

Roger R. Neitzel

Retires as Superintendent of Records at Brown Swiss Association of U.S.A.

We are honoring a man who has devoted a good part of each day of his life for the past 32 years to the Brown Swiss Cattle Breeders' Association.

And while many of you know him as the man you see presenting awards at the annual meeting or at a national show helping to keep track of the production winners or perhaps as the person you call to scream at when a cow's record is messed up, we'd like you to get to know more of the man, Roger Neitzel.

Roger was born in 1943, the only child of Fritz and Erma Neitzel, near the little town of Wilton, Wisconsin. His family had a small grade Holstein herd - yeah that other breed!

He attended the Wilton schools and was very active in FFA, showing his Holsteins and pigs on the local and state level. Following graduation he went to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls to major in dairy science. He credits his high school FFA advisor with playing a major role in convincing his parents to let him go a little farther from home to attend the good ag college there. He then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison to obtain his masters (in 1967) and doctorate (1970) degrees, majoring in Dairy Cattle Breeding with an emphasis on genetics and statistics. In 1970 Roger was named Research Associate in the Dairy Science Department at Michigan State University in East Lansing and in 1973 was designated Senior Programmer.

But this journey was not made alone. After graduating from high school he began dating Jean, also from Wilton. Following his graduation from River Falls, they were married in 1965. On June 26, they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. And for those of you who don't know them well, you couldn't find a couple who enjoy each other's company more, work as a team and truly are the



Roger's home farm in Kinney Valley near Wilton, Wisconsin



Roger's first two registered Holsteins, Ideal and Topsy.



Graduation from UW-Madison, left to right: Erma and Fritz Neitzel, Roger's parents, Roger and Jean and Herb Anderson, Jean's father.



Roger and Jean, June 26, 1965.



The sign on the north side of the Brown Swiss building, Roger's new home on March 1, 1979.



Jean, Jim, Kristin, Roger and Chad.



The table rock on the family farm that led to the cattle prefix.



epitome of a marriage and relationship to strive for.

In the spring of 1979 Leonard Switzer left the association and Roger was hired to become the new Superintendent of Records at Brown Swiss. For those of you not around at the time, it truly made many of us laugh when we met Roger. Leonard was a tall man and could easily have passed for Santa Claus. But you know the saying, "Great things come in small packages." It was very true in this case.

Roger and Jean moved to Beloit along with their three children, Jim, Kristin, 5, and Chad, 3, on Jim's 9th birthday, February 27, 1979.

Roger's first day of work was March 1 - his first project, no not fix messed up records, but to design a new IE brochure. What many of you do not realize is when you are an employee of the Brown Swiss Association you wear many, many hats. The sample names on the brochure still carry Roger's home prefix, Table Rock.

Remember that Roger was hired in great part for his computer expertise. Well we probably should mention that when he walked in the door, there was no computer in the office, nary a one. Production records and classifications were being processed on a computer - but they were in Madison, with information going up and back almost daily. The information came back on printed IBM cards to file.

So his next task was the first computerized system for Brown Swiss. This included the purchase of the hardware - a processor and a tape drive, each the size of a refrigerator, a disk drive the size of a washing machine with a whopping 192 MB of storage and several dumb computer terminals. By the time they got all this moved into his office, it truly was a blessing he was a man of smaller stature so he could fit too. Then came the actual writing of the computer programs, the initial data entry of the historical data, documentation of the data and training of the staff. When thinking of the time involved to get all of this work done - compare it to mating a cow, waiting 9 months for the calf to be born and then waiting another two years until she calves. It is a process that

Computer in December 1979 (the first computerized equipment for BSCBA). And Roger's thoughts? "What do I do with this?"

