



Honoring a Legend

Hans Wittenburg recognized for dedication to the breed.

by Chel Terrell

“Mr. Beefmaster Futurity” has added another honor to his list of accolades. Only this time, Hans Wittenburg did not receive an award for consigning a top Beefmaster lot to another futurity event – a feat he has repeated nearly 70 times since he began raising Beefmasters. Instead, he is the recipient of the prestigious Live Oak Beefmaster Breeders Association Legend Award for 2011, which will be presented to him during the satellite’s annual bull sale this month in Three Rivers, Texas.

The list of past recipients of this award reads like a “who’s who” of the Live Oak Beefmaster family – Walker White, J.B. Kolb, Joe Yarbrow, Jack Dunn, Joe Hendricks, to name a few. Wittenburg’s addition to their ranks is fitting. He has been a member of the Live Oak BBA since 1973 and has consigned cattle to their sales since the satellite’s inception, and has won numerous awards at Live Oak’s graded sales and futurities.

“Hans has been an asset to the Beefmaster breed and to Live Oak BBA for many years,” said Rocky Carrillo, past Live Oak BBA president. “He is one of Live Oak BBA’s members who, through the years, has been involved within all aspects of the association. Whether he is buying or selling cattle at a Live Oak BBA sale, many members look to him to guide them in their selection.

“Hans’ eye for quality cattle is second to

none. He always brings his top cattle to Live Oak BBA, and generally has the high selling lots. Raising top-quality cattle year after year is but one reason why Hans is qualified to be a legend. Sharing the knowledge with members of Live Oak BBA is the other."

"I really want to thank the Live Oak board for this special honor," Wittenburg said. "They do an excellent job with their sales and support of the breed, and I'm very proud to be a part of their group."

Sold on Beefmasters

As a young man fresh out of Texas A&M University 1950 with an animal science degree, Wittenburg went to work for Green Valley Cattle Co. in San Marcos, Texas. The company owned an auction facility, feed store, ran registered Herefords, and had a feedlot where they fed 10,000 cattle per year. Wittenburg was in charge of the feedlot's mill for two years. During this time, he saw his first Beefmaster cattle, and their performance made a memorable impression on him.

"A producer from South Texas had a group of Beefmaster heifers that he wanted to retain and feed out at the feedyard," Wittenburg said. "They gained on a maintenance ration just as well as the steers, and I remembered that when I decided to get into the Beefmaster breed."

The draft board came calling shortly thereafter, and Wittenburg enlisted and served his country for several years. After his military service ended, Wittenburg moved to Edna, Texas, with his wife Mary Ann and went to work with her father who owned a John Deere implement business. His venture into raising cattle began shortly thereafter with a commercial herd. After acquiring additional land, Wittenburg sold his commercial cattle and purchased his first Beefmasters at a sale in Alice, Texas, in 1968.

"We chose Beefmasters and have stayed in the purebred

business because we think they perform so good for us," he said.

"Another reason we got into the Beefmaster business at the time was that all the people in Jackson County were buying Beefmaster bulls, and all I had was a Santa Gertrudis and Hereford cross herd of cattle.

I was taking care of them just like you would registered cattle, so I thought, heck, I might as well get some registered cattle. I loved Beefmasters when they were at the Green Valley Cattle Co. feedlot, so we started raising Beefmaster cattle and selling all the bulls to these people who were going out of town to buy their Beefmasters.

"We were probably selling 60 to 75 bulls a year then. We didn't have that much property, probably 1,000 acres and ran an average of about 200 mother cows and saved 80 percent of the heifer calves and 20 percent of the bull calves. We culled pretty hard if anything was wrong with them. We still try to keep real good, fertile cattle."

Wittenburg, with the help of his son Joe and wife Mary Ann, has remained committed to providing producers with quality animals, and appreciates his customers for their loyal business.

