

## Extension Oral History Project – Dean Frischknecht - Part 3

Date: February 9, 2008

Place: Dean's office on the OSU Campus

Time: 26:06 minutes

Interviewer: Elizabeth Uhlig, Oral Historian

Transcriber: Sue Bowman

EU: This is part 3 of the interview with Dean Frischknecht.

**[00:05]**

Dean, do you want to now, talk a little bit about the beef improvement that you did. Talk about some of the projects you worked on and maybe if you tell us exactly what you mean by "beef improvement."

DF: All right. I'll be glad to. Beef cattle, was a major livestock source of income in Oregon; beef cattle are the largest livestock industry we have in Oregon. And beef cattle improvement was already going on when I came. John Landers had been working on it and Harry Lindgren had worked on it and another fellow, Jim Ellings had been working on it. He left Oregon to go to California where he worked in the Extension Service and his work in California was much on beef cattle improvement.

But what it amounted to, back then was getting the calves weighed at weaning time and although several people in Oregon were having their calves weighed at weaning time, there needed to be one program for the state where calf weights were adjusted to 205 days. Now this was a national program. Calf weights were adjusted to 205 days which was the average time of weaning and cows were rated on the basis of the calves they produced. This is basic beef cattle improvement but then we wanted to start getting the carcasses of market animals figured into the equation in the beef cattle improvement.

We had what we called the “beef exhibit trailer” which was financed through the Oregon Beef Council. This was kept at the car pool here at Oregon State University and we would take it out when we wanted to demonstrate something educational about different carcasses.

About this time, the yield grade system came into existence where cattle carcasses were rated according to how fat they were and the amount of muscling they had in relation to the fatness over the outside of the body. Now, we had some carcass contests at the PI, Pacific International, carcass demonstrations we called them. But run actually through Oregon State University Extension Service. Animals were selected based on the “cutability” we called it, the meatiness of their carcass in relation to the fat in the carcass.

**[3:50]**

Here at Oregon State University we put out publications showing the rib eye area of a carcass and we also had it show the outside fat of this carcass and this gave a fairly good estimate of what we called “cutability.” That is how much lean meat was this carcass going to produce. And we had demonstrations at county fairs, demonstrations at the State Fair and our beef carcass exhibit trailer was very much in demand. This worked out very well for us.

Now, John Landers, one of his responsibilities was to keep track of where the people had asked to have the beef council trailer so they could exhibit and use it. John kept a record of this and helped schedule it. I drove the truck many times out across the state and it was heavily used at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition. But people were beginning to learn that dressing percent was a little higher on an exceedingly fat animal would have a higher dressing percent but that might be extra fat. This beef carcass trailer made it so people could see the size of the amount of lean inside what we called the “rib eye” and also associate that with the outside fat on many animals.

**[6:15]**

EU: Dean’s looking at a notebook to find a picture ... here we go. So, here we have a picture showing the cattle and this is the rib eye?

DF: These are rib eyes from the Pacific International Exposition. And these are USDA models. And here is a yield grade 1 and we can see that there's thin outside fat and this yield grade 2 has a little more outside fat. And here we got down to a yield grade 5 and he's very heavy in the brisket compared to these animals.

EU: We are looking here at diagrams or drawings of the different cattle.

DF: Yes, these are USDA models and the actual rib eyes to represent them, but these are actual Oregon State University pictures. But this is quite a contrast between a yield grade 4 with that outside fat and ...

EU: And this is a publication of the Extension Service.

DF: Now then, I sent a copy of this publication, let's see, it was reprinted soon after it went out because it was in demand and it was Extension Circular 752. It was put out earlier but was reprinted, then, in February of '73 because we ran out of them. If I could read just a minute here, it says, "Identification of breeding stock that will produce the most desirable market animals for all segments of the beef business is a major problem confronting the industry. The fast growing, high gaining well-muscled animal that will yield a quality carcass of the popular weight with a minimum of waste fat trim is desired by the breeder, the feeder, the processor, the retailer and the consumer. Fortunately for producers, the larger framed, heavier muscled kind also make faster and cheaper gains."

