

All Because Two People Fell in Love

A wedding gift 102 years ago began this family's love for the Hereford breed.

by *Christy Couch Lee*

It began with a wedding gift of four Hereford cows and one Hereford bull more than a century ago. And, today, the love for the breed and its people is still as strong as ever.

LeRoy Huff of Huff's Polled Herefords, Rutledge, Mo., was honored as a Century Breeder Oct. 28 at the 2016 American Hereford Association (AHA) Hereford Honoree Reception in Kansas City, Mo. The Century Breeder award recognizes Hereford breeders who have stood the test of time and have been dedicated to raising Herefords for 100 years.

The Huff family has overcome hardships and found strength in their century of Hereford

involvement. And, Huff says, the family looks forward to many more years with the breed and its people.

The wedding gift that changed it all

The Huff herd began in 1915 when LeRoy's grandparents, Orville and Lenora McClamroch, were married and were gifted four Hereford cows and a bull by Orville's parents, Jonathan Longfellow Beal McClamroch and Katherine Bauer McClamroch, who had a Hereford cattle herd of their own.

Since 1915 no other breed has walked onto the original homestead.

Through the years, the McClamrochs built on the original Victor Domino bloodline, retaining

replacement heifers and gradually building their herd.

"During the Great Depression in the 1930s, their biggest fear was that they would have to liquidate the herd to survive," Huff says.

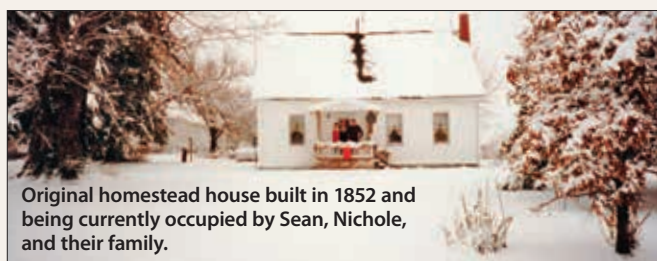
However, the herd and purebred Hereford genetics remained and grew.

"My grandparents taught me integrity, honesty and truthfulness — it was just instilled in me," Huff says. "They were honest, and their word was their bond."

In 1916 LeRoy's mother, Melba, was born. She married Arthur Huff — a Methodist minister — in 1939. One year later, LeRoy was born.

Arthur and Melba established their life and family about 75

Huff's Polled Herefords timeline



1852

Original Huff homestead was established in northeastern Missouri by Josephus Moore and Catherine Callen Moore.

1889

Orville McClamroch was born.

1891

Lenora Callen Russel was born.

1915

Orville and Lenora McClamroch were married and were gifted four Hereford cows and a Hereford bull by Jonathan Longfellow Beal McClamroch and Katherine Bauer McClamroch.

1916

LeRoy's mother, Melba McClamroch, was born.

1939

Arthur and Melba McClamroch Huff were married.

1940

LeRoy Huff was born.

1956

Arthur Huff died and Melba returned to the family homestead with her children, LeRoy and Arlene.

miles from the McClamroch homestead, where Arthur was a Methodist minister. But when Arthur passed away from cancer in 1956, Melba, LeRoy and his sister, Arlene, returned to the McClamroch home, living with LeRoy's grandparents.

LeRoy began showing cattle in 1954, when he was 14.

"That's when I really started developing an interest in the operation," Huff recalls. "My grandfather made sure I always had a heifer to show every year from then on. But that's the type of man he was — he did a lot of things he didn't have to do by taking us in."

The original herd consisted of horned genetics; polled lines from Ernest Clarkson were introduced in 1957.

Upon high school graduation, Huff ventured to Northeast Missouri State University, where he received three degrees within the college of education. Upon graduation, he traveled overseas on a yearlong fellowship and returned to accept a teaching position in Scotland County, Mo.

This job opportunity introduced Huff to his wife, Jane, whom he married after a whirlwind two-month courtship in 1964.



Huff's Polled Herefords, Rutledge, Mo., was honored as Century Hereford Breeder Oct. 28, 2016, in Kansas City, Mo. Pictured (l to r) are Steven and Elizabeth (Huff) Lonergan; Arlene (Huff) Holden; LeRoy and Jane Huff; Jessica, Nichole, Sean and Abigail Huff.

Huff progressed in his educational career, eventually serving as principal and then superintendent of the local school district.

"My grandfather instilled in me: you don't quit," he says. And "quit" he didn't. With the National Association of Elementary School Principals, he spent six weeks in China in 1990, helping to improve secondary education there. In 1989 he had the opportunity to meet President George H.W. Bush. And

now, even in retirement, he works as an educational consultant to the Missouri General Assembly for educational policy in elementary and secondary schools.

The Huffs have two children: Elisabeth and her husband, Steven Lonergan, are professors in the Iowa State University College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Department of Animal Science, where she specializes in meat science and muscle biology.

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Jane and LeRoy Huff at their wedding in 1964.

◀ 1957 ▶

Polled lines from Ernest Clarkson were introduced into the herd.

◀ 1964 ▶

LeRoy and Jane Huff were married.

◀ 1985 ▶

LeRoy and Jane began their five-year term as Missouri Junior Polled Hereford Association advisors.



Elisabeth, Missouri Polled Hereford Queen, and LeRoy at Missouri Cattleman's Association awards presentation.

