

# 2011 Historical Master Breeder Award Winner Norman E. Magnussen



Left to right: Nancy and Gary Magnussen (son), Russ Geisy, Historical Society; Norman C. (son) and Traci Magnussen, Leon N. Button, award sponsor.

The 2011 Historical Master Breeder Award Winner was born on December 18, 1910 in Augusta, Wisconsin. His introduction to Brown Swiss was in 1925 when Harold Magnussen, bought his two younger brothers, Norm and Vic, Swiss calves for 4-H projects.

Attending school through his sophomore year, then entered the dairy work force full time. One of his early jobs was going on the show circuit in the Midwest with Fred Wetmore (an early cow photographer) and the Wisconsin Institutional Herd from Waupun, Wisconsin.



How it all began in 1925 . . . at left: Norman E. Magnussen and Louise of Swiss Acres 13453; at right: Victor A. Magnussen and Swiss Valley Merney 18450.

In 1934, he traveled east to New York to work for his brother, Harold, herdsman of the great Walhalla herd, alongside brother, Vic. And thus the Brown Swiss career of Norman E. Magnussen was launched in earnest. Through the next several years editorial comments in the Brown Swiss Bulletin would mention the Magnussen brothers and their behind the scenes work.

Evidence of Norm's early keen eye for cattle was winning Honorable Mention in the 1935 Hoard's Dairyman Judging Contest. (Older brother Harold won it that year.)

About that same the Walhalla herd was put under quarantine due to one of the diseases of that era. Harold urged Norm to seek other employment as he had no idea when the Walhalla herd would be back out on the circuit . . . and he knew they were looking for a herdsman at the recently established Judd's Bridge. On July 12, 1936 Norm became herdsman at Judd's Bridge and thus began his nine years at New Milford, Connecticut. In January of 1936 the first Judd's Bridge ad appeared in the Brown Swiss Bulletin. Norm was herdsman, George DeVoe was herd manager and it was owned by J.B. Metcalfe.



The 1922 Get of Sire - Norman E., Victor, Iver, Harold and father, Carl.

Norm was instrumental in the development of the great Judd's Bridge Herd. Through the years he made several



Colonel Harry and the Ohio breeders syndicate that purchased him for \$23,500 in 1947.

trips back to the midwest to buy a carload of cows to serve as good foundation cows.

His most famous venture west occurred in late 1936 when Norm was sent to Orbec Sherry's in Viroqua, Wisconsin to buy the famous Janes. But as Norm later told the story, "When I got there I thought why buy the daughters when I can buy the dam and breed to get the sons?" And so he came home with Jane of Vernon.

While many great cows and bulls came from Judd's Bridge to herds throughout the country, without question the greatest animal to be bred

at Judd's Bridge was Colonel Harry of J.B. The son of Jane of Vernon and Judd's Bridge Swiss Betty Barn was born in 1940 and became the Judd's Bridge herd sire. Sons were sold across the country spreading the Jane blood. He sold at age 7 in the Judd's Bridge Sale in 1947 for a breed record at that time of \$23,500 to a syndicate. Anyone you talk to that can remember back to those days will tell you of the great influence Colonel Harry had over the Brown Swiss breed's development.

We should mention that in 1937 Norm did take time away from the cows to marry Marion Chrysler who joined him at Judd's Bridge where they started their family. In one of Vid Vye's telegram ads of the day it mentions that Norman doesn't have time to travel much anymore, but does visit local herds with his four year old son Gary in tow.



The December 1949 Bulletin cover shot of Norm reading "The Night Before Christmas" to the family, Wayne, Nancy and Gary.

In 1945 Norm left Judd's Bridge and spent a short time at a Holstein herd in Flint, Michigan. But Norm couldn't stand the dishonesty and ethics of the place and moved on. A reputation for extreme honesty became one of Norm's biggest attributes in his career.

In 1945 an older half brother, RG, told Norm that he knew of a nice farm for sale near Lake Mills. Were he and Marion interested? They needed a partner to make it work and brother Vic was brought into the deal. In December 1945 the farm was purchased and the herd Norvic was established using the combination of the two brother's names. A few year's later when Vic married Marion's sister, they moved to a farm near Johnson Creek with the two brothers continuing to work together making hay, etc and developing the Norvic bloodlines. (Sadly Vic passed away a few years later).



A lineup in the Norvic barn - picture appeared in the December 1958 Norvic Bulletin ad.





Lee's Hill Masterpiece M sold for \$17,600 in the 1956 9th Imperial Sale and was purchased by Office of the Minister of Agriculture, Bogota, Colombia. Consigned by Norvic Farms, Norm is on the left and Vic Magnussen on the right. In the background on the left is Gary Magnussen.



Norvic Loamaster sold in the 1960 Waukesha Spring Sale. Left to right are Marion and Norman C. Magnussen, ?, ?, Les Wallace with Gary Magnussen at the halter. In the box - Norman E. Magnussen and Martin Fromm.



Norvic Lady Loa and her nine daughters.



High seller at the 1968 Norvic Sale was Norvic Sunwise Loa at \$4000. She was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Woods, White Cloud Farms, New Jersey. Left to right are Norman E. Magnussen, Norman C. Magnussen, Jim Armbruster representing Red Brae Farm, contenders; Gary Magnussen, Marion Magnussen, Tom Whittaker, Wayne Magnussen, Nelson McCammon, leadsman. In the box John W. McKitrick, pedigrees, and Martin Fromm, auctioneer.

Their first ad appeared in the March 1947 Bulletin announcing the establishment of Norvic Farm.

