

Brentford & Brenda Miller, Millers Livestock

The origins of Millers Livestock started back in 1857 when George Miller first moved to the property when it was considered 'brush and timber' ground and developed the land into production agriculture use. Over the next 160 years all types of livestock have been raised by the family including harness horses and Dairy cattle, milked by hand in the 1800's, to beef cattle in the 1930's and 1940's, and sheep and hogs that are raised on the farm today.

Brentford was a 10year 4-H member and recognized as the 1940 4-H Livestock Champion at the Oregon State Fair, however he would become known for his registered Berkshire, Yorkshire and Spotted hogs that were shown for many years at the Oregon State Fair and the Pacific International Livestock Show. When his two children Scott and Brenda were old enough for 4-H in addition to hogs, they exhibited market lambs from the commercial sheep that were grazing the barnyards. It soon was apparent that better animals were needed to do well at the fairs so a quality Hampshire ram was purchased to improve the flock. As fate would have it, just a week before he was to be put with the ewes, he suddenly dies--a replacement was quickly needed. A fast trip, with the county sheep specialist, to Oscar McCartys of Echo, OR found us the proud new owner of a Registered Suffolk ram for our mixed breed flock...it was the 1960's and probably they were Southdown influenced females as that was popular at the time. In 1967 the first Registered Suffolk ewes were purchased--three ewe lambs the 1st year and three more the next--and in 1971 the last ten ewes were purchased from an elderly local couple who were looking for a young family to take over their flock that they had spoiled for many years, at least half of which were 10 to 12 years old. Those females had Ace Eoff, Floyd Fox and Eldon Riddel breeding...after that group arrived less than half a dozen other outside ewes have been added to the flock since that time.

As the years went on Scott was supportive of the animals but his interest was in farming. Until his death in 2014 he was very successful with fruit, vegetable and seed crops on the Miller farm. His son Ben is now carrying on in his father's footsteps.

After 10 years in 4-H that included three Grand Champion Market Lambs at the Pacific International Livestock Expo and Master Showman awards at the county and state fairs Brenda capped off her 4-H days with a trip to the National 4-H Congress as the state Swine Project winner. It wasn't until 1971 that girls could join FFA and Brenda had only one year of High School to try all they had to offer. One of the best memories was being one of four girls selected to the National FFA Chorus, along with about 95 guys, and performing at their national convention. Brenda has a B.S. in Animal Science from Oregon State University but during 1975 was an exchange student at South Dakota State University. This was a unique opportunity to be a part of the Livestock Judging team that had the privilege of competing at the last Chicago International Livestock show and the first North American Livestock Expo.

With Brenda out of college, she and Brentford started expanding the sheep flock - it was a time of rapid growth and popularity of the Suffolk breed. Influenced by his years in hog production, Brentford was an advocate of practical and productive, thick bodied sheep and success at the Willamette Valley and California Ram Sales resulted. The trips to California were on commercial trucks combined with Ronald Hogg, Chauncy Hubbard and Don Bischof. After a number of years attending ram sales and Brenda's interest in going to purebred shows and sales like the Purple Circle and Nugget Sales, the rams were eventually sold as lambs off the farm to private parties and only a few were grown out to sell as single stud rams. Both Brentford and Brenda were active and officers in the Oregon Purebred Sheep Breeders Association and the Oregon Suffolk Breeders Association, the OSBA was the sponsor of the Northwest Classic sale that drew sheep people to Oregon from a wide area. Other events like the Inland Northwest Sale, Washington Ram Sale, Top of the Rockies Sale, Cow Palace Sale and Midwest Stud Ram Sale were all opportunities to market sheep across the country. We are proud to have had sheep at or near the top of these events and have Miller genetics make their way from coast to coast and to Mexico, Japan and Canada over the years.

Brenda is also grateful for the many opportunities, and faith placed in her by fellow breeders, to judge livestock in her state, around the country, several times in Canada and the National Show in Mexico. It was truly an honor to judge the 2001 North American Suffolk Show and be the first women to do so.

The number of livestock, both sheep and hogs, have been reduced in recent years as Brenda is now taking on all the farm activities solo. Brentford passed in 1988 and Helen, her mother, died in December of 2015. The interest in quality purebred livestock is still strong and the privilege to work with them on a daily basis is not taken for granted.

Many, if not all, of these lifetime highlights would not be possible without the help of trusted advisers, family and good friends. Many thanks for all your help along the way. Suffolk People--surely a great flock to be a part of.