



Parker Cantrell (center), Collinsville, Okla., was honored as the 2020 Hereford Junior Herdsman of the Year. Presenting the award (l to r) are: 2020 NJHA Chairman Montana Lawrence and National Hereford Queen Melanie Fishel.

Grit and Gratitude

An eagerness to learn and a humble mindset helped pave the way for this herdsman's success.

by **Grace Vehige**

Two straight lines of elite Hereford females stretch across Hale Arena. Junior showmen stare intently at judges Dan Shike, DVM, and Kyle Colyer as they size up the impressive display before them. In the midst

of the heightening anticipation, four young showmen are called to the center of the ring for their own moment of glory. Entering from all sides of the arena are the 2020 Junior Herdsman of the Year candidates



Cantrell reflected, "I always tell myself, 'I may not have the best calf and because of facilities, my calf may not have the best hair, but there's not going to be a single person that has outworked me from sunup to sundown.'"

— Parker Cantrell, Ethan Hopkins, Logan Stumpf and Burk Van Horn.

In center ring, the 21-year-old son of Steven and Michelle Cantrell of Collinsville, Okla., humbly shook hands with the other finalists as he received the title of Junior Herdsman. Recalling previous herdsman honorees, Cantrell recognizes Oklahoma's Cameron Curry as one of his idols in the livestock industry. Extraordinarily enough, Curry was named the 2013 Junior Herdsman in Kansas City, Mo. Seven years later, Cantrell considers himself blessed to be recognized in the same arena as his mentor.

"It was a big deal for me to be named Herdsman because I remember how the whole state felt whenever Cameron had won it," Cantrell describes. "Now, I'm realizing I've done it. I did it here, and it kind of made everything a little emotional and made me look back upon where I started."

Bucket stacking 101

Cantrell is a second-generation Hereford producer at C3 Cattle & Agriservices. His father, Steven, showed Herefords in high school and passed that interest down to Cantrell at a young age. Thanks to the folks at Star Lake Ranch, he found his calling and stuck with it.

"We started as humbly as we could, and I was hooked after my first show," Cantrell says. "I was upset I didn't win because I always loved winning, but it lit that passion and lit that fire in me to really work on it."

Cantrell's first Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in 2008 — fittingly in Kansas City — was also his first out-of-state cattle experience.

"It really made me realize this was my home. This was where I belong," says the retiring president of the Junior Hereford Association of Oklahoma (JHAO).

Having missed only two JNHEs since then, the Oklahoma native found ample opportunities to establish lifelong friendships with people across the country who have taught him invaluable lessons, including the Stotz family. While helping the Stotzes and GKB Cattle at the 2014 JNHE in Pennsylvania, Cantrell made a mistake stacking buckets by alternating the



Parker Cantrell and his sister, Karstyn, enjoy their time at the 2019 Faces of Leadership conference in Lincoln, Neb.

handles rather than aligning them to one side. Though it seemed a minute issue at the time, a lesson emerged: Never leave any detail out.

Cantrell says his family often jokes, “Bucket Stacking 101 as a 15-year-old is what put [me] where I am today.”

As well, he sharpened his leadership skills, with seven years of experience as either a board member or a regional representative of the JHAO. Sam Eck, longtime advisor of the JHAO, says Cantrell has grown into a great leader.

“I’ve watched Parker go from not knowing how to blow a calf to being one of the best fitters in the barn,” Eck says. “He’s really matured a lot, not to mention all of the things he did for Oklahoma this year. Parker rallied the troops and got everybody pulling in the same direction to make things happen.”

Rome was not built in a day

Starting at a young age, Cantrell dove headfirst into the Hereford breed and all things cattle. As he learned more about cattle feeds and nutrition from Star Lake’s Zeb King, he opened a still-operating feed store, which allowed the young businessman to compete and receive honors as the runner-up in the Ag Sales Entrepreneurship proficiency area at the National FFA Convention.

