

SNELL & ALDEN OLSEN SHEEPMEN

Purpose of this history

My cousin Matthew Olsen contacted me on September 12, 2013 and asked me to provide some details concerning my father, Snell Olsen and his brother J.Alden Olsen, who were in business as partners as Olsen Bros. for most of the middle of the 20th century. The audience is Suffolk Breeders, Current and Future Sheepmen, other interested Agricultural Parties. Larry Pauly President of the Suffolk Association made initial request.

This is solely my view with edits from Snell's children- Scott Olsen, Jedd Olsen, Shawn Olsen and Alden's children - Michael Olsen, David Olsen and our recollection of facts as they occurred and from discussion with our father, his brother and many individuals in the livestock industry; since we spent our youth and early adulthood working daily with them on their farm/ranches from 1958 to 1993. I will cover the following periods.

1. Synopsis Summary for Suffolk Association recognition of Snell and J.Alden Olsen in their 'Hall of Fame' presented at Louisville Livestock Exposition November, 2013.
2. Early childhood roots of their business beginnings of Snell and Alden and told by them, and their brothers, Sterling, Lawrence, Norman, Paul and their sister Reeva.
3. Sustainment during the war years, early family growth and rise of an industry, which they were major players in the market.
4. Growth of their business and the industry they participated in actively.
5. Notable photos with their breeding Rams (Bucks) and Ewes.

Photo's Source

All graphics are noted on the page. They appear and source from which they were derived:

Written Form

- This document is solely the property of the author and is generated from his recollections of life situations as he recalls with edits from siblings as noted.

1. Synopsis and Executive Summary:

- Snell Olsen and J.Alden Olsen were brothers in the Purebred Suffolk, Hampshire, Rambouillet business from 1939 to 1993 in Spanish Fork,

Utah, USA. They were known for large frame meaty animals, Ram characteristics that would bred through to offspring, improved wool qualities through genetics and healthy care.

Integrity, Honesty (guaranteed ewes to bred, Rams fertile) were their hallmarks and teaching up and coming generations of the aspects of good husbandry, proper feeding, marketing, wool fashion trends and solid hard work will lead to success for all active participants.

- Notables:

- Bloodlines: Thousand Peaks, LongEars, Sedalia Peaks, Ole'99
- Sales: Purebred Production Sale-Des Moines, IA (memorial day '71-'82), Breeding Rams-Bakersfield, CA; National Ram Sale-Woods Cross/SLC, UT; Utah Ram Sale, Spanish Fork, UT; Craig Ram Sale, Craig, CO; Eastern Stud Rams & Ewe Sale, Staunton, VA
- Shows: Midwest Stud Ram & Ewe Show-Sedalia, MO, Intl. Livestock Exposition-Chicago, IL; Cow Palace / Golden Gate Expo. Show & Sale-San Francisco, CA
- Multiple private treaty (too numerous)
- Recognized by peers as Utah-Idaho Farmer / Stockmen of Year 1974; First to Syndicate a Breeding Ram for use by multiple Growers
- J.Alden President of American Purebred Suffolk Association
- Local Breeders: Jack Larson, Jim Caras, Lee Jarvis, Mark Bradford, Mark Hanson, Byron Killian, Raleigh Williams all from Spanish Fork
- Breeders out-of-county: Jim Heggimeir-II, Marzuski-II, MSU,MI, J.Warrick-IA, Burroughs-OR, Hogg-Hubbard-OR, Bas Aja-AZ, G&A Thoud-AZ, Ansaldabahere-CA, El-Tajon-CA, Iturria-CA, Larry Mead-Sheepbreeder & Sheepman, Rollie Rosenblum-Actioneer

2. Early beginnings root of their business:

Snell and Alden were two of nine brothers raised in a two-bedroom home, (all the kids were raised with one bathroom) at 7th east and 3rd north in Spanish Fork, Utah, USA. SF as it was called, was then divided into something similar to Burroughs, (smaller but similar to New York

City); there were the Scottish, Danish, English, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic wards. Most houses were built on the corner of a block 2 1/2 acres, thus four homes on each corner had enough land for a home, barn, garden and minimal grazing with some yards. Generally the family purchased land “further out”, on-the-bench, in-the-west-fields, down in -the-river-bottoms for additional grazing, farming production activities and brought the crops/ livestock in during the fall/winter period. They began their lives in the “roaring twenties” and experienced the full wrath of the depression. Their father Joseph Olsen was like most Americans of the time, he worked and toiled and traded whatever to bring in cash to feed the family during very dark economic times. You would never believe the “unknown poverty” a way of life that most of us will never experience. Since everyone was in the same “barrel of pickles”, and the Olsen family had each other and they had their mother, Grandma Myrl, Robertson Olsen Christensen to help lift their spirits, teach them, and play with them, they were never hungry or never afraid of economic conditions. Grandma Myrl’s ancestors came to America from Scotland via New Orleans and were wool buyers. It was destined for them to be in the Sheep business.

