

2010 Historical Master Breeder

Vernon C. Hull



Vernon Hull
The Early Years

Vernon showed an early interest in the cattle and as a reward they gave him a heifer calf. He then joined a 4-H club with his calf as his project. In 1920 he was a member of the state 4-H team that went to the National Dairy Show in St. Paul, Minnesota . . . at age 11, the youngest participant in the contest. A very early start to his judging career! The Hull family were exhibiting some Lake View animals at the same show and had Grand Champion with Betty of Lake View.

As things developed at the farm his Uncle Lewis took over the herd and his father concentrated on running the farm. Vernon maintained his interest in the cows, the only one in his generation. As a result, his uncle took him with him when he traveled to Beloit and the National Office, where the young Vernon got to meet Mr. Ira Inman. (From 1916-1924 L.E. Hull served as vice president of the association.) Vernon lost his mother when he was 7 and his father when he was 15 and much of the focus of his life became the cows. In 1926 he showed his first of many national show grand champions. Swiss Valley Girl 7th's College Boy was the Grand Champion Bull. Vernon milked and fed Swiss Valley Girl 10th when she made her national breed record in 1929. (12-4 354d 4x 27,514m 4.0% 1106f). Hull Bros. were named Premier Breeder and Exhibitor at the 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1929 National Shows.

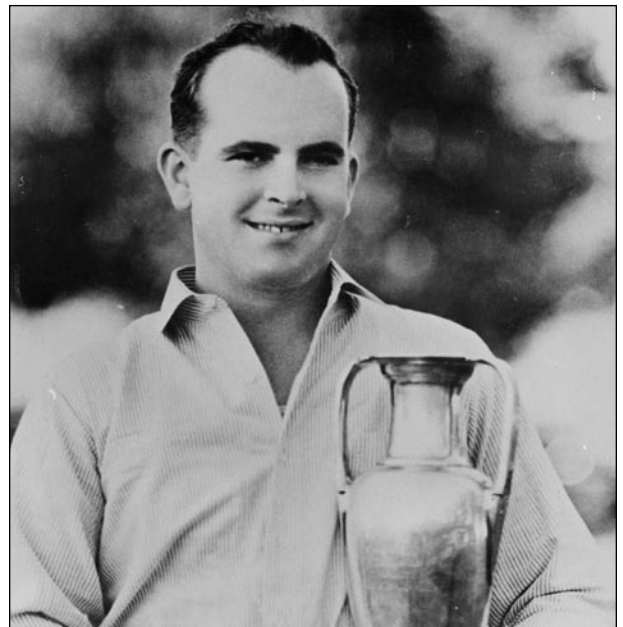
Vernon Hull, an Ohio native, was born in 1909. He passed away in 1992 spending a lifetime with the Brown Swiss Cow. He is the first winner of the Historical Master Breeder Award.

(We'd like to mention that much of the following information was taken from a story Vernon wrote in 1989)

The Hull family's association with Swiss began over 110 years ago. Vernon's father and grandfather had gone to the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and purchased a bull and two females which were the foundation of the Lake View herd. The farm was within easy sight of Lake Erie, near Perry, Ohio, thus the prefix was quite fitting. When his grandfather passed away the ownership went to the Hull Bros., Vernon's father and his brother.



Vernon at the halter of the 1st aged cow and eventual Grand Champion, Royal's Maida of Lee's Hill, at the Eastern States Exposition in 1939.



Vernon with his Klussendorf Trophy in 1941.