As a 16th birthday gift, Cantrell became certified in artificial insemination (AI). He continues to help local showmen and producers breed cattle, and when he is not home, he completes AI work at the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Purebred Beef Center.

At home, Cantrell’s personal herd is focused on developing a solid foundation of females that are powerful, sound and clean footed. Always striving for improvement, the newly named Junior Herdsman comments, “Rome wasn’t built in a day.

“Our big focus is creating cattle that are functional in the ring, on the range and on the rail,” he adds.

With plans to graduate from OSU this December with a degree in animal science and an industry focus in agribusiness, Cantrell hopes to return to his community to work in the insurance industry.

“I love sales,” he shares. “I love interacting with people and I wanted to have a job that allowed me to be able to stay close to home and still operate my cattle.”

“Come Home to Hereford”

As the 2020 Junior Herdsman reflects on his experiences with the Hereford breed, he reminds himself how far he has come and to never take anything for granted. Growing up in the Hereford breed means more than going to cattle shows — it means creating connections to serve him a lifetime.



Cantrell smiles at the backdrop with his newly awarded Junior Herdsman buckle.

Eck, who has advised Cantrell for 10 years, says, “Parker has grown and matured quite a bit in that time, and you’re not going to find a young man who wanted it more or worked harder with his cattle in the breed.”

As this chapter ends, the retiring National Junior Hereford Association



Cierra (l), Cricket and Claire Collins, along with their friend Cady Pieper (r), gather at the backdrop to celebrate the new Junior Herdsman.

(NJHA) member reflects on all those who have been alongside him throughout his journey.

“I wouldn’t be half of who I am if it weren’t for the hundreds of people that have made an impact on my life, and I wish that I had enough time to thank every single one of them individually,” Cantrell says.

Giving credit to Max Stotz and Todd Herman and their families, as well as Cameron Curry, Cantrell notes these individuals played a role in inspiring him as a young kid trying to learn the ropes. Fast forward to modern day, he continues to be inspired by Hereford producers, this time by the younger generation.

“Nowadays, I always look at the younger members. I see the gleam in their eye, and I see how excited they are to be at the shows,” he says. “Really, the one family I can point out where this applies the most is the Collins family... Whenever I look at those three Collins girls, I see the future of our association and it makes me want to make things the best for them.”

Wrapping up his journey with the NJHA in the same arena where he started, the 2020 JNHE led Cantrell home to his Hereford family in Kansas City.

“I wish I could tell every member, whether they are just going into their first junior nationals or coming up on their last junior nationals in Wisconsin, to enjoy the moment and thank those who get you there,” he advises. “Don’t ever be afraid to thank someone for what they’ve done.” **HW**

2020 Junior Herdsmen Finalists



Logan Stumpf

Illinois

Parents: Gene and Lori Stumpf from Columbia, Ill.

First JNHE: Kansas City, Mo., in 2008

Stumpf enjoys traveling all over the country every summer, meeting new people and seeing show friends he has made along the way. He is grateful for

the experiences and opportunities to show cows at the national level and now likes to look back on his early years to see how far he has come from where he started.

Burk Van Horn

Indiana

Parents: Chuck and Patt Van Horn of Morgantown, Ind.

First JNHE: Denver, Colo. in 2007

Van Horn’s favorite things about the JNHE are the opportunities to see friends whom he cannot always see and competing in showmanship. One of his favorite memories from the JNHE is taking home the grand champion bull title in 2016.



Ethan Hopkins

Tennessee

Parents: Roy and Kim Hopkins from Winchester, Tenn.

First JNHE: Tulsa, Okla. In 2009

The NJHA has helped Hopkins to meet and connect with a group of Hereford breeders who will be friends for a lifetime.



During the JNHE, Hopkins enjoys competing in the bred-and-owned division and seeing the quality of cattle the other junior exhibitors bring. **HW**