Snell and Alden like all the boys helped with the family farm. This meant daily feedings, daily milking, seasonal farming including hoeing beets and peas (cash crops), thrashing grain and stacking loose hay on wagons. Most crops were brought from the east bench to 7th east on horse and wagons at this time. Snell proved his young athletic skills one day in the ‘80’s with friend Garth Hansen in the field, they both stabbed a bale of hay with a fork and hoisted it three layers high on the truck (approx. 11’ in the air), this was a skill learned early on with putting up loose hay, I remember both of them telling the on-site crew, “this is much easier with baled hay”. Alden also told me, “It was quite a pleasure to get rubber wheels on the wagon from the steel wheels. I left my pocket knife on the side of the wagon one day, and it made the 4 mile journey to home without falling off, that never would have happened with steel wheels”. Alden relayed the experience of bringing a loaded wagon off the top of Center Street. He said, “we had to put old railroad ties, tree stumps, whatever we could find to chain under the front of the rear wheels to make it off the top, the foot pedal brake was just not enough when loaded. I have always thought the trips to Strawberry, UT or Wyoming each spring and fall, with 2-ton trucks at first and later in Semi’s, was probably a real amazement to them and no worries when coming off Center Street loaded anymore.

Snell and Alden excelled in raising fat lambs for the stock shows in Nephi, Richfield and Ogden. They also raised breeding sheep for sale to other producers and commercial sheepmen (professional or larger scale producers). They built a reputation of being very good feeders, raising healthy sheep and in short excellent husbandry-men. It is very conceivable that some of their earnings helped the family during the depression.

3. Sustainment through the war years:

During World War II Alden served in the Pacific as part of the Marine Corp and saw heavy action; Lawrence served in Europe as a Infantryman in the Army and saw less action; Norman served in the Merchant Marines delivering goods to the troops and made two voyages from Oakland to Singapore. Since he was the second youngest, it is rumored that he forged

documents or “fibbed” about his age to serve: Sterling served in the scientific part of the Army working in Greenbelt, MD doing lots of research, but mainly finding a source of replacement rubber. Snell was fifteen when WWII started, and was later given a waiver to stay at home and help with the family farm while four other brothers served. Long were the nights and time between letters, and especially Alden’s risky missions kept Snell, if not the entire family, in great humility and respect for a watchful Heavenly Father. Just one story, Alden told me, “we finished the grain in the fall, and pa (grandpa Joe) took it to the mill (by today’s fairgrounds) and I said, it was time for me to enter the service since the crops were up and the other boys could help with the remaining chores and planting next spring. Then I went to basic training and learned how to shoot better, operate in the jungle and carry my needed packs, the other recruits thought it was tough, but after hauling hay and putting up grain, I thought it was quite relaxing, and they feed us three big meals everyday!” It was never told to me however, I cannot help think with all those brothers serving away from home, Snell felt the full burden of helping others, working extremely hard and never quitting, skills he carried through-out his entire life. He also must have held Alden especially in high esteem with the multitude of very dangerous missions that he survived.

Growth was common during the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s.

The business continued to grow as the numbers of sheep in Utah and the Intermountain West continued to grow. Alden told me while delivering rams the story of how he won enough money in poker on the ship home from the war to purchase a pickup and two barns. This became the nexus of their Sheep Production. For many years these two sheds housed the lambing ewes and buck feeding facilities for Olsen Bros. Alden & Snell attended some college, Snell graduated and they fervently began building up production on the bench Shortly thereafter, the Lambing barn, the single turnout barn and the twin turnout barn were constructed to the north to accommodate the increasing herd size. During the summer, the sheep were pastured in Strawberry. The growth of the sheep herd also drove the purchase of the “ranch” in Lonetree Wyoming, where much fun was had on the 4th of July. My memories are more of working with my brothers, uncles & cousins fixing fence, sorting out buck lambs, irrigating in very small ditches and trucking the sheep to and from Lonetree over the three sisters mountain range, early on at low speeds of 10-15 mph, the semi’s with turbocharged diesel engines were wonderful, a full 45 mph over the hill.