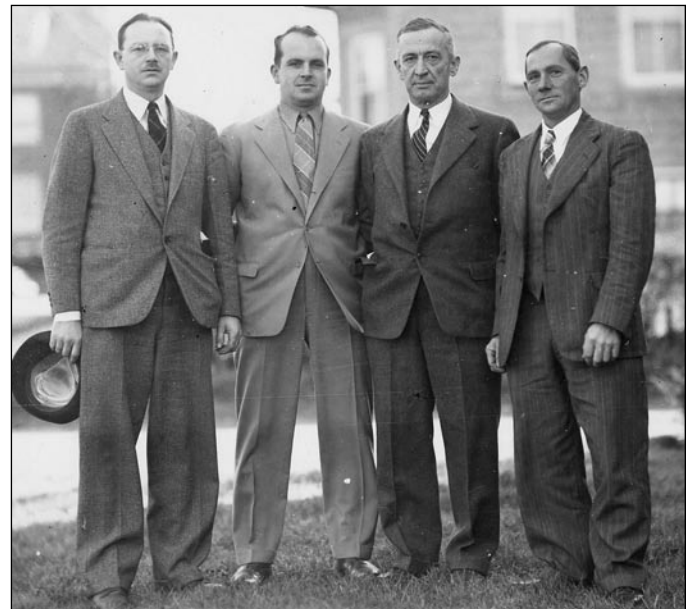


At the National Dairy Show in 1941, held in Memphis, Tennessee, Lee's Hill exhibited the first 5 aged cows. They included two daughters and three granddaughters of Jane of Vernon. Right to left: Jane of Vernon V, Grand Champion; Jane of Vernon II, Reserve Grand Champion (the two daughters); Royal's Violet of Vernon; Jane's Royal's Maida of Lee's Hill and Priscilla's Foxey of Lee's Hill, 3rd, 4th and 5th, respectively. (in the same issue of the Bulletin as the show results, it was announced that Jane of Vernon V had become a new Class Leader for production.)

Following an offer to go work at Walhalla Farms in New York and a trip to Mexico with Mr. J. Frank Zoller, owner of Walhalla, Vernon realized that there was a much larger world for Brown Swiss than Perry, Ohio. In his words "once again Lady Luck smiled at me." In exhibiting the Hull Bros. cattle it fell to him to take them into the show ring. Somehow a man by the name of Paul Misner had noticed and asked him if he would consider showing his favorite cow, Eleanora Della Burk. Vernon agreed to - and she won. This was the beginning of Mr. Misner's influence on the Brown Swiss breed. He was a man who strongly encouraged the development of Brown Swiss as a dairy breed.

About this time things began to get a bit touchy at Hull Bros.

Mr. Misner entered the picture again and recommended Vernon to Mr. Porter Fox, president of the Chicago Farmer's Club and owner of Foxwood Farm located in suburban Chicago. He got the job and went there in late spring of 1936, taking along two or three animals. One was Mary's Nell who in 1936 had become the new breed champion for milk and fat, following Swiss Valley Girl 10th. At that time she was listed as owned by Vernon, but when she won the National Show in 1937 her owner was listed as Foxwood Farm, Wasco, Illinois.

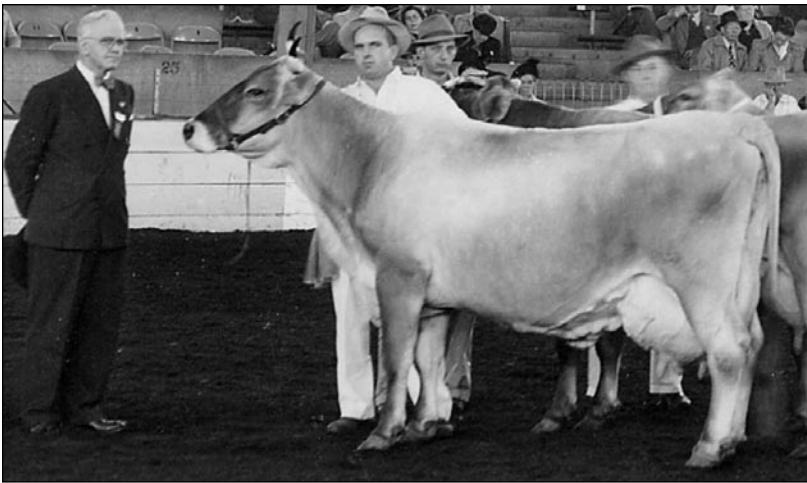


Officers of the New Jersey Brown Swiss Association in 1946. Left to right: Fred Gauntt, secretary and treasurer for ten years (he would later serve as Eastern Brown Swiss fieldman); Vernon C. Hull, president; Paul B. Bennetch, 1st president; and John Hoser, director for ten years.



