

# *Joe Holbrook*

Joe Holbrook was born and raised in the small farming village of Chesterfield, Idaho. He married Beth Hansen in the spring of 1947 and they purchased their Chesterfield farm in January of 1948. Joe and his brother, Lafe Jr., worked together farming their own places along with the land owned by their mother, Annalease. Their father had been killed in an automobile accident in the fall of 1942.

Joe's father had a small herd of sheep when he was a young man and Joe enjoyed working with them. In 1953 he watched a neighbor purchase Suffolks at the Golden Spike Stock Show and Sale in Ogden, Utah. "When I saw these sheep, they really appealed to me." said Holbrook, "I hadn't seen any before that were purebred registered Suffolk sheep. They were striking! They were outstanding. I decided before very long that I was going to have some of these sheep."

The first Suffolks purchased by Holbrook were highly bred and imported rams from England. His friend and mentor, Jesse Humphrey, of Soda Springs, Idaho, gave him a solid foundation in breeding, fitting and showing the Suffolk breed. Through the years, Joe focused on his blood lines and ultimately developed a quality purebred flock of 100 Suffolk ewes. His main two rams came from Kalseanes and Swenson bloodlines. Joe marketed his rams through The Idaho State Ram Sale, the Idaho Falls Purebred Sheep Breeders Sale, and the Colorado Ram Sale. His rams had a reputation for being strong, sturdy and dependable breeding stock producing quality results. He enjoyed a great reputation among the sheepmen and his peers.

When his son, Joe Jr., was in 4-H and FFA, the Holbrook Flock always made a "clean sweep" of the Caribou County Fair! Later, Holbrook continued providing fat lambs to the youth of the County - many typically finished with top honors. Joe helped many breeders get a start in the purebred business. One, Gail Rathbun and daughter, Christine, developed a quality flock that won honors at the Los Angeles County Fair.

One of Joe's finest stud rams, "Shorty", was judged the Grand Champion Ram of the Eastern Idaho State Fair. It is thought that Joe named him "Shorty", because the ram just did not quite "reach up" to his friend, Rollie Rosenboom's "Walk'n Tall".

Holbrook was a member of the Idaho Wool Growers throughout his life. He chaired the Caribou County Wool Pool. He enjoyed serving on and chairing the two Idaho Ram Sale committees. He was a member of the American Suffolk Sheep Society Board of Directors for nearly twenty years, representing the states of Idaho and Washington. He served as chairman of the finance committee and as president. Joe supported the national merger which led to the formation of the United Suffolk Sheep Association.

In 1965 Holbrook joined his good friend Jesse Humphery working for the J.R. Simplot Company near Soda Springs. He drove a 170 ton electric truck hauling phosphate ore. Joe and Jesse prepared pit barbeque whole lamb for the Company Picnic each year. The CEO, J.R. Simplot was always in attendance. Joe's wife, Beth, also worked as an assistant to the mine superintendent. In 1971, they moved to Soda Springs to eliminate the long commute to work. Joe kept the farm in Chesterfield, and bought a few acres in the "cedars" near Soda Springs for his flock. Somehow, Joe's dedication to the purebred sheep business enabled him to maintain his flock and stay active in the ram sales. He and his friend, Jesse, continued working side by side fitting out the rams every year.

Holbrook retired from Simplot in May of 1985. Following the ram sales of 1988, he liquidated his flock and traded his sheep sheers for a fishing pole. In retirement, Joe enjoyed fishing with his brothers in Alaska, on the Snake and Clearwater near Lewiston, Idaho, and of course on his favorite Chesterfield Reservoir. Joe lost his wife, Beth, on December 19, 1995. He lived the last few years of his life with his son and daughter-in-law in California and Utah. Joe passed away of natural causes on December 30, 2011. He was 91 years old.