

Vukonich

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cessful for us that we have continued to buy Canadian blood lines from Courtney Herefords and Line-1 from Fort Keogh as well as Ron Baker. Over the last couple years dad has begun selling club calves to showers in Nebraska and the Midwest, and one as part of the Make-A-Wish Foundation for a terminally ill patient that wanted to show a Hereford as his wish. We also sell replacement heifers to other commercial producers, and our feeders go to a buyer in Nebraska where they out-gain most of the competition.

As I said, nothing good in life comes easy. And growing up on our ranch, as my brother and sister will tell you, was not always easy. But it was a good way to grow up and like most ranch kids; we wouldn't trade it for the world. In a country drowned by Angus you couldn't pay me enough to raise anything but Hereford. I am proud of our cattle the place I call home, and I am extremely proud of my parents. This has not been easy for any of us, but the rewards have been endless. And while I cannot say for sure the birth date of our operation, nor do I know where it will be in the future, I can say that the Pick Ranch is not going anywhere for a while.

Thomas

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working for most anyone who needed a hand. Home for this future Hereford breeder was the small town of phosphate, Montana, just 10 miles east of the where the family ranch is located today.

A little later in life he served in the National Guard and on May 24, 1957, he married his high school sweetheart Shirley Dutton of Dutton Herefords. That same year they began building a purebred Hereford herd which is known today as Thomas Herefords.

In 1959 he and Shirley were blessed with their first child Donna who was soon followed by Bruce and then Terri Jo. As the kids became involved in Hereford events, 4-H, and FFA, so did he. His dedication to the community and area youth could be no better expressed than in the fact that he has served on the Tri-County Fair Board for 41 years and continues to serve.

His involvement in the Hereford Industry has included the Missoula Hereford Association where he became a member in 1964. He exhibited at every "Top Cut" event from then until the last sale in 2001 and was privileged to have many award winning females, bulls and pen bulls. Also, he served on the Board

of Directors for much of that time in many offices including president.

On a state level, he served as a director of the Montana Hereford Association for several terms, some of these including being the chairman of the board. Additionally he and Shirley helped co-sponsor a Montana Jr. Hereford Field Day and hosted a Hereford Tour. Over the years they exhibited cattle at various Montana Shows and Consignment Sales.

The original Thomas Herefords cow herd was developed with the purchase of Lamplighter cows out of Idaho and cows that Shirley had acquired and raised prior to their marriage. For the next 10 to 15 years the genetics of the herd were influenced through bulls purchased from breeders in the Montana area. In the mid-70's they began using artificial insemination. Though it was used minimally then, it paved the way for the decisions made ten years later. Those decisions made artificial insemination and Total Performance Records the tools that have been instrumental in making the Thomas Herefords genetics what they are today.

Today; all replacement females are synchronized and bred in a two to three day window. Approximately 95% of the cows are artificially inseminated on an

annual basis. The ranch's A.I. season is 21 days and is then followed up with ranch-raised bulls in a 60 day breeding season. Much of the semen currently used is from Breed Leading Sires raised at Thomas Herefords (KT Top Secret 1030, KT 122L Online 3074, & KT John Wayne 7167) along with semen from other present and upcoming Horned and Polled breed leaders.

Currently the ranch offers 50 polled and horned bulls annually for sale; through private treaty as well as show heifer prospects, bred heifers, and Hereford club calves selling nation wide. It has been in the last 10 years or so that the genetics (both cattle and grandchildren) of this couple have been seen in the national Hereford spotlight.

Those successes include various Grand, Reserve, and Division Champion Females and Steers at the Jr. National Hereford Expos. The height of the show ring was with Richard's grandson, Kurt receiving Grand Champion Horned Bull at the 2008 National Western Stockshow (KT John Wayne 7167). John Wayne traces back to the very first female that Kurt received from his grandfather.

— Reminder —
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*Picture Taken Of Yearling Heifers
In A Real World Setting*

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