

Hereford Connections Span Generations

Justin Moser wins Poll-ette heifer donated by the McKown family in honor of Luther Munsinger.

by Sara Weller



Justin Moser was announced as the Poll-ette heifer winner during JNHE opening ceremonies. Pictured (l to r) are: Amber Schmidt, National Polled Hereford Queen; Justin Moser; and Starr Whaley, National Organization of Poll-ettes chairman.

The Hereford industry is a small world as was proved with the annual Poll-ette Heifer Award Program at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) when Justin Moser, Westmoreland, Kan., was drawn as the winner of a heifer donated in memory of Iowa Hereford breeder Luther Munsinger. Justin's father, Dan, knew Luther and once visited his farm — MM Herefords.

This is the third year for the heifer drawing at JNHE, but this time it was a little different.

Instead of having a heifer at the show to give to the winner, McKown Polled Herefords gave Justin the opportunity to come to its farm in Atlanta, Ill., and pick a heifer from its spring calf crop. Actually the change was the result of a misunderstanding.

Successful misunderstanding

Rick McKown first heard of the Poll-ette heifer program at the JNHE in Wisconsin, when his granddaughter's name was drawn to win the heifer, but she was in the barn and couldn't get to the arena in time to claim the heifer. Then, last January Rick attended the Poll-ette meeting during the National Western Stock Show in Denver with his wife, Sharon, where the heifer program was discussed. "They were talking about the heifer program and it just kind of made me think of Luther because he had helped our kids so much," Rick says.

So the McKowns decided to donate, but there was a slight mix up because the Poll-ettes thought the McKowns were bringing the heifer to the 2007 Denver JNHE but the McKowns thought they were contributing the next year in Kansas City, Mo. When the misunderstanding was realized the

McKowns went ahead and gave a heifer for this year, but decided to send pictures and then allow the winner to come to the farm and pick her out.

In actuality, the process worked out well according to National Organization of

Poll-ettes (NOP) Chairman Starr Whaley, because this way Justin will be able to meet the McKowns and see their cattle, and he will have the experience of picking a heifer.

Passing it on

McKown Polled Herefords includes about 35 registered cows and the majority of their bloodlines trace back to Munsinger's cattle. Luther Munsinger helped their youngest son when he was showing, Rick says. He also helped the McKowns' grandkids.

Luther's wife, Jean Munsinger, says their families were close friends. "We've shared a lot of times together at cattle shows and all over," Jean says. "Rick has bought a lot of cattle from us in years past and Rick and Luther worked together and talked a lot about their programs. They are just very good friends of ours."

Jean adds that cattle were the main part of Luther's life. "He enjoyed it so much and he made many friends all over the United States at cattle sales," she says. "We are farmers too, but that was the main thing in his life."

Rick called Jean to tell her they had decided to donate the heifer in honor of Luther. Jean says, "It's very rewarding and gratifying that Rick thought enough of Luther to do this. He would have been very proud and pleased."

Rick says, "Luther had great cattle. We had national champion female in 1994 with one of Luther's heifers. Luther and I had reserve national champion bull in '97." But Rick says the biggest thing about Luther was the type of person he was. "I just thought as much emphasis as Luther put on the youth it would be a good thing that he would like," Rick says.

Jean explains that she and Luther got into the business because of their children. She says, "He got started with the polled Hereford breed when our kids were in 4-H."

Rick adds, "He helped us so we are trying to pass it on a little bit."

The McKowns passed it on to Justin Moser and his family through the heifer donation. Nine-year-old Justin was with his state delegation in the



Youth winning \$1,000 heifer scholarships (l to r) are: Marty Delaney, Lake Benton, Minn., senior; Amanda Kelly, Fayette, Iowa, intermediate; Tyler Wells, Westley, Calif.; and Haylee Lau, Aurora, Iowa, peewee.

ring at Denver when his name was announced as the winner. He says he was surprised and excited.

His parents, Lisa and Dan, were in the stands watching the opening ceremonies when the winners were drawn for the \$1,000 Poll-ette scholarships and the heifer winner.

“They started drawing for the scholarships and they had them divided into groups and I am thinking there aren’t that many peewees here so he might have a shot at that one,” Dan says. Justin didn’t win a scholarship so when it came time to announce the heifer winner, Dan wasn’t listening too carefully. “I heard ‘Justin’ and I wasn’t sure of the last name but then they said ‘Kansas’ and I knew he was the only Justin from Kansas,” Dan says. “So that was when I jumped up and yelled.”

Meanwhile, Lisa was watching Justin. Dan had given Justin his ticket because he wasn’t sure if they would announce a name or a number. So Justin was staring intently at his ticket when he heard his name, then he started jumping up and down, Lisa says.

“He doesn’t typically react that way; he’s usually very contained,” Lisa says. “So it was especially fun to see his

excitement at hearing his name drawn as the heifer winner.”

The family’s pleasure grew when they realized McKowns had donated the heifer in honor of Luther Munsinger who passed away March 21, 2006.

Small world

Dan grew up involved in the Hereford industry. In fact, while he was in high school and college he worked part-time for Kevin Jensen of Jensen Bros., Courtland, Kan. It was while working for Kevin that he first met Luther Munsinger and Rick McKown. It is that connection that makes this donation all the more special to the Moser family. “I can remember going to the Illinois State Fair and showing McKown’s cattle,” Dan says.

Dan also had the opportunity to visit Luther Munsinger’s operation in Coin, Iowa. “When I was in high school, Kevin had me help clip bulls at Munsinger’s so I was fortunate to meet Luther and see his cows,” Dan says.

Dan continues, “It meant a lot to me that the McKown family made the donation in memory of Luther because he really was a good man and somebody I thought a lot of.”

A good one

The Mosers say they are looking forward to traveling to McKown’s to pick out a heifer. Rick says they are planning to come after the calves are weaned in October. Justin already knows what kind of heifer he is looking for — “a good one.” He has been showing Herefords for two years. Although this was his first JNHE, he has shown at the county fair, spring shows and his state Hereford show. At JNHE he showed two heifers in the owned division and participated in the mentor program, peewee speech, photo and judging contests, and the grill-off.

Justin would like to win a belt buckle and raise his own cattle to show. That is his plan for this heifer after he shows her at JNHE next year. “Then she’ll have some calves that Ryan and I can show,” he says. Justin is speaking of his younger brother Ryan, 6; he also has a 2-year-old sister, Allison.

A junior with a plan like Justin’s is what the McKown family was hoping for when they decided to donate a heifer to the program. “My wife and I feel that the future of the breed is, of course, the youth,” Rick says. “We raise nice cattle, but more importantly we try to raise good people.” **HW**