

Pennsylvania Holstein President Says Job Is To Steady The Course

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"I like to see people get involved," he says. "PHA offers a lot of activities other than showing that members can partake of. For instance, we find that if we get our junior members to one activity, like our judging schools or a state junior convention, they'll usually be back."

He is especially enthusiastic about encouraging new members to participate in the breed's activities.

"I look at the new people becoming involved in shows and educational meetings and conventions and think that we must be doing something right," Burdette believes. "And, it really trips my trigger when a new exhibitor wins at a show."

Actually, Burdette is the proverbial poster-child for promoting Holstein involvement. His dairying career took root in Boyds, Maryland, where his father, who was in the excavation business, began also operating a milking herd on a neighboring farm. Along with a hired employee handling

the 80-head in a 22-stall milking barn, young Jim Burdette came home from school every day to work with the cattle. His brother, a professional surveyor, also lent a hand with chores as time allowed. Following graduation from high school, Burdette began managing the dairy herd full time.

But he new PHA president's cattle beginnings did not include registered Holsteins. In fact, his first turn around a showing, as a rookie 4-H member, was at the halter of an Ayrshire calf. Burdette could also be spotted hanging around the beef, horse and dog portions of the local shows, where 4-H'er Nina Brown might be exhibiting her projects.

In August 1974 Jim and Nina were married. Three months later, they moved to a rented farm in Pennsylvania, sandwiched between Mercersburg and the stretch of Tuscarora mountain which has since become Whitetail Ski area.

"That first night after we moved we milked 32 head, two registered Holsteins, three grades and the rest were Ayrshires," recalls Bur-

dette. The two registered cows had been purchased "off the truck" from a cattle dealer. A third registered cow was added a bit later, a wedding gift from Nina's sister and brother-in-law, Nona and Joe Swartzbeck, Union Bridge, Maryland. The Swartzbecks, like the Burdettes, are active Holstein members and Joe is a past president of the Maryland Holstein Association.

"She was right out of the top of their herd," Burdette relates. The two-year-old Elevation daughter, Peace and Plenty RA Susan, milked 24,000 pounds her first lactation, scored Very Good and had two daughters for them.

That was just one of numerous cattle success stories which have developed over the years in the Windy Knoll View herd. From one of those first two registered Holsteins purchased from the cattle dealer, Jim and Nina bred their first homebred cow. Sired by Duncravain Boehms Countdown, Windy Knoll View CD Cindy-OC also became their first Excellent cow. As a 4-H judging team member

Jim had visited the Boehm's registered herd in New Jersey, owned by the world-renowned porcelain artist, and seen the farm's famed Kings Artic Rose, matron of the herd and dam of Countdown.

"I liked that cow and I liked Astronaut, his sire," remembers Burdette of his reasoning for using Rose's Countdown son early in his breeding program. The mating proved to be an "Excellent" choice, with several consecutive generations of daughters scored from EX-90 to EX-92 points.

In late April, the herd's most recent classification, a sixth-generation Excellent was added to this tremendous pedigreed family when Windy Knoll View Cassandra, a Raider daughter, scored EX-90 as a four-year-old. Windy Knoll View has now bred 44 Excellent cows.

Another special Excellent boosted during that latest classification is a 13-year-old Gold daughter scored 4E-92. Few cows in the breed even fulfill a lifetime of 10 calvings, let alone retain the impressive "staying power" to become a 4-time-Excellent honoree.

As their dairy herd grew, so did the Burdette family. Justin was

born in 1978 and Kyle in 1982. Both young men have been part of the family dairying team since they were small children and are breeding, developing and merchandising their own families of cattle. In fact, claims Burdette, they're better merchandisers than he is.

Ultimately, the animal that has doubtless had the greatest impact on the lives of the entire Burdette family, and become the hallmark of Windy Knoll View, was another homebred. Her name was Windy-Knoll-View Ultimate Pala.

Pala's dam was one of two Creek Bluff Lester daughters that Burdette bred to the Canadian-born Quality Ultimate bull, sire of several top show winners in the "hot" cattle investor days of the early 1980s. Burdette took a liking to the Quality Ultimate bull, acquired a couple of units of semen and got two heifer calves for his efforts. The first, Pala, was born in March 1985 followed by a September 1985-born paternal sister which they named Lotsa Quality.

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Lotsa Quality caught the eye of Lylehaven Farms, Vermont, which eventually purchased half-interest in her. She developed to become a Reserve All-American and was second high seller, at \$10,500, at the 1987 World Premiere Sale held at Madison, Wisconsin.

Burdette later flushed her dam again to Quality Ultimate. The resulting offspring sold for \$15,000.

And, although purchase offers had also come in for Pala, the Burdettes turned them down.

"We were offered a five-figure price for her. I said 'no' I don't know why," reflects Burdette of the now-historic decision to keep Pala in the herd.

It wasn't because her family had an extended string of high-scoring pedigrees. Her dam, the Creek Bluff Lester, scored VG-88 as her best classification. Pala's second dam scored 78. On a second classification, following some health problems, she was dropped to a score of 70. Before she could be classified a third time, she died.

Pala's own first daughter was a Valiant. She was named All-Pennsylvania summer yearling, made 30,000 pounds of milk and eventually carried an EX-92 classification score on her paper.

Pala's second daughter, was an Astrojet. She scored VG-89 on her first evaluation, won a high-dollar Pennsylvania Futurity contest, milked 26,000 pounds with 1,200 pounds of fat and was in line to be sold to Japan. Then, one of those misfortunes hit familiar to most livestock breeders, they were unable to get her bred back.

But the pair of sisters, combined with their mother, captured numerous of awards and honors for the Windy Knoll herd, including Reserve All-American Best Three Females in 1991. The daughters were also nominated All-American Produce of Dam.

Her third calving produced a set of heifer twins by Melvin. One was named the 1990 All-American summer yearling and went on to be 3E-93, while the other scored VG-88. Both produced records of over 33,000 pounds of milk.

At that point in her career, Pala's genetic contribution to the breed was intensified as the Burdettes began embryo-flushing this tremendous animal. According to Burdette, Pala averaged 24 embryos per flush, and on one occasion, produced 46 good embryos. Some have gone to breeders on distant points of the globe, others remained right at home in their sons' own growing herds of outstanding animals.

Some years ago, Justin paid for a flush from Pala to Counselor in exchange for his choice of calves. The result was Pear, ultimately scored 2E-94 and nominated Junior All-American four times. Justin has flushed Pear twice and sold offspring and embryos.

Kyle is currently flushing Pet, another