◀ 2015 ▶

Huff's Polled Herefords were recognized by the Missouri General Assembly for 100 years in the Hereford breed.

◀ 2016 ▶

◀ 1986 ▶

Elisabeth served as the Missouri Polled Hereford Queen and was first-runner-up in the National Polled Hereford Queen competition

Huff's Polled Herefords was honored as Century Hereford Breeders at the 2016 American Hereford Association Hereford Honoree Reception in Kansas City, Mo..



The Huff family was recognized as a Missouri Century Farm by the University of Missouri.

Their son, Sean, his wife, Nichole, and their three children — Jessica, 18; Abbie, 15; and Caden, 10 — reside in the original family home. Sean helps manage the cattle operation and works as a computer analyst and programmer for a major farm dealership.

Elisabeth and Sean were both active in Hereford activities as youth — both showing at junior

national events and state fairs from the ages of 11 and 9. In 1986 Elisabeth served as the Missouri Polled Hereford Queen and was first-runner-up in the National Polled Hereford Queen competition, as well.

Today, Huff's Polled Herefords consists of about 100 mother cows. The Huffs market bulls, breeding heifers and cow-calf pairs locally

and have incorporated artificial insemination (AI) and genetic testing as they've progressed through the years.

"Often, by the end of March, we are out of bulls because of our reputation and repeat buyers," Huff says. "We try to produce a quality product and depend on that quality product to sell itself. And I believe it does. It's not been hard to sell them, because there are many buyers who are in the market for Hereford bulls to put onto black cows for black baldie calves."

Giving back to the youth

For five years in the mid-1980s, the Huffs served as Missouri Junior Polled Hereford Association advisors.

"We were talked into doing it for one year," Huff recalls with a laugh. "After five years, we said someone else was going to do it."

All joking aside, Huff says his involvement with the youth of the industry has been a highlight of their Hereford involvement.

"Meeting so many great people was a highlight of our involvement as junior advisors," he says.

"Looking back, how'd we had the time to do that? I don't have a clue. But we love working with kids — we wouldn't have worked in education for 40 years if we didn't.

"Getting to work with those kids and watch them grow and



Since 1915 no other cattle breed but Hereford has walked onto the original homestead at Huff's Polled Herefords.

expand — to see them mature and make mistakes and not be here to condemn them, but to help them grow. Those teaching moments are some of the greatest moments I look back on,” Huff continues. “As adults, we all have teaching moments. We can take advantage of them and grow from them. It’s all about the kids, and taking the opportunities to mold and shape them — to help them understand we pick up the pieces and move on.”

As a junior advisor, and as a show parent, Huff says he tried to teach youth about the lessons and benefits of showing beyond the showing.

“I told my own children and the youth of the Missouri Junior Hereford Association, ‘Winning isn’t everything,’” Huff says. “I said, ‘If you are showing just to win, you’re in it for the wrong reasons, and it may not ever happen. The families you meet, the experiences you have. Those are the real benefits. Winning is certainly an added benefit — but it’s not the end all, be all.’”

A look to the future

In 2015 the Missouri General Assembly speaker of the house recognized Huff’s Polled Herefords for 100 years with Hereford cattle.

Huff says his family’s century-long involvement in the Hereford industry can be attributed to his family’s stick-with-it mentality.

“We have passion and love for the breed,” he says. “And we also believe that when you start something, you stick with it and improve it. You also have to enjoy it. You wouldn’t stay in this breed for 100 years if it hadn’t been engrained to love the lifestyle that comes with it. We have a passion and love the hard work that comes with trying to improve the breed with quality breeding stock.”

As for the future of Huff’s Polled Herefords? Huff says he hopes his grandchildren will see the value of continuing the operation into future generations.

“You can’t force someone to like something,” he says. “You can encourage them, and hope it



In honor of the Huff family’s 100-year history raising Hereford cattle, the family received a Missouri General Assembly Resolution commissioned by Missouri Speaker of the House Todd Richardson and presented by state representatives from the 3rd and 4th district Nate Walker and Craig Redmon.

catches. And we are seeing positive signs that it’s working on the next generation. We can only hope when Jane and I are no longer involved, the kids and grandkids will keep it going. We’ve made it 102 years, and we hope we can make it much longer.”

He believes a life in the Hereford breed can teach a family much about values and work ethic.

“It’s a lot of hard work. If you don’t want to work hard, you sure shouldn’t be in the cattle business,” Huff says. “But on the positive: working with cattle can certainly demonstrate what life is all about. We’ve had our fair share of ups and downs. But when you reach the age Jane and I have reached, you can look back over a lifetime and see the good times and the bad. And it’s really exciting to look back

and say, ‘Wow, what a ride.’ Our involvement in the Hereford breed has certainly been great.”

A humble man, Huff doesn’t believe he’s in a position to offer advice to other Hereford breeders.

“We’ve been awed at the opportunities offered to us,” he says. “I believe it would be inappropriate to offer advice to the great people of the Hereford breed. But I can say, we’ve just tried to stay grounded. We’ve tried to support the breed however we could. Being flashy? That’s not what we’ve been about. But I think success can be found in finding your niche, developing it, and seeing where it takes you.”

Yes, this family’s century of involvement began because of two people falling in love. And a love for the breed and its people is what has carried them through the years. **HW**



Caden with his first show heifer.



Abbie and Jessie putting on the final touches before entering the show ring at the Missouri State Fair.