But it wasn't long until Vernon figured it was not a good fit for him. During his stay at Foxwood Farm, he learned that Jane of Vernon could be purchased from Orbec Sherry. Orbec had told him he would sell her for \$3000. She was such a change from the Swiss of that time that jealously prompted the story that she was part Jersey. (For those not familiar with Jane of Vernon, she was not a big cow, but beautiful conformation with an exceptional udder.) Mr. Fox turned down the opportunity and she was soon sold to Judd's Bridge, much to Vernon's disappointment.

Shortly thereafter, Vernon was asked if he would go to Lee's Hill Farm in New Vernon, New Jersey, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Warren Kinney. Lee's Hill was an old, well estab-



Vernon at the halter of Royal's Innocent of Lee's Hill , 1st in the aged cow class and Grand Champion at Waterloo in 1950. The judge - Joe P. Eves, long-time Brown Swiss supporter and one of the founders of Dairy Shrine.

Before long serious differences came between Mr. Fox and Vernon. He contacted Mr. Kinney to see if the job as manager was still available. Vernon was assured it was. By mid-summer of 1938 Vernon and Marinda had moved to Lee's Hill. To quote Vernon, "It became the beginning of a long and harmonious friendship."

Vernon began to think again about the four daughters of Jane of Vernon and eventually timidly brought up the subject to Mr. Kinney. He asked what they would cost, Vernon contacted Orbec Sherry and found he would take \$10,000 for the four. That was agreeable to Mr. Kinney, but he did not want the price publicized, perhaps Vernon's first indication of Mr. Kinney's retiring personality.



Lee's Hill Keeper's Raven with Vernon at the halter as Warren Kinney accepts from Allen Crissey the Allen Crissey Trophy for highest record cow on the grounds (1397 fat) at the Eastern States Expo in 1955.

lished herd that had been started by Mr. Kinney's father in 1890 as Kinnelon Farm.

For once the cows did not take priority. Vernon was engaged to marry Marinda Allen back in Ohio and that came first. But where did they go on their honeymoon? East of course to visit Lee's Hill Farm. His first impression was, "No way." The cows were mis-managed. Mr Harry Kromelbein, who was retiring, had purchased a son of Jane of Vernon, Jane's Royal of Vernon, but he wasn't being used much. The thought went through his mind that it wouldn't take much to make some improvements, but he and Marinda returned to Illinois to think about it. Those of us looking back now wonder how much Brown Swiss history would have been altered if Vernon had stuck with his first impression.



Vernon helped coordinate the New Jersey state herd at many of the national shows. He is pictured with the "suitcase" at the 1951 New Jersey Annual Meeting, presented as a thank you for his efforts. At left Fred Gauntt and at right Clyde Swendesen, New Jersey Brown Swiss Association president.

Through the years as they began winning Premier Breeder and/or Exhibitor banners, Mr. Kinney always insisted Vernon go to accept them, even when he was at the show.

Vernon was delighted to have the four Janes at Lee's Hill to develop and use as foundation cows. Since there was only one Jane of Vernon, Vernon felt he should concentrate the bloodlines and so there was some close breeding. He later admitted that some would say it was "inbreeding". But it worked at Lee's Hill and as he said, "luck again".

The purchase paid off quickly as Jane of Vernon 5th was Grand Champion at the National Show in 1940, 1941, 1942. (Because of World War II, there were no national shows in 1943, 1944 and 1945.)

