

Olsen Brothers, Alden & Snell

Experts & summary from biography written by Kirk Olsen, Snell Olsen's son.

Snell and Alden were two of seven brothers raised in a two-bedroom home in Spanish Fork, Utah. They began their lives in the “roaring twenties” and experienced the full wrath of the depression. Snell and Alden like all the boys helped with the family farm - daily feedings, daily milking, seasonal farming including hoeing beets and peas, thrashing grain and stacking loose hay on wagons. Snell and Alden excelled in raising fat lambs for the stock shows in Utah. They also raised breeding sheep to sell. They built a reputation of being very good feeders, raising healthy sheep and, in short, were excellent husbandry-men.

Alden served as a Reconnaissance Marine in the Pacific during World War II. Snell later served as a Drill Sargent at Ft.Hood, Texas during Korea. It was told that Alden had 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. The business grew during the 50's, 60's and 70's as the numbers of sheep in Utah and the Intermountain West continued to grow. During the summer, the sheep were pastured in the Strawberry Valley and at their ranch in Lonetree, Wyoming.

Marketing their herd included long distance deliveries of bucks to surrounding states and points East. The California market was and continues to be one of the most important buck markets and is enjoyed by many Utah /Idaho producers as developed by Snell, Alden and Burroughs of Oregon. Peak production leveled off at 1600 Suffolk ewes, 400 Rambouillet, 200 Hampshires, farming crops of Alfalfa Hay, Oats and Corn were produced full time with no other income.

The secret to their success was not a secret at all; it was based on discipline of good husbandry. For decades, they feed the sheep at relatively the same time morning and night, fed high quality grains and hay, 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 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. 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 20-year period.

In 1977 plans for dividing the herd started. One for Alden went to the left; one for Snell went to the right at the sorting gate. Snell ventured from the purebred breeding business into commercial sheep, while Alden bought a herd of Hereford cows. Snell purchased thousands of commercial sheep and also bought ownership rights into a slaughter plant in Chino for fall and winter processing into steaks, chops and roasts. Snell had a massive heart attack in October of 1993 while he was trimming sheep for the Utah Ram Sale. Just three weeks later Alden joined the homecoming in heaven with his brother. They were very close in life and in death.

Today Snell's son Scott Olsen continues to run the farm. Snell & Alden influenced hundreds of people in American Sheep Industry. Thousand Peaks and Long Ears fundamentally improved the Suffolk breed with

meaty large framed Rams. If they were still with us today they would somehow break new ground in breeding skills, feeding skills and marketing skills, and yes they would be Internet saavy.