

feature story

Reflections on 150 Years of Herefords in Canada

By Catherine Brown ASSOCIATE EDITOR



→ Mack and Lois James and family

"If we can hang in there another five years, our family will have been in the Hereford breed for 100 years," says Mack James of Spring Valley Farms, Carleton Place, Ontario.

Mack's father, W.T. ("Billy") James bought his first Herefords in 1915. The family is now four generations steeped in Herefords and cattle breeding.

"We've seen the Hereford breed dip and dive," says Mack. They have seen many breeders come and go. Some of the breed's "super promoters" weren't always complimentary to

the breed, he says.

And then there were the breed types – "the short, then the tall and now the moderate."

The James family never balked away from the showing themselves. In the late 1920s, Mack's father, Billie, showed his Herefords at the local fairs. He walked them 20 miles to the fair and back home again. "His bull, Douglas Fairfax, was apparently

Spring Valley Farms held annual production sales for years and always supported the local 4-H club. Mack and Lois have won countless banners and trophies at Hereford shows, assisted by their son Glenn, who works with his parents. Daughter Sheila, now working with the Farm Safety Association, still enjoys the challenges of the purebred beef industry and is active in association

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especially good at leading the group," says Lois. "A tad different from the treatment that show cattle get today!"

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Mack officially joined his father's operation as a partner in 1945, after which polled Herefords were added and the herd was expanded. Billie and Mack were ultimately instrumental in forming the Ottawa Valley Hereford Club in 1953.

In 1959, Billie served as the Ontario Hereford Association president and was later named to the Canadian Hereford Honour Roll.

affairs. Another son, Steve, was a founding member of the Ottawa Valley Junior Hereford Club and remains active in the beef industry on his own farm in the Perth area. Steve's daughter, Samantha, has continued the family tradition with her 4-H projects.

Mack was recently honoured when the board of the Ottawa Valley Seed Growers Association nominated him to the Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame.

Mack and Lois were inducted into the Canadian Hereford Association Honour Roll in 2001.

➔ The Reid Family

Young leaders and mentors among the 107 juniors attending Bonanza, 2010, were brother and sister Kurtis and Kaitlyn Reid, of Saskatchewan. Both were named Triara ambassadors of the show and neither are strangers to Canadian Hereford circles. Kaitlyn, the current Canadian Junior Hereford Association president, is also one of this year's "Future of the Breed" Scholarship Winners, while Kurtis is a past CJHA president and Scholarship recipient.

Kurtis and Kaitlyn's parents, David and Kathy Reid, live in the city of Saskatoon but maintain a few Hereford females boarded at local farms where they also own some partnership cattle, under the herd name The Cliffs.

What some fellow breeders may not know is that the Reid family was one of Canada's earliest Hereford breeders, registering its first female in 1894 - a heifer whose dam was bred by none other than F.W. Stone, the first importer of Herefords to Canada. The Reids were recognized for 100 years in the breed in 1989. Kyle, Kurtis and Kaitlyn are fifth generation Hereford breeders.

Thomas and Agnes Reid moved to Ontario from England 200 years ago. They had six children, the oldest of which - William - eventually moved to Carlyle, Saskatchewan in 1883, followed shortly after by the next oldest son - John. Another son - David, took over the Ontario farm after their father's death. That David, along with brother, Thomas Junior, ultimately moved west too - to Moosomin, Saskatchewan. Thomas



Grant and Phyllis Reid



junior was the great grandfather of the current David Reid.

Thomas junior's son Thomas John Carlyle, was a bull grader in Eastern Saskatchewan. Employed by the government, bull graders inspected all purebred bulls purchased as a requirement of the Pure Bred Cattle Act. Producers who purchased a purebred bull then received a grant for their purchase. The better the

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bull, the larger the grant.

Carlyle was one of the founders of the Southeast Saskatchewan Hereford Association Sale. He was also a founder of what used to be the Mainline Breeders' Association sale, held for 40 consecutive years. Carlyle's sister, Leonne, married into the Baskie family, also of Hereford fame.

Carlyle's son is David's father, Grant Reid, who, at 83 years of age today, still owns the farm in Moosomin. Of Grant and Phyllis Reid's five children, David Reid is the only one who stayed in agriculture.

Grant ran a mixed operation for years, which included 60 purebred Herefords. In 1949, a polled bull was incorporated into the herd. In the Reids' first production sale in 1954, cattle were sold to places far and wide. In 1959, Grant exported a polled bull to England. He was also a founder of what used to be the Mainline Hereford Breeders' Association sale, held for 40 consecutive years.