Snell and Alden used the 250-acre Boyer piece and the 300+acres further up the canyon (original Ranch) for turning out lambs in the spring. One year early in the fifties a banker from First Security Bank came up to the mouth of the canyon to see how the lambing was going. Since they had been into the bank for a follow-up loan, he was so impressed with the lambing percentages and general health of the ewes and lambs he approved the loan. There was money coming in from sales of bucks, ewes, and wool and more available for land purchase and operating from the bank. Snell and Alden wisely used the money to build the operation without much consideration of repayment. Times and market prices had been good and would remain good for many years.

Early fall breeding used owned and leased farmland; it was plentiful in close proximity to the bench. For early spring turnout with lambs and the building of sheds continued. The West land from the lambing sheds to the railroad tracks was designed as a feeding location and the pellet mill was started in late ’68. Then a wonderful thing occurred for the farm, a disaster for the lumber owners. A train derailed at the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon, just down from the diversion dam, 2-4 carloads of lumber were deposited with many other coal, boxcar and flatbeds. The law was for the railroads, when this occurred, transitioned 1st rights, (at a severely discounted price) to the owner of the land, any commodity in the cars as portion payment for the

damage on the ground. This was a major score of lumber and is the source of the pellet mill, the big hay barn and the cow barn. All had previously been pastures. all they did was dig holes and erect the beams with this new found treasure of lumber. Through all of this building “Uncle Russell” which was really Grandma Myrl’s brother, was the chief architect, Snell, Alden and their families provided the labor to build.

During this thirty-year period, Ogden was a major railhead to the north of Spanish Fork by 70 miles. Much of the trade existed at the rail terminals and stockyards in Ogden. This trip was generally an overnight event, since no freeway existed, only the state highways. Snell must have driven this route hundreds of times to sell or buy sheep and lambs. Additionally, the National Ram Sale was conducted each fall in Woods Cross. Sheepmen from the surrounding areas of Nevada, Arizona, Idaho Colorado Wyoming and some limited buyers/producers from extending states. Snell & Alden had a personal goal to sell sheep in all 50 states. I personally, took a load of Rambouillet ewes (15) and bucks (2) to the airport in Oakland in late 1980, since these were heading to Hawaii, they satisfied their goal. Alden earlier told me of selling a “pickup load of ewes/bucks to Alaska, they sold them priced at Spanish Fork and told the buyer they had to pay to bring to Alaska”, he met the purchasers in Seattle Washington, and they paid extra.

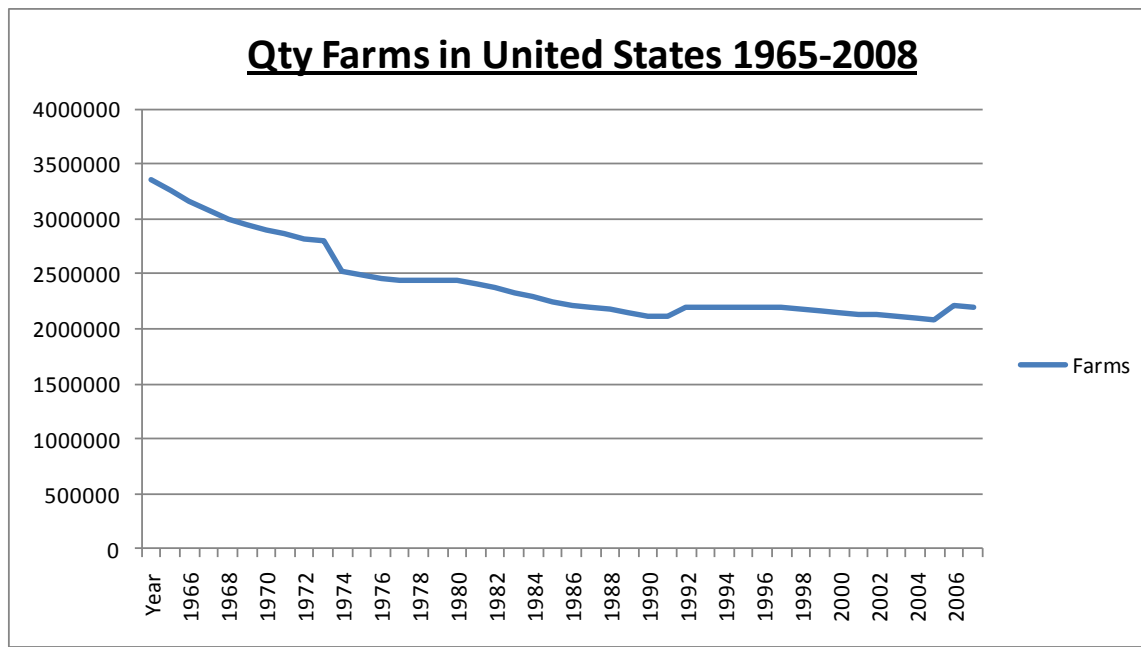
4. Really, Really, Really good times.

