

Tradition

Eva Hammon continues the legacy started by her father and uncle nearly 95 years ago.

by **Angie Stump Denton**



Eva Hammon is a polled Hereford promoter. Through the years she has been recognized for her efforts promoting the breed and for her success as a Hereford breeder. In 2006 she was named third place Poll-ette of the Year, and in 2009 the National Hereford Show in Ft. Worth was dedicated in her honor.

averaging 411 head per year for 20 years. In 1947 the ranch recorded more than 600 polled Herefords, and during that fiscal year for the American Polled Hereford Association (APHA), only 19 of the 48 states registered more cattle than the Johnson Bros.' herd did itself.

Eva explains that her dad was the ranch manager and Lewis was the office manager. During the depression, the brothers were instrumental in helping the APHA stay afloat. Instead of following their contemporaries and registering fewer calves, they registered more. Eva boasts her uncle wrote a letter to all APHA members and encouraged them to pay their membership dues and continue to register cattle to help the APHA survive the depression.

Lewis was a member of APHA board of directors, serving as chairman from 1936-37. Bill was a director of the Texas Polled Hereford Association for many years. For their dedication to the polled Hereford industry, the brothers were inducted into the APHA Hall of Fame in 1978.

The Johnson Bros. partnership was dissolved in 1949, after which Lewis' half was sold to J.D. Craft and then dispersed at public auction. Bill died in 1949, but the herd continued as the W.R. Johnson Polled Hereford Ranch, under the guidance of Eva's mother, Gladys, and Eva.

Eva and her husband, Blake, lived in the Ft. Worth area for many years. Blake was involved in the oil industry. They had three sons — Bill, Blake III and Bob.



Eva's granddaughters, Keely and Kailey, have started their own Hereford herd.



Dedicated, patient and loving is how granddaughter Keely Hammon describes her grandmother, Eva. "But most of all she loves polled Hereford cattle."

Eva Hammon, Jacksboro, Texas, is passionate about polled Herefords, a love that her dad passed to her and that she has passed to her three sons and grandchildren.

Eva's father, Bill Johnson, and her uncle, Lewis, owned the world's largest herd of registered polled Herefords for more than 20 years. The brothers, who began with a horned Hereford bull and 30 heifers in 1915, eventually built their herd to more than 1,000 head, running on some 16,000 acres. Their first polled Herefords were added in 1919.

Beginning in 1927, the herd led the world in number of polled Herefords registered annually,

“I enjoy each day being here and working with the cattle. I plan to continue, with the help of my children and grandchildren, keeping the ranch active and working. I can't imagine ever doing anything else.”

In the early 80s, the couple moved back to the ranch, where Eva was raised. “I wanted to come back home and build back a herd of good Hereford cattle. I wanted to continue my father's work,” she says.

All three of her children also live in the Jacksboro area and are involved with the ranch. Son Blake is the ranch manager.

The ranch today

Eva and her family have built the Hammon Ranch to include 100 registered and 100 commercial Hereford cows. They also farm about 700 acres of wheat.

The Hammons have both a spring and a fall calving herd, and they utilize embryo transfer (ET) to propagate top genetics. About half the calves born each year are ET calves.

“ET is a big part of our breeding program,” Eva explains. “We flush our top cows twice, then rebreed them to have a natural calf. We select donors based on performance numbers and conformation.”

The Hammons market bulls private treaty as yearlings as well as participate in consignment sales. They have participated in the Oklahoma Hereford sale for eight years.

Blake explains that the reason he likes Herefords is their disposition, their good milking qualities and, in his area, their tendency to sell easily. “We can't keep bulls around here; we have a real demand for good Hereford bulls.”

The Hammon family continues to show at state and national shows, a tradition Eva's father and uncle started years ago. “Dad said showing is a form of advertising. You have to be known to be successful in the cattle business;

if we didn't show, we'd only be known locally,” Eva says.

Passing the passion

Eva's grandchildren are also developing a passion for the Hereford breed. Granddaughters, Keely, 16, and Kailey, 12, are members of the Texas Junior Polled Hereford Association and have been Texas Polled Hereford Sweethearts.

“I have been showing Herefords since I was old enough to help with Nana's cow-calf pairs,” Keely says. “I'm proud to be a fourth generation Hereford breeder.”

The girls have started their own Hereford herd. Eva's grandsons, C.J. and Bill, are also starting to take an interest in the ranch and plan to start showing Herefords when they get a little older.

Giving back

Eva does all she can to support youth — locally and beyond. “I think it is important for us to do our part and help youth,” Eva says.

In 2008 Eva donated a heifer to be given to a Hereford youth as part of



Through the years Eva has collected a lot of Hereford memorabilia that she displays in her house and in the ranch office. She proudly points out pictures of famous people from across the country who came to the Johnson Bros. Ranch to purchase and look at cattle.

the National Organization of Poll-ettes scholarship program. Lucky junior Paige Morrison from Gilead, Ohio was the recipient of the generous donation.

Eva also supports school and 4-H fundraising projects as well as hosts judging teams at the ranch.

“I enjoy each day being here and working with the cattle,” Eva says. “I plan to continue, with the help of my children and grandchildren, keeping the ranch active and working. I can't imagine ever doing anything else.”

Keely and Kailey both agree with their Nana, as they hope to keep the Hereford tradition continuing for years to come. **HW**



Eva and her three sons, Bob, Blake III and Bill.