EU: Dean is reading this circular, here.

DF: "Cattle differ widely in their lean to fat ratio, even when the same age on the same feed and fed to the same slaughter weight. Degree of marbling largely determines quality grade. Some cattle will marble to choice grade with less than one-half inch of fat covered over the rib, while others may have an inch of outside fat by the time they reach

choice. These differences are largely hereditary which means the lean fat ratio can be improved by selection. This also means that cattle producers should follow their cattle through the packing house in order to see carcass merit.”

“In addition to growth rate and carcass merit, other areas of real economic concern to the cattle industry are fertility of breeding stock. Reproductive and mother ability of cows, skeletal and structural soundness and longevity of production and freedom from inherited defects. We can work on all of these things in our beef cattle improvement program. When judging live cattle, the point of the shoulder is probably the easiest area to feel in order to determine the amount of finish, that is the outside fat, carried by that particular animal. Also, the hip bone and the backbone are the vertebral column are all bones that have only a small amount of connective tissue and skin covering over them. As an animal fattens a layer of fat forms between the connective tissue and the skin layer. So by feeling these areas, it’s possible to feel fat or the lack of it. The ribs, the loin edge, the flank, the elbow, the brisket and the cog are all areas that can be used to determine the amount of finish a beef animal is carrying.”

**[11:30]**

Well, this particular circular, I sent copies of that to a few breeders and then they asked for more copies and said they would be glad to pay for it. One was Farrington R. Carpenter who was going to give a talk at our Beef Day at the Bull Testing Station in Klamath Falls. He said he would like to have 200 reprints to pass out at his own sale. He said, “This is the best illustration he has seen of live animals and their carcass yield grades, choice grades from 1, 2, 3 and 4.” And so Mr. Carpenter said that was actually a help to him in his breeding program and to the buyers of his registered cattle

And he says, “We’ve got to educate these people so that they know what they are looking at.” And he said this was the best publication he had seen up until that time demonstrating what yield grade 1 through 4 was and the amount of back fat associated with the lean of that carcass.

**[13:00]**

So we thought we had a very good publication there, a helpful publication. Still, we've got to have a live calf born, it's got to grow and grow rapidly and we know from experience since then that we can get cattle too big for the amount of feed available on their ranges. So there's a type of cattle, a size, where cows can live on the forage on the range and breed back when they should and have a calf every year. So that's the goal of the cattle producer, is to get a calf every year, and early in the calving season. So he's got to have his cows in good shape at breeding time so that they will be cycling and that they will breed. There are many, many objectives in beef cattle improvement but we've just gone over some of the main things.

So we record this and the breeds are recording this now and as an aside, although we hear a great deal about certified Angus beef now, only about 18 percent, 17 or 18 percent of the black cattle meet the specifications for certified Angus beef. And to be a certified Angus they want at least 50 percent of the breeding to be Angus. The other 50 percent can be Hereford and a lot of it is, or some other breed. But people nowadays are really trying to improve their cattle through breeding and selection. So the more we can help them with selection, and the more good cattle we have on breeding programs, the more we'll see in beef cattle improvement.

**[15:30]**

EU: So it seems a lot of the work you did was educational work and publications?

DF: Yes. And while we're on this, one time at Stone Herefords sale over in the western part of Umatilla County, they were going to have Stones - Stones were primarily a Hereford operation and the American Junior Hereford Association was going to have their annual meeting there at Stone Hereford Ranch. I was asked by the American Hereford Association if I would be responsible for putting on a leadership conference for these young Hereford breeders or whatever breed they had.

But we put out - I asked Vern Atwood, Washington County Extension Agent, to work with me and put out a publication that these junior cattlemen could take with them. And so, I'll just read a very early part of it. It says, "American Junior Hereford Association

Leadership Conference; this was June 25-26, 1975 at Hermiston at Stone Hereford Ranch.” I asked Vern Atwood, Washington County Extension Agent to help me and we have written here a publication that we used. And we gave a copy of this publication to each one of these junior Hereford members that were there, also to all adult breeders, parents and anyone who was there. We had enough copies made.