Throughout the 1970's David Reid remembers that his family hosted

international delegations at the farm and enjoyed many exports, to Japan, Russia, Spain and Czechoslovakia. Loads of heifers were gathered for export, much like they are today. But as David points out, it is surprisingly much more difficult today to export livestock, mostly

due to regulations and restrictions involved.

The Reids exhibited cattle at Agribition since the second annual show there and Grant attended every Hereford show there ever since, until the past few years.

Grant was a 4-H leader for over 12 years. One year, his own five children "dragged" a total of 12 animals out to

their 4-H achievement day.

Some of Grant's foundation females came from the Franklin herd in Missouri when it dispersed. When the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Haver Research Station dispersed its L1 line of cattle, Grant also partnered in the purchase of a bull there.

David took part in his family's operation until leaving the farm in 1981, after which he helped his father on weekends and boarded his own cattle there. David is currently the Royal Bank's manager of Aboriginal Banking services in Saskatoon, while Kathy is a school teacher.

Their eldest son, Kyle, is married and involved in the field of agricultural lending. Kurtis just started his fourth year in a ruminant nutrition program at the University of West Texas A & M. Kaitlyn is in her first year at the University of Lethbridge working toward a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Sciences.



The Porteous Family



Duncan Porteous

Duncan Porteous goes without introduction. He managed the Canadian Hereford Association (CHA) for nearly 30 years from 1975 to 2004 and was the secretary-manager of the World Hereford Council for 16 years. He was the first to integrate U.S. and Canadian EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences) for a consolidated North American Cattle Evaluation. This was a great boon to trade across borders. He was CHA's General Manager at the time of the World Hereford Conference held in Calgary in 1976, which is still, to this date, the largest World Hereford Conference

junior program. He arranged for U.S. delegates to visit Canada to help set up a Canadian National Junior program, which was the first of its kind across all breeds. The inaugural Bonanza took place in 1980.

In 1981, Duncan oversaw the initiation of the CHA's Total Herd Enrolment (THE) program. This is recognized as the forerunner of complete cowherd reporting systems used by all major breed associations in Canada today.

A highlight of Porteous' childhood is that of raising and showing the Grand Champion Hereford steer at the Calgary District 4-H Club, in a competition of 500 head. It sold for \$1.10/pound. In the same show, some years later, Duncan's sister had the Champion carcass with a straight Hereford. It had the largest ribeye ever recorded for a Hereford up to that point.

Much of Duncan's love for the Hereford breed and its people, is in fact inherited. His father, Hume Porteous, is a member of the Canadian Hereford Association's Honour Roll. Hume started the prefix "DP" which represented the community of Dog Pound, Alberta, near the site of the farm. For many years, the "DP" prefix was associated with top breeding sires in both Canada and the United States.

Born in California, Hume ultimately moved to his grandparents' farm near Carlyle, Saskatchewan, where he helped show and sell bulls with great success at the Regina Bull Sales. This is where the Porteous Hereford

was also one of the first to enroll in the ROP program in 1957.

Another bull, Domino DP Lad 8C, bred by Hume Porteous, had a mature weight of 2,600 pounds, which, at the time, went down as the heaviest bull ever sold at Calgary. This bull went on to sire bulls that won three Grand Championships and one Reserve Grand Championship at the Calgary Spring Bull Sales.

"Dad looked for big cattle and raised big, useful Herefords," says Duncan, who adds that his father began using polled genetics in his later years.

Hume was one of the first in Canada to import Line 1 bulls from the USDA Research Station in Haver, Montana. This line was developed for its feminine traits and milking ability.

Hume and Bernice Porteous had four children. Duncan had a twin brother, along with another brother and a sister, none of whom remained in agriculture.

After graduating from the Olds School of Agriculture in 1962, one of Duncan's first jobs was with the CHA in 1964, researching pedigrees of calves with genetic mutations (dwarfism).

Duncan regrets that purebred breeders have largely lost the passion and enthusiasm for their enterprises they once had.

"As a kid, the whole operation stopped when someone came to look at cattle," says Duncan. "They would be toured through the herd and through neighbouring herds."

Current farming enterprises don't

In 1967, Hume Porteous was one of the first breeders in Alberta to begin using artificial insemination (A.I.). He was also one of the first to enroll in the ROP program in 1957.

ever held. It hosted 1,000 delegates representing over 20 countries and over 4,000 purebred and commercial producers. This phenomenal event ultimately opened Canada's door to the world where cattle exports are concerned.

Duncan was also instrumental in developing the Hereford junior program. He developed a brochure and promoted the first junior membership at a discounted fee. After attending the U.S. National Junior show in Kansas City, he realized what could be done with a

herd originated, in 1911.