Marketing of this herd of sheep was another matter. Long distance deliveries of the bucks required long trips to surrounding states and points East. Snell told me in the 70’s of his earlier trips to Fresno, CA in the train during the 50’s. “We took the sheep from the bench to the train station North of town by Palmyra. Alden or I stayed with the sheep and slept in the train cars for the two to three day trip, feeding and watering the sheep. The remainder of the day was less exciting and usually very cold, it was always a welcome relief to come off the Truckee pass to Sacramento to warm up. We were awfully happy once the interstate was built over the Utah hill in St. George through Las Vegas, no more cold train rides.” Why they didn’t move forward to the passenger cars was probably driven by cost. Once in Fresno the California sheepmen would come to the yard, select their bucks and take them home. The central California market continues to one of the most important breeding buck markets and is enjoyed by many Utah /Idaho producers as developed by Snell, Alden and Burroughs of Oregon. The California breeding market has never grown to support the local commercial needs, mainly to the efforts of very satisfied customers by out-of-state breeding sheep producers. The value of Thousand Peaks and LongEars was the prepotency ability to pass on as many good traits essential to the breed as him. Peak production leveled off at 1600 Suffolk ewes, 400 Rambouillet, 200 Hampshires feed Alfalfa Hay, Beet pulp, Oats and Corn they produced operating the business full time with no other income, a word-Motivated!

Idaho, Colorado and Arizona were also important markets, but none to the high degree of central California. Snell generally stayed at home farming and putting up the crops, Alden generally went out to meet the sheepmen and make the deals. He was known far and wide as “buck” Olsen. The secret to their success was not a secret; it was based in discipline of good husbandry. For decades, they feed the sheep at relatively the same time morning and night, they fed them high quality grains and hay, they constantly sorted the pens to help the bloomers grow faster and the medium ones grow well and vaccinated almost daily if needed. Alden always preached, “Good clean water and good clean air do wonders for raising sheep”. Attention to genetics and

crossbreeding also yielded two famous sires, Thousand Peaks and his son Long Ears (who is buried in front of the pea-vinery). Thousand Peaks was sold partial interest to a ranch in Weber canyon that holds that name, but he resided most months at the farm on the bench. Long Ears sires are still seen today in his trademark “Long Ears” and sired lambs that bred true to the breed, long black ears, long black head, strong boned legs and highly meaty body. His bloodlines can be found in most Suffolk herds and Snell and Alden sold well over a million dollars of breeding stock over a 19-20 year period. These breeding sales were not just for bucks, however that remains the “bread and butter” but expanded to ewes sold at Sedalia Missouri’s-Midwestern Stud Ram and Ewe Sale; Eastern Stud ram&ewe sale in Staunton Virginia, Chicago Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, Golden Spike ram sale in Ogden Utah, Cow Palace /Golden Gate exposition in San Francisco, California, as well as their production ram & ewe sale in DesMoines Iowa, and breeding buck sale in Bakersfield, (Formosa) California. There were also smaller ram sales in Craig Colorado, Filer Idaho, Grand Junction, Colorado and Spanish Fork, Utah. A normal year during the 50’s, 60’s was selling 800 rams, 100 ewes gathering \$200,000 grew to 1200 rams, 400 ewes at \$900,000 during the 70’s and early ’80’s.

