

Bagpipes to Boot Shines

Hereford youth share talents outside the showing.

by *Riley Greiten*

Hereford juniors possess a wide array of gumption and talent extending well beyond their cattle endeavors. Consider Haxton Hoffman, Thedford, Neb., and his cousins, Peyton and Libby Pérez, a few states southwest, from Nara Visa, N.M. Haxton has been an ardent



Haxton can be found playing the pipes at various cattle sales throughout the year.

student of the bagpipes for the last four years. The Pérez pair took Peyton's boot shining business national at this year's VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

Bagpipes in the Sand Hills

Haxton is only 12 but his love for the bagpipes has been around from the beginning. His ancestors traveled from Ireland to homestead in Nebraska because it reminded them of Ireland. Bagpipes are associated with Ireland as much as they are with Scotland. So, maybe Haxton's roots have something to do with his instrument of choice.

"Ever since preschool he has had this fetish with the bagpipes," explains Kaycee Hoffman, Haxton's mom.

Haxton was 8 years old when he picked up his first set of bagpipes; it has been an exciting ride since then. Haxton has traveled the nation to showcase his talent since beginning to play the bagpipes four years ago. Unsurprisingly, he frequently gets asked to play at different cattle sales. Although he's been to many different states, he says his favorite place to play has been a cattle sale in New York.

Aside from cattle sales, Haxton has played at funerals, tributes to those who have served their nation, the Charolais Junior National and even on the beach. Haxton has played at 14 events so far. He says his favorite part of playing the pipes is the traveling he gets to do and the new food he gets to try. Haxton's dream is to play the bagpipes in Scotland.

Haxton doesn't know why he decided to start playing the bagpipes, or where he even got the idea, but he's glad that he did.

"I think it's worth it," Haxton says.

His sisters play other instruments, but he's the only one in the family playing bagpipes.

Consistency is key

As might be guessed, bagpipes are not the easiest instrument to learn. Haxton's talent has been honed by many hours of dedicated practice and two different instructors. At a town meeting neighboring Thedford, one of Kaycee's friends heard a "god-awful noise" coming from a back room. It turned out to be an older gentleman trying to learn to play the pipes. The friend connected the man and Haxton to a bagpipes instructor.

John Bergquist, Estes Park, Colo., traveled to Alliance, Neb., every other week to work on hospital equipment. While there, he would host a bagpipes class. Haxton and four adults attended in hopes of learning how to play the pipes.

"It consisted of about four older men and Haxton," Kaycee explains. "He kind of took Haxton under his wing. By the end of this class, because bagpipes are such a hard instrument to learn, it was just the instructor and Haxton."

Living in Thedford and traveling to Alliance was a long trip, but Haxton's love for the bagpipes made the commute worth it.

"We would drive four hours roundtrip, for a \$5, thirty-minute lesson," Kaycee explains. Haxton attended lessons in Alliance twice a month for two and a half years.

Eventually, the instructor knew Haxton was ready for the next step in his bagpiping journey. He recommended Haxton start taking lessons from his instructor, a world-renowned pipes player located in Pennsylvania. Living in Nebraska, the Hoffmans rely on technology for weekly virtual lessons. With a world-renowned instructor, comes a higher level of dedication and practice.

"He has to practice an hour a day, or this instructor doesn't want to mess with him," Kaycee says.

Barn shine

Walking through the barns at the JNHE this year, you would likely see a long line of exhibitors waiting to get their boots shined by Peyton Pérez. He started his boot shining business just eight months ago and is already becoming popular among his peers.

Peyton is a 10-year-old entrepreneur who credits the majority of his boot shining knowledge to YouTube videos. He says the opportunity to meet people and earn a little money encouraged him to start his business.

"I taught myself," Peyton says. "I was thinking of making money at the shows, and I thought it would be a really fun hobby."

Out of all of his JNHE customers one young lady shined in Peyton's mind.

"My best customer would have probably been this little girl. She had really shiny boots that had sparkles all over them; we had a really good talk," Peyton says.



Peyton and Libby found success in the showing, and in their new business venture while at the JNHE.

Family and future

Peyton's sister, Libby, assists him in his boot shining venture. When Peyton mentioned the idea, Libby aided in buying the supplies.

"My sister bought the boot shining kit for me for Christmas," Peyton says. His busy week at the JNHE meant restocking supplies soon.

Libby helps with more than supplies, though. She has been his biggest marketing advocate. Peyton explains his sister helped come up with the idea to make signs to hang throughout the barn. These signs helped build their clientele.

"She and my other six cousins helped advertise by walking through the barn, stirring up business," Peyton explains.

Although the JNHE was the launch of his business, it will not be the only time you see him shining boots in a cattle barn. Peyton wants to take his business across the country to other livestock shows he attends. He says you can expect to see his business in Colorado, Oklahoma and Kansas in the near future. **HW**