

HALL of FAME 2020

Prominent Industry Leaders Inducted into Canadian Simmental Association Hall of Fame

Ralph Whitfield started his career in pharmacy upon graduating from the University of Manitoba in 1952. Ralph's energy, work ethic, generosity, humility, and sense of humour have no limits. A farm boy whose family lost their Boissevain-area farm in the Depression, Ralph realized a lifelong dream to raise cattle when he bought his first parcel of farm land in 1969 and named it Woodsong to honour the family of Captain Gilbert Wood, one of the first families to settle the Souris area. He bought his first cows – Herefords - from Bob Rose, Bunclody, MB. Later, Bob Gordon as purchasing agent on Ralph's behalf, bought thirty bred half-blood Simmental heifers from Arnold Bros. in South Dakota. Ralph then bought thirty bred half-blood Simmental heifers from Lucien Cancade, Pipestone, MB.

Woodsong's first herdsire was GR Napoleon Image owned with Gordon Bros., Bob and Wayne Gordon. Ralph was then a partner in the purchase of Achilles Golden Jet with All Star Breeders: Gordon Bros., Senkbeil Bros., Bob Duncan, and Bobby Hull.

The first fullblood bull raised on the farm was Woodsong Leader 2K, son of Achilles Golden Jet.

On the advice of Dolphe Henuset, Ralph and son Rod travelled to Switzerland and chose two bulls from the Simmen Valley. The following year, Dolphe and Ralph jointly imported another bull from Switzerland. Later, Woodsong Farms purchased with Mar Mac Farms, Bushwacker and Fisch Pilot.

Ralph purchased 116 bred and open females from Roger River Ranches in the early 90's. This started a new era in the Woodsong breeding program. These females had some Fleckvieh influence and with the purchase of several new herdsires, Woodsong began to show a real presence in the show ring as well as the sales ring.

By 2005, Woodsong was home to one of Canada's larger herds of fullblood Simmentals, breeding over 400 fullblood females and calving approximately 350 (50 fall and 300 Jan./Feb.). A bull sale was held every spring at the farm and for several years a fall female sale was held as well. Ralph enjoyed marketing his sales and the breed with his famous TV and radio ads and descriptive sale titles and catalogues. Woodsong participated in many other sales and sold packages by private treaty locally, across Canada and internationally. Woodsong cattle were sold to destinations in Brazil, Japan, Venezuela, United States and Mexico. Semen was sold to destinations in Australia and England.

Ralph judged cattle shows in Canada, Colombia and Brazil. He was a Director of the Manitoba Simmental Association and served on the board of the Canadian Simmental Association for six years, including as CSA President in 1988-89.

In 1999, Ralph was honoured to be presented with the A.O. (Dolphe) Henuset Memorial Distinguished Service Award by the Manitoba Simmental Association "to persons who have unselfishly given of their time to help establish the Simmental Industry in Manitoba".

On October 22, 2006, after 41 years in the Simmental business, Woodsong held a complete herd dispersal sale at Heartland Livestock Services in Virden. This was a difficult but necessary decision for Ralph, following an encounter between his truck and an unmarked train stopped at an unmarked crossing on a foggy, icy, dark morning in January 2006. In the years following, Ralph and Averill sold the machinery and farmland and adapted to retirement, promoted the heritage of Souris and Glenwood, and enjoyed their home and family. On September 29, 2021, Ralph was inducted into the Canadian Simmental Association Hall of Fame "In Recognition of Dedication and Commitment to Canadian Simmental – 2020". This honour, presented by Ralph's long-time friends and associates Bill Biglieni, Blair McRae and Kim Warburton, continues to bring joy to Ralph and Averill and their family.

Ralph and Averill, sons Rod, and Chris (deceased 2008), daughters Daphne, and Pam – acknowledge with appreciation the friendships forged with so many wonderful people in the Simmental industry over the years:

Herd Managers: Kim and Sheree Warburton and family, Ron and Debbie Robinson, George and Judy Davies and family.

Life-long cattle friends: Bob and Joyce Gordon and family, Wayne and Eleanor Gordon and family, Allan and Margaret McRae and family, Blair and Lois McRae, Bob and Bev Duncan, Dick Thiessen and Sons of Cromer, Dolphe Henuset and family, Larry and Ellen Decock, the Senkbeil family, Rocky Addison, Frank Mapletoft, Lyndon Hutchings and all the friends who worked at Woodsong over the years. Sincere apologies to anyone inadvertently missed. It's been a wonderful ride!

Thank You



September 29, 2021 - Souris, Manitoba
Left to Right: Blair McRae, Bill Biglieni, Ralph Whitfield, Kim Warburton