A typical year went like this: January, February and March feeding bucks and lambing sheep; April was the buck sale in Bakersfield and private sales to growers in California and Arizona through May. The production sale on Memorial day weekend in DesMoines Iowa, (this was my first time to fly on a plane, and flew to Kansas City then to DesMoines with Daddy and Scott to trim and sell the sheep, a skill I remain to utilize to this day), then harvesting hay in early June, late June the ewe and ram sale in Sedalia Missouri: July 2nd crop hay and the Filer ram sale in Idaho; August: sorting of the current year buck lambs, 3rd crop hay, combine oats & barley grain/hauling straw trim and sell at the National ram sale now re-located to Salt Lake City, Utah; September bring the ewes home from the mountains, farming fall wrap-up and the sale in Craig, Colorado; October was breeding season and the Sale they put together under a tree in the city park, the Utah Ram Sale in Spanish Fork, followed by buck deliveries to Idaho, Colorado and Nevada; November was cleaning of the pens with manure on the fields and December was a relatively quiet month to spend with family with the occasional purchase deal selling pregnant ewes or buying buck lambs to feed out. Later the commercial cycle was laid on top of this already rigorous schedule, it is no wonder that Daddy had a lot on his mind during the late 70;s and through the 80’s, payoff on those loans came around and development growth on the bench was starting but not soon enough to carry the financial burden. By the 90’s Daddy was truly exhausted from all the demands on his time. I do always remember that if we were playing a game of basketball, football or baseball and he came to the house, he always participated. We never could beat him at “HORSE” or a 1-1,2-2-basketball game.



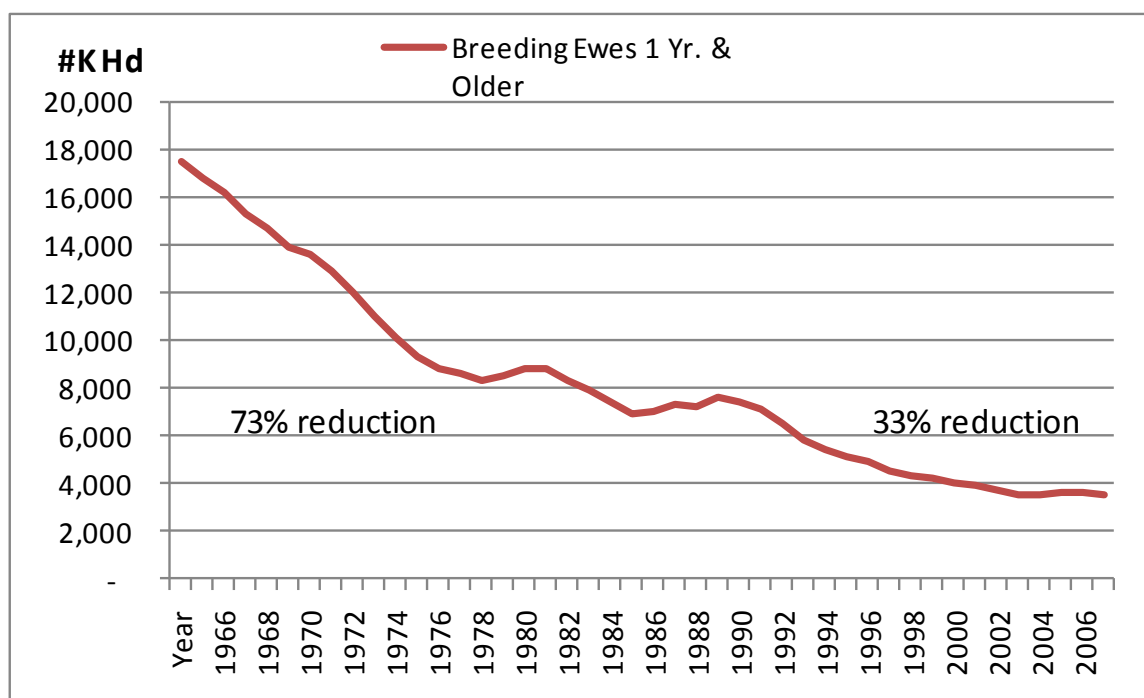
Division of the assets and later years.

