



# Foundation for Today

**Bob and Connie Hermann, Perkins County, S.D.,  
live an American legacy of service and ranching.**

*by Kayla Jennings*

A few pages back in the history book consume minds with iconic moments in time that forever shaped the country as it is today. History reveals the past to better prepare for the future, but history is not confined to yellowed pieces of paper within dated textbooks. No, history is being lived each and every day by ranchers, farmers, servicemen and women, politicians and others.

Undoubtedly, across all the hardships filling those pages, there are mainstay industries that kept this country afloat — and continue to.

Coined the wisest pursuit and the most noble employment by past presidents, agriculture has been one of the foundational industries in this country since its beginning.

Likewise, brave men and women who have served on behalf of the United States of America domestically and abroad are in the same company — noble, wise, and a foundation upon which this country grew. To both pursuits, Americans are forever in debt.

Beneath a silver belly hat and with his wife, kids and grandkids at his side, Bob Hermann, Perkins



Each member of the Hermann family, from the youngest to the oldest, plays a unique and valuable role on the ranch. For Bob and Connie, there is no other way to raise a family than on a ranch.



Northwestern South Dakota can experience challenging seasons for raising cattle, but the values of hard work, perseverance and faith have served the Hermanns well for countless years on the ranch.

County, S.D., combines the essence of both. Bob and Connie are second-generation Hereford breeders, ranching on the same land Bob's father purchased when he came over from Austria. In addition to expanding their operation of red and white cattle across the plains of northwestern South Dakota, Bob served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971.

**Not for trade**

As the story goes, Gus Hermann, Bob's dad, arrived in the country in the 1920s before purchasing the homestead land still in the family today. After a short stretch with Shorthorns, he quickly switched to Herefords, and the Hermanns have not changed since.

"It is just the mothering ability, and the predictability," Bob shares about why they stick with Herefords. "They've just been good to us."

"Another reason we have Hereford cattle is because of their calm disposition," Connie adds. "That's really important, especially when you have family in all different ages."

Bob fondly remembers growing up ranching with his father and cherishes the shared passion they had, which he and Connie shared with their four children: Ryan, Laurie, Jamie and their late oldest son. While the Hermann children are still involved in the ranching business, Ryan, his wife, Tina, and their boys, Walker (6) and Weston (4), work directly with Bob and Connie. While their other two children do not live on the ranch, they are still involved with the family business. Laurie and her husband, Eric, raise cattle nearby, and Jamie and his wife, Julie, work in the public-school system as well as raise a small herd of cattle.

The Hermanns' spring-calving commercial Hereford herd requires all hands on deck,

including grandchildren: Walker, Weston, Riley, Payton, Garrett and Kole. While Connie has a career outside the ranch, she pulls her weight helping with all segments from tractor driving to calving and paperwork.

The herd is primarily bred by artificial insemination, and natural service sires are used to cover the remaining cows. For Bob and Ryan, this system allows them to utilize the highest quality bulls in the business to produce the

*continued on page 58...*



PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL HOTCHKISS, HEREFORD AMERICA

Nothing brings greater joy to Bob than the blessing of community surrounding the Hereford breed both in his own family and in the industry.



A tradition as old as time for the Hermanns — spring branding. Bob could not be more excited to be at the helm of this multi-generational Hereford operation his father founded many years ago.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL HOTCHKISS, HEREFORD AMERICA

Bob and Ryan (r) find great joy in working together each day on the ranch or at a bull sale to propel their family legacy forward in the Hereford business.

best calf crop possible. Bob says they have been fortunate to sell to mostly the same buyers for the last 25 to 30 years in early spring after backgrounding the calves.

Connie applauds her husband and son Ryan for their talent in utilizing their extensive pedigree knowledge, data and phenotypic evaluation to make sound decisions to push their operation further.

“Ryan and Bob spend hours studying the background and the genetics,” Connie describes. “They know the background of Hereford cattle. I mean, it’s their business. They study it and they’re very good at that.”

It was this dedication to data-driven decisions and progressive management techniques which earned Bob, Connie and Ryan the 2014 South Dakota Hereford Association Commercial Producer of the Year. In addition, Bob has served his ranching community through the county weed board, his church council, the hospital board, the Grand River Grazing Association and Dakota Propane.

“It’s Bob’s life,” his wife notes. “That’s who he is. That’s what he knows. And he does it so very well. He is an exceptional rancher, manager, and probably through some of these droughts and some of the things that we’ve been through, we probably would have not survived had it not been for Bob’s wisdom on what to do. He exemplifies what a rancher is, period.”

Like many breeders, raising Hereford cattle is a family affair for the Hermanns, offering much more than a salary. For Bob and Connie, this lifestyle is not one they would trade for the world. Times working shoulder-to-shoulder with each other for a common goal is irreplaceable, and Bob and Connie hope they can pass along those values to their grandchildren.

“The value of hard work, the value of honesty, and the value of integrity,” Connie points toward. “And faith,” Bob adds.

### Service abroad

This spirit of comradery spilled over from Bob’s childhood on the ranch to his time in the service. In fact, as fate would have it, two worlds collided when a fellow Hereford breeder ended up serving at the same time as Bob. They were both drafted into the U.S. Army in 1969 for basic training at Ft. Lewis, Wash., and went on to Vietnam in different units. While Bob’s time serving was only a few years, it certainly accounts for many life experiences he would not have had otherwise.

Bob received the Bronze Star for distinguishing himself by meritorious service in connection with military operations against a hostile force during the period of April 1970 to March 1971, while serving as Clerk Typist, Advisory Team 49, Long Khanh Province, Republics of Vietnam.

Perhaps Bob’s passion for serving his country is best illustrated by a John Stuart Mill quote posted in his company headquarters in Vietnam:

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war, is much worse... A man who has nothing which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares more about than he does about his

personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

As a humble man, Bob says he simply knew serving his country was the right thing to do. Despite much negativity around the war at that time, Bob came home a hero to his rural South Dakota town.

“In rural communities, our servicemen who served in Vietnam were still looked upon with great honor and respect,” Connie recalls. “Here in his home, rural community, he was honored because he served our country.”

Regardless, if it was in the service or is in the pasture today, Bob maintains a strong faith. He and Connie credit their success in the Hereford business, Bob’s safety abroad, and their ability to overcome many challenges in life to their faith in knowing there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Bob says it best, noting there is not a better way to live than in the ranching community with Hereford cattle.

Bob and Connie agree, “War and ranching have blessings and challenges, all designed to refine us as silver is refined, and try us as gold is tried, to hear the words, ‘Well done good and faithful servant.’” **HW**



Bob received the Bronze Star for distinguishing himself by meritorious service.