

Livestock Marketeers Honor Birdwell, Wolf

Jim Birdwell, auctioneer and Hereford breeder from Fletcher, Okla., and Willard Wolf, former American Hereford Association (AHA) field representative, Valleyford, Wash., were inducted into the Livestock Marketeers "Hall of Fame" during the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Jan. 13.

Livestock Marketeers is an informal fraternity of livestock fieldmen, auctioneers, sale managers and related livestock business leaders. Birdwell and Wolf were "roasted" at the group's 42nd annual banquet.

Jim Birdwell

Birdwell grew up in southwestern Oklahoma on a small livestock operation near Fletcher. After graduating from Fletcher High School in 1963, he attended Oklahoma State University (OSU) majoring in agriculture education.

Birdwell was a member of OSU's livestock judging team, earning high individual in beef cattle judging at the American Royal and high individual in sheep judging at Ft. Worth.

Following graduation, Birdwell taught vocational agriculture in Union City, Okla., from 1967-71.

The American Polled Hereford Association (APHA) hired Birdwell as an area coordinator on Jan. 1, 1972, and put him to work traveling throughout Oklahoma and Kansas.

While working for APHA he also managed commercial stocker steers on his family farm. Following his experience with stocker steers, he decided that a cow-calf operation might have less risk. He purchased a potload of registered polled Hereford weaned heifer calves from Gus Hindergarth, Ransom, Kan. This became the foundation for his breeding program.

He left APHA in 1975 to enter the sales management business with National Cattle Services Inc. In July 1978 Birdwell made the next step in his livestock-marketing career and became a full-time auctioneer.

Birdwell has sold livestock sales across the U.S. and in Canada, including all purebred livestock

breeds, Quarter Horses and, most recently, Standardbred Horses in Kentucky, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

His wife, Jeanne, is a retired elementary school teacher. They have two children and four grandchildren. The Birdwells have a small ranching operation in Fletcher, raising registered polled Herefords, Angus and Quarter Horses.

"I'm looking forward to many more years in the greatest business I could ask for — the purebred livestock auction business," Birdwell says.

Willard Wolf

Many recognize Wolf as one of the "great" breed field representatives. He was born and raised in Oklahoma on a 300-head commercial Hereford operation and graduated from Oklahoma State University (OSU) with a degree in animal science and a minor in business law.

While at OSU he worked part time and summers for the Oklahoma Commission Co. buying and selling feeder and fat cattle at the Oklahoma City Stockyards.

After college he went to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a livestock market news reporter working in Oklahoma City, San Francisco and Spokane, Wash. He then transferred to Washington D.C. where he was responsible for the national cattle slaughter estimate and coordinating national cattle industry market news and information.

In 1966 he accepted a position with the Foreign Agriculture Service and a private company that exported cattle, sheep, hogs and horses to foreign countries. While in this role he exported more than 5,000 head of Hereford cattle to Spain, Mexico, Portugal and Honduras.

Two years later, Wolf was hired by the AHA as a field representative for the Northwest. He moved his family to Spokane and served the Association in this capacity until 2001.

During his 33 years of service to the AHA, Wolf bought more than \$12 million of Hereford bulls and females for ranchers who could not attend sales. He assisted several



This year's honorees to the Livestock Marketeers "Hall of Fame" are Jim Birdwell, Fletcher, Okla., and Willard Wolf, Valleyford, Wash.

hundred commercial cattlemen with their seedstock needs, as well as in marketing their replacement heifers and steers. Along the way, he mentored many young people and spent considerable time with junior Hereford members.

In his retirement Wolf continues working with Hereford breeders, commercial cattlemen and feedlot operators. He still purchases bulls and females and ships thousands of feeder cattle to feedlots for the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program.

"What made him so good is that he really knows every aspect of this business," says Lovell Kuykendall, former AHA staff member. "His biggest attribute was his work and camaraderie with the commercial cattleman."

A tribute to Stout

In addition to the traditional roast of Hall of Fame honorees, the Livestock Marketeers had a special memorial tribute for auctioneer Stanley Stout during this year's banquet.

Stout, a longtime leader of the Livestock Marketeers, died in April 2006. In his honor, fellow marketer Gary McDonald, Franktown, Colo., compiled an extensive list of Stout's work at sales during the NWSS for more than 30 years. A plaque featuring a picture of Stout and listing those accomplishments (approximately \$38 million in sales) was presented to Pat Grant of the NWSS, to be hung in a place of honor in the National Western Club. **HW**