

# An Artist at Heart

**Hereford Publications Inc. Graphic Designer Bruce Huxol retires after 43 years working for Hereford breeders.**

by Julie Mais

A talent that brought joy to Hereford breeders, created portraits to commemorate great achievement in the breed and helped to market cattle was humbly just another day in the life of American Hereford Association's (AHA) graphic artist Bruce Huxol. On March 31, after spending 43 years working for Hereford breeders, Bruce walked out the doors of 1501 Wyandotte for a final time as an employee and marked the beginning of retirement.



Hereford artist Bruce Huxol created this sketch of Cory Lowderman at the Junior National Polled Hereford Show in 1979 which was used for the "Chin Up" award given to Hereford youth participating in the 1980 junior national. Cory passed away after a tragic car accident and the Lowderman family has said this drawing serves as an inspiration for them to keep their faith during difficult times.



"My whole career has been pushing Herefords and getting them better than anyone else," he says, noting his competitive tendencies aided his efforts.

Bruce first came to work for the Hereford breed as a layout artist for the *Polled Hereford World* — his first day was Nov. 1, 1974. A graduate of Central Missouri State University, he brought with him a commercial art degree and a double minor in graphics and communication. "This was a functional art degree for how to put together printed material," Bruce says. "At that time I wanted to be an illustrator. All the famous people in the magazine business were illustrating covers and doing advertising and stuff like that. I have been pretty lucky — I've had illustrations published in every continent in the world but Antarctica."

## Transitions in Hereford advertising

During the four decades working for Hereford breeders, Bruce witnessed tremendous change in both the beef industry and the magazine business.

"Bruce is a true Hereford employee legacy," says Caryn Vaught, production manager for Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI).

Today's staff structure at HPI looks a little different than it did 43 years ago. "When I started with the *Polled Hereford World* we had two artists, a typist, a production manager, a production director, advertising coordinators, an editor, editorial staff, two layout artists and a darkroom for photos," he says.

Bruce says the late 1990s and early 2000s were a period of transition for digital publishing. "Lots of new graphic programs came in," Bruce remembers. "My job as a whole remained in advertising production, but the way we did things did change."

Throughout his time with Hereford, he held numerous titles including production director, art director, editorial assistant and proofreader. "I also cleaned the bathroom and fixed the plumbing," he laughs. "We were a hands-on staff and wore a lot of hats."

When Bruce started with the *Polled Hereford World*, the magazine was using hot type for production, which is using pieces of type manually put in position. "We still had some advertisers who used that older technology in their ads," Bruce remembers. "We had to transfer that over and it was quite a deal."

Moving into the digital age, Bruce says the *Polled Hereford World* was the first magazine in Kansas City, Mo., to be designed solely on a computer. "We came in one day and everyone had a computer on their desk," he says. "Computers were huge and memory was expensive."

The work was still extensive and making a mistake meant starting over again. "It was all very labor intensive," he remembers. "But we may have had more advertising than we do now."

Technology continued to evolve and so did efficiency. "We eventually decided to switch to

Macintosh computers,” Bruce says. “After struggling on the IMBs, we came in on a Monday morning and they had Macs on our desks. We were doing complete layouts and everything we had done before by that afternoon. We all caught on so quick. It was just amazing. When that type came back, everything was in position and you could see that typeface on screen. It made a lot of difference as far as your design.”

A major change in Hereford advertising that Bruce has seen over the years is the content on the page. “Ads used to be more about getting people interested in coming to a sale vs. about what was in the sale,” he explains. “Everyone knew pedigrees by heart and when you advertised an animal you didn’t have to run the pedigree.” But today, making room for pedigree information is a must.

### Years of sharing talent

Bruce is an artist and his work proves it — winning awards for designs in advertising and creating beautiful portraits treasured by many. It’s a tradition for recipients of the Hereford Hall of Fame and the Hall of Merit to receive a Bruce Huxol original portrait.

“I have witnessed the award recipients genuine pride when they were given the portraits that Bruce had drawn for them,” says AHA Board member Kevin Schultz, HaviLand, Kan. “The award meant a lot to them, but the portraits they were given were the ‘we made it moment’ of the evening.”

However, Bruce says, “Most of the artwork I’ve done, I don’t own. It’s out the door and I never see it again. But I enjoy seeing what people do with it and how they display it.”

In retirement Bruce is looking forward to doing artwork for himself and exploring mediums like woodcut, pen and ink, and watercolor. “This is something I’ve always wanted to do. It will be fun.”

Bruce also plans to spend more time volunteering with veterans.



“The group I have been volunteering with has a couple of new projects going on in Kansas City like building tiny houses for homeless vets,” he says. “My wife and I plan on going and helping build. There’s 14,000 homeless vets in the Kansas City area and as many as 140,000 vets that could qualify for disabilities. It’s a huge problem. If we can get 50 people off the street that’s great — but it’s just scratching the surface.”

Bruce will continue work with Project Healing Waters, where he teaches veterans how to tie fishing flies and occasionally takes a group fly fishing at a local lake.

He will also fill his days enjoying time with his seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Not growing up in the livestock industry, but in a rural community, Bruce has enjoyed a “getaway” from the suburbs and city life through his work.

“Bruce’s talent touched many through the *Hereford World*,” says Joe Rickabaugh, AHA director of

seedstock marketing. “Bruce has the ability to convey so much meaning to a sketch or piece of artwork that many have enjoyed throughout not only the Hereford industry but also the cattle industry.”

“It’s been a crazy career,” Bruce says. “When I was in college my instructor said ‘the things you’re learning now will be obsolete when you graduate and you’ll probably have to change how you do things every five years — it’s much faster now. The only way you can hang on is be ready for change, because you know it’s coming. If you get too set in your ways, you’re just not going to survive.’”

Joe wishes Bruce the best in his retirement and says, “Time with his family and grandchildren will be special and he will also have more time to devote to his fly tying and fly fishing. It will be hard to replace his talent and we look forward to our continued working relationship with Bruce on future projects for the AHA.” **HW**