"Most of our business is repeat customers," he said. "We've been honest and value integrity, so we tell people that if they have any problems with the animals they buy from

PREVIOUS LIVE OAK LEGEND AWARD RECIPIENTS

2010 – Bill Carr	2000 – Jack Dunn
2009 – John Newburn	1999 – Ascencion "Chon" Martinez
2008 – Melvin Scherer Jr.	1998 – Joe Hendricks
2007 – Ed Wicker	1997 – Leo Joeris
2006 – Seymour Wormser	1996 – Joe Yarbrow
2005 – Anthony Mihalski	1995 – Enrique G. Garcia
2004 – Don Kasper	1994 – Jim Ed Rhodes
2003 – Don Moore	1993 – J.B. Kolb
2002 – Pat Shannon	1992 – Walker White
2001 – Humberto Garza	

us, they can bring the cattle back, no questions asked. They appreciate that.

"We have sold cattle and semen to producers both in the United States and internationally. We've sold to Guatemala, Columbia, Mexico and South Africa. We were part of the first group of breeders to send semen to Africa, and we're real proud of that."

Committed to the Breed

To say Wittenburg has been active on the association side of the Beefmaster business would be an understatement. He has tirelessly served in many capacities for Beefmaster Breeders United (BBU) over the years, including director, secretary, vice president, president and ex-officio. He followed these years of volunteer service with a second



Wittenburg, his wife, Mary Ann, and son, Joe, proudly display the special honors Wittenburg has received as a Beefmaster breeder. Pictured in the background are some of the 68 futurity awards the operation has won over the years.

term on the Board. He has been a member or served as chairman of nearly every BBU committee, and has been a member of every BBU satellite.

Wittenburg has also received numerous accolades for his commitment to the breed over the years. He was inducted into the BBU Hall of Fame in 2003, received the BBU Breeder of the Year Award in 1983 and was presented the Junior Beefmaster Breeders Association Lifetime Booster Club Member honor in 1999. He has also received a Lifetime Member distinction from the South Texas BBA.

Wittenburg's dedication to the breed and its future extends to other Beefmaster breeders as well. He has counseled numerous new BBU members and offered welcomed advice on breeding and marketing Beefmasters. He has also been a long-time participant in BBU's Weights and Measures Program and has been recognized as a Merit Breeder. His breeding program is acknowledged at each BBU Convention as having several animals recognized with Pacesetter/Typesetter status, an accomplishment that fills him with pride. In fact, Wittenburg owned one of the first bulls to be recognized with this distinction, Speck.

Wittenburg is also affectionately known as "Mr. Beefmaster Futurity" due to the number of champion top-quality Beefmasters he has produced over the years.

"Since getting into the Beefmaster business, we've won probably 68 different futurity

classes with our cattle," he said.

At Live Oak BBA events, he's taken home grand champion female, grand champion 3-n-1 and reserve champion bred heifer honors.

Wittenburg is quick to express his generous thanks to many people for helping his program remain so successful over the last four-plus decades.

"Every executive vice president has helped me so very much," he said. "That's one of the reasons I have done so well with my cattle. People like Fred Thompson, Gene Kuykendall, Wendell Schronk, Tommy Perkins ... and especially my good friend John Newburn who was a field representative for BBU.

"I also can't give enough credit to my son, Joe Mack, and to my wife, Mary Ann. She and I will celebrate our 60th anniversary on Jan. 28. I thank them for all of their help and support. When I was president of BBU, I went to every sale but two during those three years. And every sale I went to, I bought an animal. That made me feel really good."

Wittenburg credits his son Joe's knowledge of working cattle for helping their operation generate greater profits.

"Joe Mack went to college in Uvalde on a roping scholarship. He worked at a feedyard while he was there and learned a lot



Hans visits with Joe Yarbrow, Joe Hendricks and W.T. Young after a Beefmaster sale.

about treating and working cattle. When he came back to the ranch, he's used all that knowledge he learned working at the feedyard and has sure has helped cut down on our veterinary expenses. He treats all of our sick cattle, does all of the AI work, and we usually AI 100 cows a year and the rest are natural service. He also palpates all of our cows.

"When we were doing the ET business, Joe would get the cows and the recips ready for the embryologist when he came down to flush the cows. All of the stuff he does saves us a lot of money and makes the operation more profitable."

With the help of his family, Wittenburg is looking forward to continuing a tradition of raising quality Beefmaster cattle and also remains committed to the breed through his tireless volunteer work in BBU.

"I've donated a lot of time and effort to BBU and the Beefmaster breed and it's been a pleasure. Beefmaster cattle have been very good to my family and me." ★