historical Master Breeder and Active Master Breeder Awards.

Receiving the Historical Master Breeder Award posthumously was Vernon Hull. Mr. Hull spent a lifetime working with the Brown Swiss cow.

He was born into a Brown Swiss family as his grandfather and father had purchased Swiss in 1893 at the Chicago World’s Fair and it became known as the Lake View herd. Showing interest at an early age he was given a Brown Swiss calf for a 4-H project and began his judging career at the National 4-H Judging Contest in 1920 at age 11, the youngest contestant. Known by then as Hull Bros., Vernon milked and fed Swiss Valley Girl 10th when she made her national breed record in 1929. Vernon worked with the family’s show herd which received the Premier Breeder and Exhibitor banners at the 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1929 National Shows.

After leaving the home farm in 1936, he became manager for a brief time at the Foxwood Brown Swiss herd in Wasco, Illinois.

While there, Vernon took a short break from the cows and went back to Ohio to marry his fiance, Marinda. On their honeymoon they traveled on east to check out a job offer. Though he did not go there immediately, in the summer of 1938 Vernon did accept the manager position with the herd where he would spend the rest of his working life. His name became synonymous with the historic Brown Swiss herd, Lee’s Hill Farm, New Vernon, New Jersey, established as the Kinnelon herd in 1890. To quote Vernon, when he accepted the job from owner Warren Kinney, “It became the beginning of a long and harmonious friendship.”

Soon after his arrival, at Vernon’s urging, Lee’s Hill Farm purchased the four Jane’s, daughters of the famous Jane of Vernon, from Orbec Sherry in Viroqua, Wisconsin for $10,000. With them as the heart of his breeding program, the dominance of Lee’s Hill began and continued for close to three decades. One of the Jane daughters, Jane of Vernon 5th, started it all winning Grand Champion at the 1940, 1941 and 1942 National Shows. (Because of the war there was not a national show from 1943-1945). From 1940-1967 Lee’s Hill had 18 National Show Grand Champions, most of them homebred. Beginning in 1940, they won Premier Exhibitor and Premier Breeder at the National Show for 12 consecutive shows and again in 1965 and 1967. They also had nine different breed production champions through the years. One cow, Royal’s Rapture of Lee’s Hill was a national show grand champion and breed produc-
Vernon became a well-known judge throughout the U.S. and internationally. He received the coveted Klussendorf Award in 1941, the first Brown Swiss breeder to do so. Active in both the New Jersey and National Brown Swiss Associations, he served as national president from 1961-1966.

In February of 1975 Mr. Warren Kinney passed away, ending a very successful owner/manager partnership. Unbeknown to Mr. Hull, Mr. Kinney had willed the Brown Swiss herd to him. Because of his age and the farm location, Mr. Hull dispersed the herd in May of 1975.

The following spring Vernon and Marinda moved to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. But his interest in the Brown Swiss breed continued and his showing days weren’t quite over. In 1985 he showed his favorite Top Acres cow, Alfalfa Acres Sueann S, at Harrisburg where she won the Total Performance Award and went on to later be named the national winner.

Vernon passed away on October 14, 1992.

The first annual Active Master Breeder Award went to Wayne E. Sliker, St. Paris Ohio.

Wayne’s career with Brown Swiss began in 1956 when he purchased a Brown Swiss calf for an FFA project. An early sign that he “knew how to pick them”, this calf went on to be the first “Excellent” cow at Top Acres. After a very active FFA career, including serving as New Jersey State FFA President and receiving the American Farmer Degree, Wayne graduated from high school and worked to develop his herd.

In 1962 it was time for a larger home for the Top Acres herd, and he rented a farm near Califon, New Jersey. It was the fall of 1962 when he took his first journey in a box car loaded with cows headed to the National Dairy Show, as part of the show crew of the Lee’s Hill herd.

While perhaps known to many through the show ring, production was always a high priority at Top Acres. In his first year on production test, he had the highest area herd average with three Brown Swiss reaching over 100 pounds a day - 47 years ago.

Wayne and Connie were married in 1965 and one of the most successful dairy couple partnerships began.

1967 was the first major show season for Top Acres and at season’s end they had won the Premier Exhibitor banner at Maryland and New York State Fairs, along with the Eastern States Exposition.

Jan’s Autumn Audrey was the first “major league cow” purchased by Wayne. Three members of the Snow Storm family followed a few years later. The “Snow” produce was named All American in 1971, 1972 and 1973. This past year marked the 38th consecutive year that a Snow family member has received All American recognition.

In 1969 a reduction sale was held, and while Wayne did not manage his own sale, the “bug bit” and in the spring of 1970 he managed his first Brown Swiss dispersal sale. Modern Associates was begun.
and carries on through today. Many of the highest averaging sales of the breed were managed by Modern Associates and several of the record selling individuals have been sold in Modern Associates sales. The current highest selling cow of the breed, Top Acres Coll Party, sold for $86,000 in the Modern Associates managed Top Acres Finale in 2003.

When the rented farm sold in New Jersey in 1974, a farm was purchased to the west. Wayne, Connie and their son, Kevin, along with exactly 100 head of Brown Swiss moved to the current farm location near St. Paris, Ohio.

1986’s national sale purchase of the young cow, Arnola Peggy Priscilla, added a new dimension to the Top Acres herd, “indexes”. Many members of the “P” family have been sold throughout the US and the world, including the aforementioned Party. Top AI sires include Premium and Prophet.

Other key purchases by Wayne include My T Fine Whisper and Betta Vue DQ Blossom, foundation cows for the Whizzbang and “B” families, respectively. “Wonderment” is currently one of the hottest Brown Swiss bulls and “Buzzer” is the top PTAM Swiss bull in the latest proofs. Top Acres EJ Whizzbang and Top Acres Pre Bouquet are both multiple year All American winners.

In 1986 Wayne received the Klussendorf Trophy and in 1998 was the Dairy Shrine’s Distinguished Dairy Cattle Breeder Award.

Throughout the many years of building strong cow families through well-thought matings and management with attention to detail, Wayne has always had the policy to sell from the top of the herd genetics, thus successfully spreading the Top Acres bloodlines throughout the world.

In 1998 Top Acres held a reduction sale and in 2003 the Top Acres Finale was held with most of the herd dispersed. The 113 head selling in the 2003 sale averaged $8282.30, the highest averaging herd sale.

The successful breeding program at Top Acres continues with a herd of 15-20 cows, many part of the Donor Herd for the aggressive ET program Wayne manages.

For complete stories on the two honorees and “historic” pictures, go to: www.grittongraphics.com