In 1945, Hume moved to the farm's present location, west of Crossfield, Alberta, where he purchased the bull Wyoming Domino 6th, the Grand Champion at the Regina Spring Bull Sale that year.

At the Edmonton Bull Sale of 1953 and 1954, Hume showed both Grand and Reserve Grand Champion bulls with sons of Wyoming Domino 6th and Bow Valley Standard Lad 57.

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Hume Porteous

have the time they once did, he says. Nor can many of them afford extra help. So have off-farm jobs become commonplace, says Duncan. Since his retirement from the CHA in 2004, Duncan has taken the role of Project Manager for the Canadian

Beef Breeds Council's Purebred Risk Assessment Project. He is hailed as a champion of breeder education and breed improvement.

Duncan is the father of two daughters, in Regina and New Zealand, respectively and of one son,

residing in California. He has seven grandchildren. Duncan has been a resident of Calgary for 50 years and is now contemplating moving back to the family farm.

➔ Little Red Deer Hereford Farm Ltd. - The Edgar Family



Deb, Wilf and Hayley Edgar

This "little" Innisfail Alberta operation is five generations, 1,750 acres and 200 cows strong. It is also strong on foundations.

George Edgar was the CHA board member who put forward the motion to sell the old CHA office and build a new one in its current location on Skyline Way Drive. He was also instrumental in having the CHA records moved from Ottawa to Calgary.

George's grandfather homesteaded at Priddis, Alberta, in 1897, having moved to Canada from Scotland. In the original log house, his grandmother was regularly harassed by native Indians who had never



George and Marjorie Edgar

George's father, Wilfred Edgar, started the Hereford herd in 1932. He and George have both been president of the Alberta Hereford Association and the CHA. Both men have also judged cattle shows across North America. Wilfred also judged in South Africa and at the Royal Show in England.

George was the main judge of the 900-head show at the World Hereford Conference in 1976. He has judged the Calgary Bull Sale twice.

On the other end of the halter, George also had the Champion Bull at Calgary twice and the Champion Female of the 1951 Hereford show of the Toronto Royal Winter Fair.

The Edgars used to show cattle all summer but they stopped going to shows when smaller cattle were being selected. They didn't want to change their program, which supports big Herefords.

In 1949, the Edgars were the first family to win the Master Farm Award for Alberta.

In 1952, Wilfred imported the bull

made it too expensive to continue doing so.

"BSE changed the complexion of the industry," says George. He used to be able to sell bulls and females around the world. But the operation is down to selling about 25 bulls annually, which are sold at the Calgary Bull Sale and privately.

In times past, the operation made good money. "Things were booming," says George. In the mid-fifties, his father sold the first Canadian horned bull into England. Their production sale was one of the top sales for many years. One bull calf was sold for \$105,000 to Henry Venoasen and they once achieved the top selling heifer calf in Canada, at \$21,000.

The first bull that George acquired for Little Red Deer Herefords was AGA 35A, who was purchased for \$30,000 for half interest, which was unheard of at that time. That bull's first two sons recouped the Edgars' investment.

Another bull, 50F, was purchased with the Blumes for \$92,000. Yet another, 27G, was purchased with Henry Venoasen and Charlie Dallas, for \$140,000. Wabash Extra is another well-known bull used by the Edgars. With a purchase price of \$132,000, he sired a lot of good bulls across Canada and the USA.

The operation crops a combination of hay, canola, wheat, barley and peas. Cows are pastured late and the mature herd grazes corn until the end of February, after which time hay and straw is chopped, mixed and fed on pasture.

The farm hosted a production sale for 53 consecutive years until border closures caused by the BSE crisis made it too expensive to continue doing so.

before seen a white woman. The current location of Little Red Deer Hereford Farm in Innisfail was established in 1907, where George's grandfather was the first to break the land. Only 20 acres of the original 320 were broke when he moved there.

Whitmore Halflight from England, who "went on to leave as many top herd bulls as any in Canada," according to George.

The farm hosted a production sale for 53 consecutive years until border closures caused by the BSE crisis

George and Marjorie have been married 55 years and George says he has a wonderful life. The morning he spoke with us, he had just enjoyed the pleasure of touring through the cattle herd and crops. Most of his and Marjorie's family and seven

grandchildren live nearby. When people ask if he will move to the city he says that “people with money move to the country, not to town.” George calls himself semi-retired as he still helps around the farm. George and Marjorie’s son Wilf, with his wife Deb and their daughter Hayley, own the cattle herd now and have run the operation for the past 12 years. Another son, Peter, is a grain farmer. Their daughter Penny sells real estate

in Red Deer and their son Keith lives in Washington State where he sells antiques. The operation has been assisted, over the years, by some very good help, including George Hay, who was their herdsman for 30 years and Don Jamieson, who helped the Edgars for 10 years. The Edgars’ magazine ads show modern Canadian and U.S. bloodlines being incorporated into the herd,

with an eye on consistency and proven lines. The family and herd stand firmly as the industry works through inevitable change.

