

For the People

State Hereford association secretaries share a love for the cattle — and especially for the people of the breed.

by **Christy Couch Lee**

The Hereford breed is about more than the cattle. Without a doubt, it's about the people from coast to coast — whether they represent herds of five or 500 — who are passionate about the industry and the promotion of the breed.

It's not all at a national level — far from it. In fact, the greatest promotion of the breed can happen on a local or state level. And leading the charge are often the state Hereford association secretaries, who devote hours upon

hours to the advancement of the breed and its people.

Three such leaders are Jack Chastain, Texas Hereford Association (THA) secretary/treasurer, Ft. Worth, Texas; Tom Granzow, Kansas Hereford Association (KHA) secretary, Herington, Kan.; and Glenda Rickman, Tennessee Polled Hereford Association (TPHA) secretary/treasurer, Milledgeville, Tenn.

They say their service to their respective organizations has been filled with learning, enrichment

and more good than bad. And each says it's a pleasure to give back to the industry that has given so much to him or her.

Hereford strong

Chastain grew up in the Hereford breed, showing through 4-H and FFA. He and his family now raise Herefords on the land he inherited from his grandparents.

"I like to say I've been passionate about Hereford cattle all of my life," he says.

Chastain earned a degree in animal science and meat science from Texas A&M University and worked as a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meat grader; as a U.S. Army food inspector and as a meat grader in a variety of capacities for many years. And then, he says, he stumbled upon the service position that he would maintain for 40 years and counting — the THA secretary/treasurer role.

The people and the cattle drew Chastain to accept the position, he says.

"I had been in the coolers and loved that part, but I wanted to get into the live animal and people aspects of the industry," he says. "I love working with people — and especially with Hereford people. It's a special breed, and there's something special about

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the people who raise and show Hereford cattle."

Chastain, along with his son, Lee, runs 75 purebred Hereford cows on the land that has been in the family for generations. And, he says, his wife of 37 years, Lyn, has been his partner and companion through it all.

"She's attended many funerals of our members' families," he says. "Lyn was a college professor when we married, and she quit teaching to start our family. Now that the children are grown, she travels extensively with me. She's my chauffeur and right arm, and has been an integral part of the Texas Hereford Association."

And, he says, she has been understanding of the time commitment his position holds.

"When I first started, I traveled practically seven days a week, and it involved some travel on Sundays, too," Chastain says. "But being in the Bible belt, we try to keep that seventh day open for a day of rest and a church service. We have a strong faith. I'm proud to have served in the Army and am a red, white and blue American."

Granzow grew up on the family Hereford ranch in the Flint Hills of Kansas. Upon graduation from Kansas State University in 1976, he began a diverse career in the cattle industry. He's ridden pens at feedyards and worked for local sale barns, and he's managed sales and worked as a meat cutter.

In 1978 he and his wife, Mary, began a registered Hereford herd. Today, they and their son, Tobyn, manage the ranch. They also have a daughter, Toniann Richard, who is the manager and part owner of First Choice Meats Inc. in Herington, Kan. The Granzows market some of their Herefords through that business.

When the opportunity arose for him to serve as the KHA secretary,



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Granzow was enticed by the chance for greater learning.

"I've worked in about every facet of the beef industry," he says. "I applied for the job, and it's been a Godsend. This was one area in which I didn't have a lot of experience, and it was a new challenge. The KHA board of directors had confidence in me. And I should get zero credit for the association being successful — it's all about the members. From the guy with five head to the guy with 500, they want to do things right."

Rickman was born and raised in the Hereford industry, growing

up on the farm that has been in the family since the early 1800s. Married at 16, she and her then-husband, Gene, farmed and raised cattle 12 miles from where she lived as a child.

Together, they raised five children: Jane, Randy, Lisa, Steve and Bobby. Today, she and Steve — along with Steve's son, Alan — continue to raise Herefords on the family farm.

Rickman has always taken an active role in Tennessee and national Hereford service — having served as the Tennessee

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Poll-etts president for several years, participating in the National Organization of Poll-ettes (NOP) and being named the 1982 NOP Poll-etts of the Year, and producing the TPHA newsletter for many years since 1977.

So it was no surprise that she was approached to serve as the TPHA secretary/treasurer when the position opened in the fall of 2004.

Each says his or her association position didn't come without a learning curve. But the growth has been worth it.

Chastain says he's learned a great deal about the publication world in his four decades in the office.

"We've gone from the old common-type, rubber cement layouts to purchasing typesetters to paste onto pasteboards, to computers," he says.

Granzow says he also has obtained knowledge about advertising and publications in his position. And he's always open to feedback from members and the board of directors.



"I don't want to act like I run the show," he says. "One of my sayings is, 'I have the right to have a bad idea.' And I really appreciate when they tell me we're heading down the wrong path, or that an idea is a bad one."

And feedback and input help each to offer tremendous services for his or her memberships.

All in a day's work

Chastain says the responsibilities of his position are many. He often provides consultation on marketing, merchandising, breeding decisions, advertising and even nutrition of members' herds.

And he has been able to use his lifelong love of photography in a variety of ways for the association throughout his tenure.

"I used to take everyone's herd bull photos," he says.

During the Fort Worth Stock Show, THA conducts its annual membership meeting and two sales; each spring they facilitate a dinner and dance fundraising event; and each fall an annual commercial heifer and bull sale are held. In addition, the association has sponsored bus tours to purebred and commercial operations, in the past.

"We attend the livestock shows, conventions and trade shows as a voice for our members," he says.