1941 was a banner year for Vernon. The first five aged cows were all owned by Lee's Hill and included two daughters and three granddaughters of Jane of Vernon. And Vernon was awarded the Klussendorf Trophy, the first Brown Swiss breeder to receive the honor.

From 1940-1967 Lee's Hill had 18 National Show Grand Champions, most of them homebred. They included Marinda Jane of Lee's Hill (3 time winner), Lee's Hill Ski Lady R (2 time winner), Royal's Rapture of Lee's Hill, Lee's Hill Kestrel M. (2 time winner), Hidden View Sue A, Arbor Rose Mac Ruby, Mable's Tamarind Violet and Lee's Hill Sovereign Bolero, the final champion in 1967. To any of you either old enough to remember or who are history buffs of the breed, these names are all too familiar.

This might be an appropriate time to name a few of those who worked for Lee's Hill Farm with the show string or at the farm. You will recognize them also - Bill Notter (eight summers and weekends during high school and college), Wayne E. Sliker (a boxcar trip with the show herd to Waterloo in 1962) and Willie Olson. Willie, a Wisconsin native, came to



Dignitaries gathered to honor Lee's Hill Keeper's Raven when she became the All Breed's Fat Champion in 1958. (9/9 365d 3x 34,851m 4.5% 1579f). Left to right: Willard Evans, Association president; Dr. J.W. Bartlett, New Jersey State College, Mrs. Warren Kinney, Fred Idtse, Association executive secretary-treasurer; Warren Kinney, Vernon Hull and Carl Stookey, at the halter.



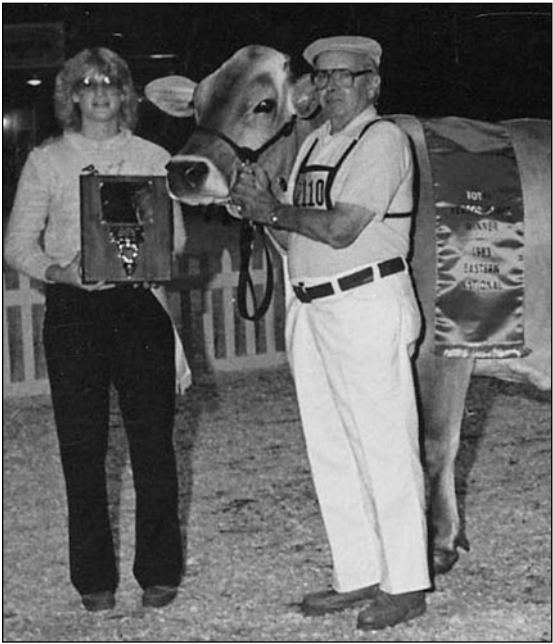
Vernon fulfilling his duties as National President at the 1962 National Annual Meeting. His wife, Marinda, is seated to his right.



Lee's Hill many summers - strictly to work with the show herd. His entire day was spent feeding, milking and grooming the animals - no body clipping in those days, just lots of brushing and cow blankets to get the great coat! He earned \$7.00 a day and room and board.

Premier Breeder and Exhibitor - yes they won those too. The first one was won in 1940 and for 12 consecutive shows, again in 1965

Vernon relaxing at the 1966 New Jersey Canton show with Fred Gauntt and Judge Cuthbert Nairn. The show was held at Wayne and Connie Sliker's farm.



Vernon with Alfalfa Meadows Sueann S at Harrisburg in 1985. Owned by Wayne Sliker, she was one of Vernon's favorites and thus he was at her halter when she won the Total Performance class.

and 1967. They were Premier Exhibitor at two more national shows.

