

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?"



Roger presented the Ira Inman trophy to Bob and Helen Blessing at an annual meeting.



A classification demonstration in Venezuela.

can not be rushed. When working with Roger you find that he is very meticulous on every thing he does, sometimes it may seem to take forever, but what you will find in the end is that when it is done, it is done right. Perhaps one of those things not appreciated enough during his years at Brown Swiss.

The other thing is that Superintendent of Records is almost a misnomer. It covers so many things, production records, classification, overseeing registrations and the problems related to that, handling the processing of the new genetic evaluations each time they came in, along with preparing the info for printing and distribution, figuring the production awards for the national shows, calculating/assembling all the production awards for the annual meeting, including junior-related ones, new promotion material related to things in his department, trophies to order, processing mailing lists for the many pieces of correspondence going out of the office, working with USDA, domestic and foreign organizations in relation to information on their cows/bulls or the U.S. animals, meetings that were required to stay on top of all of these issues and so many related things too numerous to list. And as the Brown Swiss staff shrunk, the list grew and grew.



Helping to get Brown Swiss declared a dairy breed in Japan.



Representing the U.S. Brown Swiss Association at a show in Mexico

Foreign trips included classification and mating demonstrations in Venezuela, meeting with government officials in Tokyo, Japan, to have Brown Swiss declared a dairy breed there, attending shows in Mexico, representing the USA Brown Swiss during three World Conferences and farm visits, and most recently attending the International Genomic evaluation meeting in Italy.

Roger, center, with George Opperman and Tish Byrne, co-workers, working to clean out the building's old coal room.





The Brown Swiss building built in 1856.

And oh yes, training **seven** Executive Secretaries.

The sticky note list on his desk could get quite long, trying to juggle them all and stay on top of it. And of course we haven't mentioned the many phone calls that came in daily from breeders with problems or questions to interrupt him trying to get rid of some of those sticky notes.

And there were days that Roger came to work in his coveralls, he was a man of many hats. For instance did you ever stop to consider how all the computers in the Brown Swiss office got "hooked" together? Roger, drilling holes and feeding network cables through floors, walls, foundation studs, etc. And remember the Brown Swiss building was built in 1856, it has some very thick walls and floors. Oh yes, including some brick walls - inside the building. All a challenge, but one met by Roger most generally with a smile and positive attitude on his face. And quite often a chuckle or laugh.

If you are not around Roger a lot, you do not realize the great, great sense of humor he has. There were many a day that his fellow employees cherished having Roger around as a sounding board and someone that could lift your spirits. Morale booster - we didn't have that in the list above.

In 1979 with the Centennial Celebration approaching, it became a great necessity to "clean out the back storage room" It was stacked to the gills with important papers along with completely useless pieces of information, all that had to be sorted through. It became a project of the staff at that time to spend 3-4 hours each night after office hours to work to get the

room organized (and it is a big room.)

In the far corner buried under piles of stuff was a huge wooden box, rather long, rather "coffin-looking". It is not for sure, but rumor has it that Roger was the one that decided that it had to be Ira Inman's (an early secretary of the association) coffin. You don't know how it rallied the troops to keep working to plow our way through all the other boxes and piles to see if it did happen to be Ira's final resting place. Of course it wasn't, but the staff at the time sure did have a good time with our imaginations and the possibility.

Back to the computers, 15 years later a new database system, programmed by an outside source with available storage of gigabytes of data in a suitcase size PC - lots more room in Roger's office. But what people didn't realize was that, "Yes the programming was done outside the office. But who had to send them all the



Howard Voegeli, Pat Massingill and Roger at the national convention held in California in 1981 raising money for the juniors.



Roger, third from right, won the Men's Hillbilly costume division at the Fun Auction at the 1984 National Convention in Nashville. Always supportive of the youth programs, Roger and Jean have donated an item each year and always further supported it with their bids and purchases.

information and then evaluate the programs to make sure they worked and then check all the information for accuracy? Roger. And it was not an easy process. It might have been one of those things that led to Roger's hair getting a little thinner.

Another 14 years of computer progress led to the current Online Real time database hosted by Insinc. This is recent enough that many of you remember the growing pains of transitioning to this system. Roger has truly become a "debugging" expert.

During his last six months prior to parttime retirement, he served as Interim Executive Secretary. He will continue to be involved with Brown Swiss past permanent retirement as treasurer and chairman of the Preservation Committee of the Brown Swiss Historical Society.

And though it would be impossible to calculate the hours that he has spent at 800 Pleasant Street for the good of the breed, he always took time to put Jean, his family and his church in high priority. His service to his church was just as dedicated as his service to the Association.

1993 was truly a sad time, when Roger and Jean's youngest son was killed in a car accident. But the strong family ties of the Neitzel family pulled them all together and helped them through the adjustment of going to a family of four. To bring you up to date, Jim is now an electrician's apprentice and Kristin is a pastor serving a church in Kansas.

To clear the cobwebs and rejuvenate his mind so he could face another day of Brown Cows, Roger had several passions, baseball/softball, bowling, playing softball, collecting baseball cards, playing softball, and browsing and collecting antiques with Jean. There were a couple summers when Roger was playing on three softball teams, he realistically scaled them back to two and this past year is down to one team.



The Historical Society Committee at the Ohio National Convention in 2008 toured a local museum for ideas. Left to right: Clarice, Giovanni Carollo (Italian visitor), Myron Fledderjohann, Velve Notter, Roger and Jean Neitzel, Russ and Joan Geisy.



Following Chad's death, a Chad Neitzel Cross Country meet was held in his memory for 10 years.



Jim, an electrician; Jean, Kristin, serving as a pastor in Kansas, and Roger.



Jim and Roger after they both had bowled 300 games and subsequently made it to the Bowling Hall of Fame.

Should we remind you that Roger is 66 years old, but can still hustle with the best of them onto the field. Winter time brought bowling season. One of his proudest moments was when he and his son, Jim, both posted 300 games and made it to the bowling hall of fame.



Roger still pitching in one of his favorite past times. - softball.

These words have only scraped the surface of what Roger

has done for the Association and the man he is away from his computer. But be warned in the coming months and years, all of you are going to come to realize what a true asset he has been for the past 32 years.



At the 2010 Annual Meeting Roger Neitzel was presented with the first Roger Neitzel Service Award. Left to right: Mike Moyers, president of the association, Jean and Roger Neitzel.