One of Chastain's duties is to help manage the Cowtown Select sale during the Fort Worth Stock Show each year.

The member directory and publication, along with business card, sale catalog and brochure creation, are also great services the association provides, he says. And Chastain's son, Lee, designed the association website, on which the sale listings are greatly popular, he says.

Chastain believes the main job of the THA is to promote the breed whenever possible.

"At the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association and the annual beef short course events, we feel like we carry the banner for the Hereford breed in Texas," he says.

Granzow says the KHA strives to represent the breed as economically and as widespread as possible across the state of Kansas.

"We try to make it feasible and economically smart as possible," he says. "Together with the Kansas Hereford Women, we collected money from breeders specifically for radio advertising. And breeders donated whatever they were comfortable with. Together, we raised \$7,000 for that purpose this year."

Rather than focusing on one large event, Granzow says, their approach is to spread the effort across many mediums — from feedlot research to radio and publication ads to the breeder directory and association publication.

"We can do a lot of little things to accomplish big things," he says. "I am not going to discount any idea that a breeder gives me. KHA is to be at all levels, promoting the Hereford breed, and getting the Hereford breed in the forefront at all times."

Rickman handles a variety of responsibilities throughout the year, including managing the finances of the association, preparing minutes and financial

reports for four yearly meetings, preparing an association directory every other year and handling many responsibilities of the association's annual sale.

She also collects entries, coordinates the program printing and manages finances for the yearly TPHA open and junior shows, as well as two southeast regionals held in Tennessee since she began in this position.

Association e-mails and mailings also fall into the realm of Rickman's duties.

The responsibilities are many. And the rewards are even greater, all three say.

Joy in the job

Chastain says the relationships he's developed throughout the years have been the greatest benefit of his service.

"The opportunity to go onto the ranches and into their homes and visit — they become practically part of the family," he says. "The relationships you develop with the people are, by far, the most rewarding parts of the business."

Granzow agrees. The people make the position great.

"Easily, the people are the greatest aspect of serving as the KHA secretary," he says. "I do enjoy seeing a lot of cattle and the management situations of the diverse breeding programs. But mostly, it's the people."

He says he has a great amount of respect for the people he serves — especially the ones who don't necessarily see the spotlight.

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for many breeders who have never gotten to the level of, say, a show champion," he says. "There are so many ways to be great in this business — by raising a great cow herd or managing a great feedlot. They have reached their goals, even though they may not be recognized for it or get the public accolades they deserve. Everyone in this association is important to the success of the KHA."

Rickman says the friendships developed have only enhanced her time of service.

"You get to know so many people from across the country

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Granzow (center) says the relationships developed with breeders from across the state of Kansas — and from across the country — are the greatest rewards of his service.

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— many of whom become friends,” she says. “I have friends with whom I have served on the NOP board that I would have never gotten to know, had it not been for the association.”

Their service hasn’t been without a few moments of challenge, though.

Facing the challenges

The greatest challenge he’s faced with the organization, Chastain says, is the move of the cattle industry as a whole to black-hided cattle.

“We feel like we’ve had a good product, but the industry for a time went to the black-hided cattle and looked past our genetics that they’re now rediscovering,” he says. “When bull customers were abandoning us, it presented us with challenges to keeping our membership and breed alive. But we’ve definitely seen a resurgence in the past three to five years.”

The management of consignment sales is the greatest challenge for Granzow, he says.



Rickman has been involved in the Hereford breed for a lifetime, serving in a variety of roles before settling into the TPHA secretary/treasurer position.

“I don’t have it right yet,” he says. “I would like to have a really strong sale for the smaller breeder who doesn’t have a production sale. I haven’t quite been able to turn the key and make that work, yet. But I’m not going to quit.”

Rickman says every experience in her life has brought life lessons. And it’s no different with her service to the Hereford breed.

“I dropped out of high school and earned my GED in 1982, when my fourth child graduated from high school,” she says. “I went on to get an associates degree in agricultural technology and a second degree in business communications. Through the years, I’ve worked with a group of conservation engineers and with a federal program dealing with human services. You learn from all different types of people — from those on welfare to those with master’s and doctorate degrees. And when you learn from them, it makes you want to better yourself.”

These Hereford enthusiasts say the best way to ensure the continued success of your organization is to get involved. And it may be easier than you think.

Do your part

Getting involved in your state organization, as a breeder, helps to ensure the success of the breed, Chastain says.

“There’s the old saying that there’s strength in numbers,” he says. “United, you can get more done than on an individual basis.”

Getting involved is simple, Chastain says.

“Just show up,” he says. “Attend functions. Don’t sit back and wait to be asked. Everyone has something to offer. Unified, we can utilize each others’ strengths and help overcome our weaknesses, too.”

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Granzow says every breeder can and should have input in his or her state association.

“Every breeder is special,” he says. “And the best way to get involved is to do just that — get involved. Give things a try.”

And, he says, integrity is critical, regardless of how a member serves.

“It’s important for any association or any breeder involved,” Granzow says. “Integrity is grassroots. If you’re going to do something — whether it be representing the cattle or breed or yourself — keep striving to make the breed better, and do it with integrity.”

Rickman says getting involved in your Hereford association is important not only for the association but also for yourself.

“You get to know so many people who are willing to share their experiences with you,” she says. “Experience is valuable. We don’t have to do things the way we did 40 years ago, but we can learn from it.”

Across the nation, Hereford enthusiasts are devoting their time in service to their state associations. Yes, the Hereford breed is fortunate to be about the people. **HW**