

Allan & VeNeal Jenkins & Annette Benson

Suffolk sheep became a big part of Allan and VeNeal Jenkins family in 1936, when Allan developed an interest in breeding and showing. In 1939, he purchased three registered Suffolk ewes at the national ram sale. From this humble beginning, his flock grew to over 300 head. There definitely was family involvement in this endeavor. Both Allan and VeNeal participated in all facets of the Suffolk industry. They were both passionate about the breed, with VeNeal being an enthusiastic partner as possible. (The only time she was upset with the sheep is when they got out and destroyed her flower beds.)

On the county level, Allan was the supervisor of the sheep department at the Cache County Fair for 15 years. He always encouraged the breeders. He was Chairman of the Cache County Wool Pool for 15 years – he belonged to the Wool Growers Association. He help many breeders get started with Suffolks and was a mentor to them.

Allan was assisted in his farm and shepherding by his sons. In the later years, his son, Van, participated in showing and selling the Suffolks, also helping to prepare them to be shown. His daughter Annette's involvement in her younger years was to take care of the "little babies" that needed love and attention. She did not realize at first how emotional she would become with the breed.

In the years prior to and following Allan buying his Suffolks, he would travel with his father, Henry, to farms in the surrounding areas to shear hundreds of sheep. Allan was the recipient of a record highest number of sheep sheared in one day. He continued to shear his own flock and others for many years.

In the late 1960s and early 70s, Allan, together with a dear friend, Lee Jarvis of Spanish Fork, purchased some land in Soda Springs, Idaho, for grazing for their sheep. Many great experiences were shared with the Jarvis family.

Allan was the supervisor of the Golden Spike Livestock show for eight years. In 1950, he was elected Vice President of the Utah Wool Growers. That same year, he received the Utah Purebred Sheep Breeders' "Award of Merit". He went on to receive the award again in 1965, and served as president of the organization.

Over the years, Jenkins Suffolks won many awards and were in demand by producers, eventually becoming the top-selling sheep. In addition to his Suffolk flock, Allan ran an irrigated farm in Newton, Utah area, assisted by Van, who now runs the same farm with two of his own sons. He served as Director of the Farmers Grain Co-operative in Ogden, Utah, and as President of the co-op, which had more than 7,000 members. He was President at the time of his death.

Allan served several years as a Director of the American Suffolk Sheep Society and was elected President, a position he held for several years. Later he was appointed as secretary. The American Suffolk Sheep Society was located in Moscow, Idaho after its organization in 1939. C.W. Hodgson served as the first secretary. When he was unable to serve in the late 1960s it became necessary to find a new location for the Society office. Allan and VeNeal secured an office in Ogden, Utah. They then traveled to Moscow and loaded the contents of the office into a trailer which they managed to get to Ogden, Utah in spite of treacherous weather. For several years they made the 100-plus mile trip to Ogden and back to oversee the business of the office.

In 1969-70, Allan was stricken with cancer. He fought the battle with surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, but was unable to recover. He passed away in July of 1972, and was honored at the annual meeting of the American Suffolk Sheep Society that same year by the directors and membership. At this time, Allan's daughter, Annette Jenkins Benson, was brought in to keep the office going for what she thought was a short term arrangement. At the annual meeting of the American Suffolk Sheep Society in August of 1978, the Board appointed Allan's wife, VeNeal, as secretary. The job was a blessing to VeNeal, who found it gave her purpose to go on after losing her lifetime partner.

VeNeal put the same dedication she had for her personal flock into the Society as a whole. In years prior to becoming secretary, VeNeal had always tried to promote the industry in every possible way. She had been active in the Wool Growers Auxiliary, serving as an officer and Chairwoman of the Make It Yourself with Wool Contest. She was a talented seamstress who could see an item of clothing or design and proceed to produce the article perfectly. She wore many wool ensembles she had designed and sewn to a variety of Suffolk events, and taught clothing construction to young 4-H groups in her area of experience. She was also a talented pianist. An excellent cook, she prepared leg of lamb and promoted the dish to her dinner guests. A devoted wife and mother, as Secretary she always gave her best efforts to the Society. She would always tell the staff that they should autograph their work with excellence. She took a particular interest in young breeders and would go to great lengths to personally answer all letters and requests.

VeNeal was active and attended many events and exposed breeders to her bubbly and delightful personality. During her tenure as Secretary, the Society membership was right around 25,000. She went to great lengths to accommodate the breeders; pushing the service through promptly was a given.

In 1984 office space in Newton became available, an option which was much more cost effective. With a consensus among the Directors, the Society took up residence in Newton. VeNeal continued as secretary through the majority of 1984 until health concerns provided her with a reason to retire. Her daughter, Annette, had been appointed earlier as Assistant Secretary and took over for VeNeal at this time. When VeNeal retired, she was honored in Longmont, Colorado, at the December meeting of the Society. A tribute was given by President Jones and she was presented with a lovely watch and jewelry box. By the time Annette became Secretary, she had around 15 years invested in the office and would go on for another 20 years. She hadn't planned on being there that long, but that's the way it worked out and she has never been sorry.

A few years after moving the office to Newton, the two Suffolk registry offices voted to merge into one organization. The Newton office had not been computerized prior to this event. In order for the records to be merged into a computer program, Annette was responsible for acquiring an office program that would make it possible for the documents to be processed effectively. The office was able to procure what they needed at a low cost and the program began. At the time only one generation was shown on the certificate of registration.

Later on, when it became necessary to merge the National Suffolk Sheep Association records and the American Suffolk Sheep Society records, a very tedious and trying time had arrived: every registration applied for had to have the ewes and rams for three generations researched by the office staff. If any of them were not yet recorded in the new computer program, they had to be registered separately in the database. This could result in 13 additional registrations being required, which was a trying ordeal for some time.

In the success of the 2001 merger, the board voted to close the Missouri office and have one central office in Newton, which resulted in an increased workload for office employees. However, with excellent staff of Pam Hill, Helen Cooley and Marsha Jenkins, registry papers were processed and mailed in a single business day. Directors Andy Asberry, Jim and Jody Heggemeier, Kim Ketcham and a group of volunteers from Newton made sure everything went well. Annette had the assistance of her daughter, Andrea, and other family members in addition to her husband, Mark, who was fantastic support of the office and his wife during all the years. He passed away in 2009.

For a number of years the United Suffolk Sheep Association juniors were an important part of the office, with employee Pam Hill providing fantastic service in a new venture. Chuck Ream had been the director prior, and Andy Asberry and Donna Mays were the team. The Newton office was also charged with printing a new Suffolk News magazine to replace the publication of the past. This was also a difficult assignment. Annette and Pam Hill worked together to provide a magazine that covered a variety of Suffolk-related topics for several years. The magazine was eventually suspended due to declining registrations. Annette was also responsible for looking after the building and the rental, as well as gathering any documents that needed to be in the possession of the association. However, the Newton office had its first priority service to the breeders and all of the staff were dedicated to this goal. The employees strove to always be pleasant and accommodating while maintaining the integrity of the records.

In 2009, Cambridge Who's Who recognized Annette as qualifying for inclusion in their 2009 registry. The following year she was honored as "Professional of the Year" representing excellence in administrative support. Annette has fulfilled many church callings, taught 4-H, served on various committees and community organizations, and has been nominated as "Homemaker of the Year".

Annette, like her father and mother before her, came to love the Suffolk breed and the wonderful breeders she was able to associate with, as well as the friendships and appreciation members and directors expressed to her over the course of her services. She retired in 2010, but will never retire from all that evolved from her work with Suffolk sheep.