

Building for the Future

Middleswarth Hereford Ranch lays the groundwork for a bright future.

by Stephanie White

What makes something last for generations? Is it a person's passion and dedication? What about the will to see success both now and in the future? Or, maybe, it is as simple as believing in your well-cultivated brand.

It is hard to pinpoint one variable, especially when you start digging deep into a cattle operation that will be turning 100 years old in the year to come. When an operation dates back to 1916, like the Middleswarth Hereford Ranch, Torrington, Wyo., it is easy to see, however, that the Middleswarths are doing something right.

"I am the fourth generation on our ranch and we will be celebrating 100 years with the "6M" brand in 2016," states Jay Middleswarth. "We started in the registered side of the business in 1942. My granddad, father, and uncle are who really built the registered side of the brand and made it to what it stands today. We are just carrying on the tradition



Ashley and Jessica's grandpa and great uncle Norm (both deceased) with their consignments for the Wyoming Hereford sale in Douglas.



Jay being presented a trophy by the governor and his wife in 1968 after winning the Wyoming State Fair.

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Constant focus

With several generations of experience raising cattle behind him, Jay made it clear that the Middleswarths still focus on the same issues that they were focusing on in 1942. To narrow that down, he said that he found functionality to be at the top of his priority list.

Jay says, “One thing my dad always stressed to me was that the industry is always changing and we have to stay in the middle of the road when it comes to cattle trends. We have to build an animal from the ground up to fit our environment. When you find that animal that works for your ranch, you are finding the most efficient way to run your operation.”

The Middleswarth family realized early on that bringing a recognizable brand to the ranch was essential for promoting their herd. In 1954 Jay’s dad went to Brazil as a student and came back with the name that will separate their operation from all others.

“The Cruzeiro line of Herefords are known for their performance. As ranchers, what we really are is simple. We are grass farmers. We have to yield as much as we can off the grass in our pastures. So what we are always striving for is to get more pounds of beef off of the grass we grow,” says Jay.

The Cruzeiro name, which is the Brazilian word for dollar, turned into a true trademark for the Middleswarth family. This line of registered Hereford cattle has produced amazing stock, one of the most memorable animals that represent the ranch just might be the bull “The Living Legend,” who was the most popular herd bull of his time.

While continuing to stay true to the Hereford breed, the Middleswarth family decided to expand their ranch to try another breed of cattle.

“In the 1980’s we diversified into another breed. After we raised the Herefords and the other breed side-by-side, I was able to see just how much more efficient the Hereford breed was and this still stand (stands) true today,” says Jay. “Our farm has been productive enough, even through times of drought,



Jay and Marsha receiving their 50-year medal at the American Hereford Association Annual Meeting during the American Royal.

that we could continue to supply enough hay for the herd to keep them going during (times) of bad weather. This is also (a) credit to the Hereford cow. She does well through the good times, but will get through the rough times just as easily.”

Adapting for the future

When it comes to facing diversity in the ever-changing world of cattle ranching, Jay says the Hereford breed is one that has faced obstacles in the past and will continue to face them with stride in the future.

“It is all about adapting to the current trends. One of my purposes in life is to continue the operation for the next generation. We want to help our next group of ranchers with raising Herefords anyway we can,” says Jay. “I do not think there will be a time where I will never not have a Hereford cow around. For as long as I am alive, it is my plan. This is how passionate I am about these cows.”

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Ashley with her family the year she retired from the NJHA board and received her golden bull award, Louisville, Ky., 2006.

Jay shares that looking into where the market is heading keeps them current and productive.

“A part of the business that I always like to make a note of is that I listen to what the packers have to say when it comes to how we breed our cattle. I try very hard to work my operation that way, because what is in the feedlot is the ultimate product,” Jay says.

Jay and his wife, Marsha, have raised two daughters on their Wyoming ranch. Each daughter has a clear passion for the industry and the future that it holds for them.

For the youngest daughter, Jessica, where she was raised is not taking precedence over her passion for the breed. She just recently finished her freshman year in college at Butler Community College in El Dorado, Kansas. She is going to school on a scholarship for livestock judging and is studying animal science and agricultural marketing.

“I am hoping these next three years of school will lead me toward what I want to do. I would love to someday own my own operation and stay in the Hereford breed. I am just not sure yet where I will end up,” Jessica says.

“As much pride as we have in the junior events and as much as we were involved in the junior programs, it is nice to see our family give back to the Hereford association.”

—Marsha Middleswarth

Jessica was elected to the 2014-15, National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board.

Jessica says, “One of the many reasons I ran for the board was that our breed is so large and there are so many opportunities to see other ranches and operations. I want to see what they do and how they compare to mine.”

Jay and Marsha’s oldest daughter, Ashley, also served on the NJHA board. She works for Oklahoma State University’s Robert M. Kerr Food & Ag

Products Center in Stillwater.

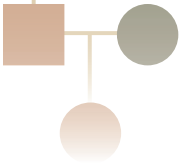
“Growing up in the Hereford business and serving on the NJHA board has been one of the best experiences of my life,” Ashley says. “The education you receive in the cattle industry is daily experience and the people you meet along the way are invaluable. There are truly no greater people in the world than those in our Hereford family.”

Marsha says that her and Jay’s philosophy when it came to the girls’ participation with the Hereford breed was two-fold.

“The Hereford youth program is, as far as we are concerned, one of the best youth programs that there is in the county. We very much encouraged the girls to get involved in any way they can so they



Jessica exhibiting the grand champion steer at the 2011 Junior National Hereford Expo, Kansas City, Mo.



can give back, as well as continue learning every chance they could,” says Marsha. “As much pride as we have in the junior events and as much as we were involved in the junior programs, it is nice to see our family give back to the Hereford association.”

Passion for the breed

Marsha added that the opportunities the American Hereford Association (AHA) has given her family have been great and are filled with fond memories.

“It was important for us to show the girls that if you receive from this organization you must give back. While doing that, they are also promoting our breed and they must promote the Hereford breed to continue to stay in business. These girls are fifth generation ranchers and the passion for Herefords runs deep. The junior association, and things similar, has given the girls a platform to promote Hereford beef.

I can easily share that both of my girls are extremely passionate about the breed, and what they have gained while being a part of the Hereford Association was beneficial in more ways than one.”

Marsha served on the National Hereford Women board and, at one time, was president of the board. She says that her family feels very strongly about participation within the Association and also in giving personal time back to the Hereford group and helping to promote the breed.

“Herefords, for us, are truly a way of life and what gets us up everyday. We are incredibly fortunate to have this purpose in life.”

—Marsha Middleswarth

Marsha says, “As a wife who walked into the Hereford breed, it has truly been a blessing to get involved in the AHA. I find that this particular group of people is very passionate and that there are still, older generations who want to see the breed continue. We are very encouraged by the next generation coming up and to see their passion is positive. Herefords, for us, are truly a way of life and what gets us up everyday. We are incredibly fortunate to have this purpose in life. Our breed has definitely seen its share of ups and downs, but the people within the breed have really stuck around. We are now seeing an upswing again and with that has come a very passionate next group of breeders.”

Passing a ranch down from one inspiring generation to the next can mean success, but looking toward the future may be just what makes this ranch continue moving forward for another 100 years. **HW**



Jessica exhibiting the reserve champion horned female at the 2011 Junior National Hereford Expo, Kansas City, Mo.