

Serene Scenes

Artist C.J. Brown believes she was meant to paint cattle.

by **Kindra Gordon**



her watercolor works. From Hereford cattle in lush green pastures to barns and rural landscapes, Brown has dubbed herself a “cow painter.” Here, she shares her journey to becoming an artist.

Thanks dad

Brown credits her father — an Illinois Angus and Simmental producer — for instilling in her an interest in both art and cattle. “My parents said I’d draw and paint all the time when I was young,” says Brown. She tells that her dad remodeled several farmhouses and she’d entertain herself by drawing pictures on the wood.

But it wasn’t until she was a junior in high school that Brown finally had the opportunity to take a “real” art class. She found a natural fit.

When it came time for college, Brown debated between studying journalism or art, but she says, “The art won out.” She received an art degree from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

As she established her career as an artist, Brown focused on painting wildlife and rural scenery. But in 2002 some personal changes in her life caused Brown to reflect and rethink her own goals.

Brown says, “I had always wanted to do a cattle print and had done some cattle illustrations for a magazine but never a print which I would market.”

Thus, for a change of pace, she decided to paint a scene of the pasture at Woodlawn Angus Farm at Creston, Ill., near her family’s farm. She tells that the owners were old family friends and her dad had purchased his first Angus heifer from them in 1948.

Brown titled her first cattle print “Grazing in the Grove,” and it was very well received by the cattle community. In fact, today it is sold out.

For Brown, the admiration of the piece by others was the inspiration she needed at a difficult time in her life. She says, “My life was going through a dark period, but when ‘Grazing in the Grove’ came along, God truly showed me that when doors are shut, He will open windows. I say He opened a gigantic ‘picture window,’ and from there my painting just took off.”

A cattle calling

Brown took the success as a sign that she was “meant to paint cattle,” and she refocused her creativity on creating cattle scenes representing many different breeds — including Hereford. “Peaceful Pastures,” “Herefords at White Rock” and “Hereford Winter Haven” are the titles of her current prints featuring the breed.



Most everyone who admires cattle has experienced some “picture perfect”

moments — those memorable cattle scenes worthy of being preserved in a painting.

Fortunately for the cattle industry, artist C.J. Brown has captured many of those serene, pastoral scenes in



“Herefords at White Rock”

She credits her first job out of college doing mechanical drawings with helping her master the detail in her watercolor prints of cattle today. “Doing the mechanical drawings was not the most inspiring at the time, but it was great training. So I look back and appreciate it.”

Asked what she enjoys most about her career as an artist, Brown says it is the many endearing friendships she has made from her “cattle-painting career.”

She says, “I enjoy the creative part of designing the piece and the production side, but equally as enjoyable is meeting the cattle people.”

Brown’s authentic admiration for those cattle people is often reflected in the pieces she paints — as many of the pieces include a story about the owners of the cattle) and the setting depicted in the scene.

“With everything I do there is a story,” she adds.

Looking ahead, Brown has many new release prints in the works. She also travels to several of the national cattle shows throughout the year to sell her work. As a result of her busy schedule, she tells that she paints wherever and whenever she can. “I work a lot of late nights, and I do a lot of painting in my hotel room too. It’s a good thing watercolor dries fast,” she jokes.

Today, in addition to her painting, she remains involved in a family partnership herd with her dad, brother and son near Lindenwood, Ill.

To see works available by C.J. Brown, visit her Web site, www.cjbrownstudios.com. She has recently completed a “cattle log” available on the site, showcasing each of her pieces and offering a bit of history about each one. **HW**



“Peaceful Pastures”

“*God truly showed me that when doors are shut, He will open windows. I say He opened a gigantic ‘picture window,’ and from there my painting just took off.*”



“Hereford Winter Haven”

Hereford highlights

The inspiration for two of C.J. Brown’s first Hereford paintings came from a neighbor and close family friend Jim Milligan, a longtime Hereford breeder from Rochelle, Ill.

“Herefords at White Rock” and “Peaceful Pastures” both depict scenes based on the Milligan’s Illinois farm.

“Jim lives just six miles from our farm and has one of the oldest Hereford operations in the country. In this region of Illinois there were Indian wars long ago, and a portion of Jim’s property was once the encampment grounds for Chief Blackhawk,” tells Brown, who likes to revel in the history of the pieces she paints.

Brown is busy at work on several new Hereford paintings that she will showcase at the Junior National Hereford Expo July 4-10 in Indianapolis. One piece will feature the Hereford sire Legend, another will feature a Hereford cow with a Legend-sired calf at her side.

Brown has also created round art prints (15 in. diameter) in the past for other breeds that have been very popular, and she intends to create a round piece featuring a winter Hereford scene. **HW**