As you read through the ads through the years created in Norm's mind and meticulously sketched out and written by Marion to be

submitted to the Bulletin office - the breeding philosophy of Norvic was often reiterated in some form - and exemplified by a headline of an ad . . . "(Norvic Herd) a result of Choice Sires Used on Cows from Great Families."

Colonel Jake DM was their first herd sire. Other noteworthy ones included Lee's Hill Masterpiece M and Norvic Larry's Lilason. (For the younger readers - remember that in this era AI was just coming into popularity and all the great herds had prominent herd sires which built their herds.)

Norvic Colonel Elso was the first Swiss bull to enter the Badger State Coop in Shawano, Wisconsin in 1953. Others followed into A.I. and Norvic bred many proven sires - most famous to us today and still showing up in pedigrees were Norvic Lilason's Beautician and Norvic Telstar.

Strong cow families were developed there. Probably the one most known was Norvic Lady Loa, a twin daughter

of a cow purchased by Norm. It is hard not to be a fan of the breed and have not seen somewhere sometime the great picture of Norvic Lady Loa and her 9 daughters - born before the days of ET work. Her daughter Norvic Sunwise Loa was the top of the Norvic Sale in 1968. (Following this sale son Gary



*The Jane of Vernon National Sale was held on Labor Day the 3rd of September 1945 in Waukesha, Wisconsin. As the story said, Brown Swiss history was written as that day she saw the highest average price for a Brown Swiss Sale (\$1386.44) and she set the record for the highest price Brown Swiss animal, The Laird of Lee's Hill 71151 at \$10,500. This picture includes several noteworthy breeders at that time. Left to right: Orbec Sherry, Viroqua, Wisconsin, breeder of Jane of Vernon; Vernon Hull, manager of Lee's Hill Farm, consignor; Members of the Eastern Stephenson County Breeding Association who purchased the seven month old bull - John Sullivan, Lena; Donald Folgate, Dakota; Perry Keltner, Pearl City; Ray Kaiser, Dakota and Ray Folgate, Dakota. At the halter - Norman E. Magnussen and in the box - Vid Vye and Jean Mack.*

and his wife, Nancy, became co-owners of the herd with Norm and Marion.)

Norvic cattle were exported around the world and sold in sales across the country. One such cow was Norvic Mistress Mirth who sold in the 1957 Imperial Sale, purchased by Jake and Howard Voegeli. She was Grand at the 1966 National Show, and she was also named All American that year.

Starting as a young lad Norm worked many sales and in the 40's assisted Vid Vye, owner of Brown Swiss Sale Service. When Mr. Vye fell ill in early 1947, Norm managed the sales already contracted. Following Mr. Vye's death, Norm took over Brown Swiss Sale Service in

July 1947. That fall he returned to Judd's Bridge to manage their sale. The first Imperial Sale (national sale) was held that fall and continued until his death. The Springtime Show Window Sale was an annual event with Norm and Martin Fromm working together in the box for many, many years.

When gathering info for this story, Norm's honesty and fair practice were "emphasized" by those who knew him and were his "clients". Their comments also included his lifelong endeavour to help young dairyman get started with some good Swiss cows.

Aside from Norvic and Brown Swiss Sale Service, Norm found time to serve the dairy industry. From 1973-1975 he served on the National Brown Swiss Board of Directors and served on the Dairy Shrine Board. He was one of the founders of World Dairy Expo, and you wonder what he would think if he saw the show that it has grown into today.

As with most herds getting started success in the show ring doesn't happen immediately. The herd was exhibited at the Canton Show in 1947, but had no class winners. The next year they had Grand Champion! By the 1950 State Fair great progress had



*The Imperial National Sale in 1953. Norm Magnussen and Martin Fromm are in the box.*





Norm and Marion accepted the Premier Breeder banner at the National Dairy Cattle Congress in 1957.



Floyd Arnold presented the Premier Breeder banner to Marion Magnussen at the 1959 Dairy Cattle Congress, the 1959 National Show. Also pictured is Fred Idtse, Brown Swiss secretary-treasurer and Norman E. Magnussen. (Accidentally in the photo at the far left holding a cow in the background - Darrell Worden.)



In 1966 at the International Livestock Exposition held at the Union Stockyards, Chicago, Illinois, Brown Swiss Secretary-Treasurer Marvin L. Kruse presented the Premier Breeder and Exhibitor banners to Marion and Norman E. Magnussen.



Marvin L. Kruse presented the Dairy Shrine Guest of Honor to Norman E. Magnussen in 1971 at the Dairy Shrine Banquet.

been made with winners at both the canton show and state fair. The late 50's were the Glory Days for Norvic. The herd toured the Midwest taking home hardware from Illinois State Fair, Wisconsin State Fair, the International Show and Dairy Cattle Congress. They were Premier Breeder and Exhibitor at the first World Dairy Expo in 1967. In those days while the National Show was quite often at Dairy Cattle Congress, it did move around. Norvic Farm was Premier Breeder and Exhibitor at the 1957 and 1958 National Shows. And Premier Breeder in 1959 and 1963. In the first year of the All American Contest in 1965, Norvic Farm had one All American and two Reserves. Others followed.

Norm was placed in the Hall of Fame of the Dairy Industry in 1971. That same year he had the prestigious honor of being named Dairy Shrine Guest of Honor.

Norm was in the midst of assembling the lineup for the 1976 Imperial (National) Sale to be held in Madison when he passed away on October 22 from a heart attack. It seemed fitting that Norvic Telstar was one of the two bulls in the sale. Selling for \$17,000 he was purchased by a syndicate and went to Tri-State Breeders Coop.

Norman E. Magnussen was survived by his wife, Marion, who passed away July 2010 and his children, Gary, Nancy, Wayne and Norman C. Magnussen.