It was 1977 just one year after the bicentennial celebration of 1976 when the plans for dividing the herd started. I remember the day like yesterday. one for Alden went to the left, one for Snell went to the right at the sorting gate. We sorted all the ewes and remaining bucks that fall. Completed the sorting and division of livestock in one day. I, or probably anyone else could not have guessed the tumultuous times in the upcoming years. That day sorting the herd was happy and sad, and an end of a great, great time for all of us. Alden moving his sheep to Salem where we had built a custom yard for his style of care. He retained the Ranch in Wyoming for a few years, but soon he was fully retired since swinging a fork at a nasty ewe injured his back placing him with a cane, then a wheel chair with no use of his legs. For many years when we helped deliver his sheep from Wyoming to Blythe California, amongst other places, we would pack him on our backs to and from the hotel every night. He eventually became very talented and strong in his upper body and had a pickup custom configured for driving with his hands. To the end he never, never, gave up. I remember clearly the day he drove to the house after daddy had died, it was the only time I ever saw him cry and three weeks later he joined the homecoming in heaven with his brother. They were very close in life and in death.

That fall of 77 Snell or daddy as we called him ventured from the purebred breeding business into commercial sheep, while Alden bought a 120 herd of Hereford cows. Daddy bought three bunches (1000-1500 head) of commercial sheep and in the two subsequent years two more bunches. They were summered near Soldier Summit and grazed in the winter by Topaz mountain, coming through the yards in the spring for lambing and the fall for breeding. It was much easier than the purebreds; we only had to feed hay to them and then only for a couple of months. He also bought ownership rights into a slaughter plant in Chino California for fall and winter processing into steaks, chops and roasts. The team at the plant with input from the producers that owned it was so efficient that the first products to sell-out were the heads (to local Hispanics) and other vital organs to the French. Chops and roasts were the slowest moving product. Four very good years were succeeded by 3 very bad years and a new plant manager that

let theft of pelts (and some meat products), fraud of the record books occurred and the venture turned out a loss, however the idea was very solid, however the execution was severely flawed.

As the years of an excellent father, provider, excellent husbandry-man, bank board member, trustee at USU wore on daddy, Jenny and I especially, and the entire other siblings to a degree, saw daddy let his guard down somewhat. Some deals went well, some did not go so well. The morning of his massive heart attack in October of 1993 he was trimming sheep for the Utah Ram Sale. I have from many of his sheep friends, local farmers and others on the bench or in Spanish Fork that he had come by the previous week and just visited, this was odd to them, since Snell was as hard a driver as any Baptist preacher and fierce competitor. During those visits he just talked and reminisced with them about what they had accomplished during their life, and how different the world had become. Remember the information revolution had not occurred, cell phones did not yet exist. He had a lot of friends, Ray Whiting-lamb buyer/feeder Mapleton, Jack Larsen, Lee Jarvis, Jim Caras-purebred breeders in Spanish Fork, Frank Nelson, Garth Hansen farmers on the bench. Goldie Fine and others from the Federal Land Bank boards and literally hundreds of sheepmen from around the US. Grandma Lorraine received calls for years from people who called to purchase sheep after daddy’s passing. Regardless of his failing financial controls he was able to innovate years before others, saw opportunities early, he took great care of his animals and gave sound advice to bank boards, local farmers and his children.



Today Snell’s son Scott Olsen continues to run the farm on the bench. Indeed there are challenges with much of modern life, low availability of credit, lower commercial herd sizes, long periods between sales of sheep and vast fluctuations of feed prices. However the enduring qualities continue in hundreds of people Snell & J.Alden influenced in American Sheep Industry.

I hope this brief narrative and graphic’s, helps the reader appreciate the efforts of the previous generations and how their work and sacrifice affords us all the luxuries we enjoy today. I am

every grateful for my upbringing and the ethic of work, general feeling of security, addressing problems as challenges to be solved. The friendships of doing business with others in a livestock environment is special, the trust, the common challenges, the respect for others efforts is almost unknown today. I hope we can all live, each day, with greater peace in our hearts and joy for the wonderful new world we live in. I still think Alden and Snell, if still with us today, would somehow break new ground in breeding skills, feeding skills and marketing skills, yes I believe they would be Internet savvy. I truly believe they watch over us everyday and help us lead a better life.

Kirk H. Olsen

September 12, 2013

Edited by:

Scott, Jedd, Shawn Olsen

Michael, David, Paul R. Olsen

Appendix A:

‘Long Ears’ Sired the following Seedstock Progeny Registered at American Suffolk Association:

<u>Sires</u>	<u>Tag #</u>
• Old 99	429000
• 911	410744
• Warrick	377459
• 100 Peaks	453451
• 2100	453455
• 1-31	446033
• Velvet Peaks	463885
• Sedalia Peaks	496987
• Idaho Peaks	447752