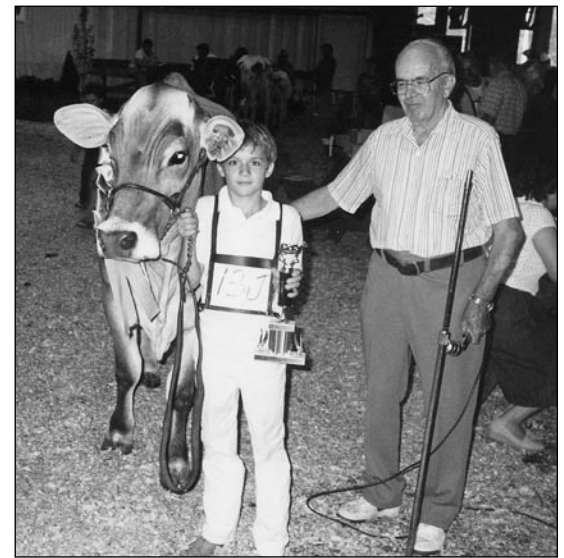
With the help of the Lee's Hill winnings, New Jersey was able to garner several state herd banners at the national shows also.

But Vernon didn't just breed for show winners, there were also Breed Champions for Production, some of them already mentioned as national show champions. Their first one in 1949 and bred

and owned by Lee's Hill was Royal's Rapture of Lee's Hill. She gave up the title to a non-Lee's Hill cow followed by two consecutive Lee's Hill animals. Rapture then regained the title in 1951 and beat her own record in 1953. At 10/0 in 365 days, 3 times a day she had 34,670 pounds milk, 4.2% and 1465 pounds fat. Other familiar names include Lee's Hill Keeper's Raven and Arbor Rose Mac

Ruby. Nine different Lee's Hill cows were breed champions through the years.

The success of Lee's Hill did not come by accident. Vernon's breeding choices of course played a major role. But he also was a hands-on manager, a meticulous man who paid attention to details. His reputation as a show man crossed breed lines and he could be found at the major shows at the halters of Guernsey, Ayrshires or Holsteins



Vernon in 1985.

It was mentioned that Vernon started his judging career at 11 years of age. Through the years he judged many, many shows. They included trips to Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil and most of the Central American countries. He also spent 18 days "classifying" cows in the low lands and high lands of Peru.

Many foreign visitors came to visit Lee's Hill Farm, often staying overnight with Vernon and Marinda and enjoying Marinda's cooking and hospitality.

Very active in the New Jersey Association during his tenure at Lee's Hill, from 1961-1966 Vernon served as president of the National Brown Swiss Association.

In February of 1975 Mr. Warren Kinney passed away. Unbeknown to Vernon he had willed the Lee's Hill herd to Vernon. Due to his own age and the location of the



Vernon and Marinda Hull



Pictured following the award presentation during the Annual Meeting luncheon are Roger Neitzel, Brown Swiss Superintendent of Records and Historical Society committee member, Leon N. Button, award sponsor, Barry and Jon Hull, Vernon's sons, who accepted the award and Russ Geisy, Historical Society committee member.

farm in New Jersey, Vernon made the decision to disperse the herd. On May 24 one of the oldest herds of the breed was no longer with the 81 head averaging \$1628. Over 50% of the herd went to foreign buyers.

The Kinney family asked Vernon and Marinda to stay on the farm, but without Mr. Kinney and the cows it wasn't the same. In the spring of 1976 they moved to Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. But Vernon didn't disappear from the Brown Swiss world. He retained the Lee's Hill prefix and often attended Brown Swiss events, including the Eastern National in Harrisburg.

And he wasn't done showing. Alfalfa Meadows Sueann S, owned by Wayne Sliker, was one of his favorites. In 1985 Vernon was at the halter of Sueann as she won the Total Performance class at Harrisburg. She went on to be named National Total Performance Winner. His friendship with Wayne Sliker continued until his passing with many Sunday afternoons or evenings spent reminiscing about his long life with the Big Brown Cow.

He and Marinda had two sons, Barry and Jon, who did not inherit the "cow" gene and went on to successful careers outside the ag industry.

Vernon passed away on October 14, 1992.



A trademark picture of Lee's Hill, New Vernon, New Jersey.