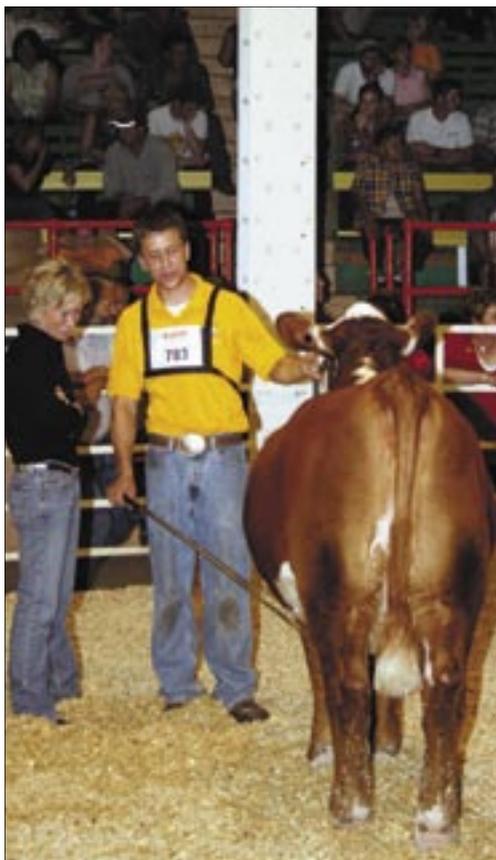


# The Whole Package

*Bradley Seiss combines showing and fitting ability to win senior showmanship.*

by Sara Weller



One of the showmanship judges, Cathy Miller Jones, Elmwood, Ill., asks Bradley Seiss a question during the senior finals.

When you are talking to someone about Bradley Seiss, there is one word that keeps popping up — “humble.” “If I had to pick one word to describe him that impresses myself and my husband the most that I think is such a rare quality is ‘humble,’” says his friend and employer Kim Herman of Star Lake Cattle Ranch, Skiatook, Okla.

Although he definitely has something to brag about, it is hard to get two words from him about his accomplishments. “I don’t want to feel like I am bragging,” Bradley says. “I like to do my own thing and let the cattle do the talking.” He was named champion senior showman at the 2007 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Denver. It was a goal he has been working toward since he started showing when he was 8 years old.

### Self-taught success

Bradley is the 21-year-old son of Dave and Brenda Seiss, Thurmont, Md. His mom showed Herefords and all of his family on his mom’s side are involved with cattle. In fact, his cousin won the senior showmanship at the Angus junior

national show two years ago in the same ring in Denver. Still, he says he had to learn most everything on his own. “I didn’t have much help when I was little,” he says. “I learned it all myself.”

His mom echoes that, saying, “He picked it up by

watching. He really likes to be behind the scenes.”

Herman, who grew up in Maryland and has known Bradley for many years, agrees as well, “Some people may think he has all these people around that help him and that is not true,” she says. “At home he is 100% supported, but he is the one out there doing the work and breaking the cattle.” She describes him as a sponge “always watching and learning and absorbing.”

He did play hockey and baseball as a young child, but since then his focus has been solely on showing cattle. He has come a long way; his first junior national was rough. “I think my heifer got away nearly every time I went in the ring,” he says laughing. After that, though, he worked hard to improve.

Bradley has since helped his younger sister, Katie, who is 16, learn the ropes. He says of the experience, “It was frustrating at times, but she does a good job. I couldn’t do it without her now.”

Bradley says he thinks showing cattle has taught him everything, but definitely responsibility. “It has taught me responsibility because when you go on the road by yourself and there’s nobody there watching you really, it’s your own deal and you make it work and go home,” he says.

He definitely made it work. His dad explains that in 4-H Bradley won the county fair when he was only about 12 years old. He’s also had grand champions at their state fair several times with heifers and steers.



Bradley works hair on his heifer’s leg during the fitting portion of showmanship contest. He says fitting is his favorite part of showing cattle.