➔ The Jones Ranch

A lot can happen in a hundred years.

Just outside of Balzac, Alberta, the Cross Iron Mills mall is being erected – one of the largest in the province. Six miles down the road lies the famous Jones Hereford Ranch, which, in 1903, was purchased by James and Alice Jones for \$1,500, four loads of hay and a cook stove.

James and Alice originally emigrated to Manitoba from Herefordshire, England, in 1884. After enduring several long winters and the loss of one son in a snowstorm, the Jones relocated to the current ranch location, north of Calgary. The original deed includes a quarter section of land.

“Thousands of acres around them



Allan Jones with mother Gladys and son Barret

Flewelling, in the summer 2003 edition of Herefords Today. “In 1905, the same year that Alberta became a Canadian province, James Jones registered his first Hereford calf.” James and Alice had eight children, four of whom continued to farm in the Balzac area after James’ death in 1933. The youngest son, Charles E. (“Charlie”) Jones continued his

throughout Canada and the USA promoting Herefords. The Northern International Livestock Exposition in Billings, Montana named Charlie to its Hall of Fame in 1970 to recognize his contributions to the livestock industry. He was inducted into the Alberta Hereford Association Hall of Fame in 1972, after he passed away suddenly in 1971.

After attending Olds School of Agriculture, both Dwaine and Douglas officially joined their parents’ business in 1961, when the herd was incorporated as the Jones Hereford Ranches Ltd. Gladys Groeneveld and Dwaine met on a blind date arranged by Doug and married in 1960. Doug married Jo Anne Hendricks in 1962.

The couples ranched together until 1977 when Doug and Jo Ann decided to start their own operation near Airdrie on land purchased in the

Charlie and son Dwaine were one of very few father-son pairs, each of whom who both served as president of the CHA in their respective times.

was free range at that time, so James and his family concentrated on increasing the herd of cattle and horses which, in later years, reached 800 head,” according to Doreen

father’s herd of Herefords on the original ranch, along with his wife Gertrude, two daughters – Arleen and Marion - and two sons – Dwaine and Douglas.



Dwaine and Gladys Jones



Doug and JoAnne Jones and Family

Charlie Jones went on to become one of Canada’s most respected Hereford breeders. He and son Dwaine were one of very few father-son pairs, each of whom who both served as president of the CHA in their respective times.

As the story goes, Charlie traveled thousands of miles each year

1950s by Charlie Jones in partnership with Jim Hole’s parents. (Jim’s mother was a sister to Charlie Jones). Just three days after their move, Doug died in a tractor accident at 40 years of age. Joanne and her three children, were left to survive on their own.

Tragically, a short five years later, Dwayne died of a heart attack. But he and Gladys squeezed in a lot of quality time during their short 23 years of marriage. They traveled extensively together, throughout Canada and to England, France, Sweden, Australia and Mexico. They had two sons, Keith and Allen and one daughter, Susan.

Gladys remembers the good times and fellowship with fellow breeders during those years, at bull sales, shows and social events. She regrets

that the enthusiasm within the breeder community is not what it used to be.

Aside from extensive involvement in their community and church, they were great supporters of the Balzac 4-H Club. Dwaine was an associate member of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede and served on the Livestock Committee. He was a director of the Canadian Western Agribition and was Alberta Hereford Association president in 1971. He served as CHA president in 1975, exactly 20 years after his father Charlie had served as president.

Now the grandmother of eight, Gladys remains on the original ranch, where her son Allen and his wife Shanna and two boys, Barret (15) and Harlen (12), continue the cattle operation, which is now comprised of 120 Hereford and Hereford-cross cows, plus 50 purebred cows to maintain the original herd. Allen also crops 6,000 acres of owned and custom operations. Her daughter Susan and her husband Jeff have their own agricultural advertising business, while another son, Keith is married to Bev and is involved in various aspects of the agriculture industry, including a biodiesel plant for which he is CEO.

Joanne married legendary Hereford breeder Jim Hole, who lived on the adjoining ranch, in 1980. Jim recently passed away in 2009, while Joanne remains on the original Big Springs Ranch. Joanne and Doug's daughters Catherine and Cheryl are both married with families involved in the cattle industry nearby. Their son Brad is a computer software engineer.