But just to start with, it says, “The greatest ability in the world is true executive leadership ability. Leadership is the activity of helping others achieve or work toward common goals or purposes. If you want to succeed as a leader of the American Junior Hereford Association, take time to do the job well. Socrates said ‘let him who would move the world first move himself.’ And Thomas Huxley, the great English scientist in talking about what it takes to succeed in life said, ‘The most valuable trait you can acquire, is your unhesitant willingness to one, do the thing you should do, number two, do it when it ought to be done, three, do it whether you like it or not. Preparation is a vital ingredient of leadership, preparation precedes leadership. Professional skill and leadership coupled with intelligent enthusiasm makes for powerful leadership. ‘ “

“Let’s look at a possible list of the American Junior Hereford Association’s most wanted leaders. One, the leader who will plan, prepare and present, two, the leader who is skilled in carrying out an assignment, three, the leader who will delegate authority and responsibility, four, the leader who will follow through, five, the leader who is aware of others.” This was given to all who attended that junior field day and so people were there from all over the United States but we had enough copies of this and it takes up in planning and preparing and presenting.

**[19:50]**

EU: So it seems you were teaching not only about the actual working with cattle and so forth, but also teaching people how to be leaders.

DF: Yes. And I could read a letter or two that came in. This is on American Junior Hereford Association stationary. Here is a letter I would like to read:

“Dear Mr. Frischknecht: I would like to extend my appreciation to you for putting on the leadership conference for our board of directors and also helping out with the all American field day. I know that I benefitted greatly from the conference. Every once in awhile, it’s good to have a refresher course in something you take for granted. An eye opener of what leadership really is. We surely enjoyed our company and your advice on dealing with people. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer. Thank you again, Amy Anderson.” She’s on the board of directors.

I would read another one:

“Dear Mr. Frischknecht, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for assisting with the American Junior Hereford Association at the all American field day. I’m sorry I was unable to attend the entire leadership conference but I assure you the material I received will be put to use quickly. I enjoyed and gained from the morning session and I like your extremely positive optimistic outlook. Your state is beautiful. We drove from Hermiston to Portland Saturday evening and I enjoyed the scenic Cascade Mountains and the Columbia River. The field day was so successful; we are so indebted to the Stone Hereford Ranch. I was very impressed with their productive operation. Thank you for organizing the meat judging contest and assisting in so many areas. I appreciate your kindness.” Well, that was nice, from a girl, Katie Knopp, who was on their board.

**[22:15]**

EU: So, you organized and presented these field days? And these were throughout the state for cattlemen and women?

DF: Yes, we usually had a field day associated with our work going on at Hermiston and had the field day there.

EU: That was an experimental station in Hermiston?

DF: Yes. And we've had huge crowds there. And it served us very well. And we could get many breeders right there close to bring cattle in. And we had the largest progeny testing station in the world there. Now by progeny, we would bring in eight or ten progeny from one herd sire. For example, Stone Herefords right there, usually tested progeny of four of their main herd bulls. These were cattle that went in at weaning time and were fed out and carcassed right there at Hill Meat Company in Umatilla County and they could see what each sire was doing. This was what we called a "progeny testing station."

And received actually, much attention throughout the United States and Canada. This was a well-known station for the programs that were put on there but for the actual cattle that were fed out and carcassed there. And herd sires evaluated on their progeny.

We had a great field day before the sale of bulls at the bull testing station east of Klamath Falls. This was an annual affair and we would have carcasses on display from some of the mates, some of the cattle of the same family, some of the bulls that were being sold or offered for sale. These were great field days.

And of course, here at Oregon State University, we used to have a field day here prior to our beef day activities which was generally held in the spring. The Oregon Cattlemen and Western Oregon Livestock Association would help us out a great deal on the field day programs that was held here and cattlemen like to come here to Oregon State University for a board meeting and also have a noon lunch here. This worked out very well for us but we find now that parking is a problem and it's not going to get better it's going to get to be more of a problem as time goes on.

EU: Let's take a break. This is the end of Part 3.

**[26:06]**