## Showmanship focus

It was the showmanship contest that really interested Bradley. When he was 15, his mom mistakenly signed him up for senior showmanship at JNHE. Brenda says, "He placed fifth and showed in senior ever since."

Also since that year he has had his mind set on being first. He says, "Since I was fifth that year, winning it has been a goal of mine."

He has had great success in the team fitting at JNHE as well. Bradley explains that he has won it three times. "I won it, was second, then won it two years in a row," he says. His success in that competition is a testament to his passion for fitting cattle.

There were nearly 100 competitors in senior showmanship at this year's JNHE and the finalists endured three rounds of stiff competition. The top 10 were given a chance to showcase their fitting skills with a 30-minute time period to get their cattle ready before entering the ring.

Bradley says that after making it to the top 10 "it was a relief, because I just wanted to get to the fitting part." He says, by far, fitting is his favorite part. He really felt going into it that this was his year to win. When it was time for placings, they were announced from 10th place up. He says waiting was very nerve wracking. "I had the mindset going into that; I thought it was win it or be mad," he says. "I had the right heifer and everything was right."

As others' names were announced he was very tense the whole way through. "I didn't really get nervous until it was down to the last three or four; then it hit me," he says with a grin. "It was a pretty cool feeling."

Then when they chose reserve champion and he knew he had won, he says, "I went numb. It's a feeling that you really can't explain." He says he thinks it was a pretty good end to his youth career. "It's the kind of thing that everybody wants to win," he says. "At least I always have."

Although he has another year to show at JNHE, he more than likely

won't. In fact, this year the only class he showed in was showmanship. He came, in part, to help Star Lake Cattle Ranch. He has been working for them for about four years. Herman says he is definitely part of their Star Lake family now and says, "My husband and I don't have a son, but if we did, I would like to think our son would be like him."

Herman describes him as the whole package. "At his age, I don't know of another young man who can feed one, clip one, fit one and do it all by himself," she says. "He knows what one should look like, how to breed one, the genetics, and what he wants for what his family raises."

Bradley graduated high school in 2004 and has since been splitting his time between helping Star Lake and helping his dad. His father owns Dave Seiss Construction and also has a large Christmas tree farm with approximately 12,000-15,000 trees in a cut-your-own style operation. Bradley also has about 12 Hereford cows but Dave admits, "I am not too good as far as the cow work goes. It's not my cup of tea, really."

In the future Bradley plans to keep fitting and showing and most likely continue to work for Star Lake and also the construction company. He says, "I may take that over depending on how the cattle deal goes."

Herman says, "I can see him staying with the family business, but I definitely think Herefords will be in his life and his children's lives." Also though, she says he has the rare opportunity to continue working with cattle if he chooses. "Let's be realistic; this is a wonderful hobby, but there's not many

people who can do it for a living. He's got the knowledge and the work sense to do the construction and the Christmas trees but the passion and capability of staying in the Hereford breed and giving it his all and succeeding in the showing."

## Giving thanks

According to Bradley he isn't too sure what his future holds, but he is just enjoying what he's doing now and wants to say thanks to all of those who've helped him along the way. "I want to thank my parents somehow definitely for their support, their help and dealing with me when I am hard-headed and stubborn," he says. He also wants to thank his sister for "dealing with me," and says, "we take care of each other."

And finally, Bradley says he wants to give credit to Star Lake staff. "They have helped me in every way with cattle in general," he says. "Those guys are just amazing, what you can learn from them. They are basically my family away from home."

Herman is not surprised Bradley wants to thank others. She explains how much he enjoys giving the credit to others. "They have won at their state show or the state fair and he'll

have different people helping the family and he'll ask them to go get in the picture. He wants them to hold the animal. He doesn't want the recognition." She continues, "He is so appreciative and always recognizing others and he's not one to take the pat on the back. He is a remarkable young man that works very hard for what he has. I am proud to call him a friend." **HW**

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— *Kim Herman,*  
*Star Lake Cattle Ranch*

