

## *George and Fred Buckham*

“Never take for granted the privilege of showing purebred livestock” was an idea that fueled their passion for raising livestock. The phrase “Breeders of Quality Livestock” was painted on their signs, truck and show box. These were words the Buckham brothers lived by.

They had been raising Shropshires all their lives as their father had done before them. Throughout the forties and into the fifties trends in the showring had turned nearly ideal farm sheep into a small compact breed that had lost touch with the commercial sheep industry. The Shropshires were becoming obsolete and irrelevant to the farm flocks on which its former greatness had been built.

Twin brothers, George and Fred also maintained a herd of 40-50 Angus cows. The cattle business had been through a cycle similar to the sheep and was quicker to realize the need to be larger and more productive. The Angus reached out to the western commercial herds for new genetics to improve their breed. Realizing that a shift in styles was coming they saw that the Suffolks had much more to offer than the Shropshires. A new breed addition was in the fold for Buckham Brothers.

The Buckham brothers had always had strong ties with Michigan State University, from which Fred had graduated. Close friendships with Drs. Henneman and Nelson provided direction and access to the quality breeding stock they demanded.

Early on Fred was the more recognized member of the Buckham brothers, serving two separate terms on the Board of Directors for the NSSA. The first term was during the early sixties, travelling to Chicago for the International where he spent his honeymoon, leaving his bride Barb to fend for herself while he attended to “business”. His second term was more eventful. He helped with the development of the National Jr. Show which was modeled after the National Jr. Angus Show. It was at this time that “The Spider” syndrome arose. Fred was among the first to believe this was a genetic abnormality and that action should be taken to control its spread. Fred was a man of few words. When he spoke, they were words that needed to be said and people listened.

Together on many trips to Sedalia, George and Fred argued over which ram they should buy. Once they each bought a ram unbeknownst to the other.

After Fred’s battle with cancer concluded with his passing in 1986, George stepped into the limelight, best known for his “Story Telling Time”. Much time was spent at shows “researching” for his next article. Some more noteworthy quotes include “Men standing around pooling their ignorance” and while I’m offending people anyway.... Many things were written tongue in cheek, but still to make a point. The other constant through all the articles is that his wife Thelma must be the greatest woman on earth!

After witnessing the decline and fall of the Shropshires and eventual resurrection, George started to express concern over the trends currently presiding over the show ring, expressing the need to moderate if you were going to remain viable to the commercial industry, lest history repeat itself. A quote from one article mentions, “The Reserve Champion Suffolk ram and The Reserve Champion Market Lamb in Louisville were both of the same breeding. The Suffolk business was going wild, sadly we may never see that again.”

Perhaps the greatest achievement breeding Suffolks was the bittersweet moment showing “White House”. Reserve Champion and high selling ram at the Mid-West Sale in 1987, a year after Fred’s death.