

Ron and Christy Ratliff

Ron and Christy Ratliff, Garnett, Kan., will be honored as the 75th recipients of the Master Breeder Award of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) at the Jersey Breeders' Recognition Banquet in Canton, Ohio, on June 27.

The Master Breeder Award is bestowed annually to a living AJCA member, family, partnership or corporation that, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, has bred outstanding animals for many years and thereby made a notable contribution to the advancement of the Jersey breed in the United States.

Whether she is watching her beloved Kansas Jayhawks playing in the NCAA basketball tournament, or if she is in the barn caring for one of her cherished cows that isn't feeling well, or walking on the colored shavings in Louisville or Madison, anyone that sees Christy Ratliff—the Redhead from Kansas—knows she is all-in with all she does.

She and her husband, Ron, both strive to be the best they can be at everything they do and with this approach they have drawn attention to Jerseys in the U.S. Their ultimate goal today—breed a cow that has exceptional type with a profitability that can allow a dairy producer to survive in a challenging Kansas dairy environment.

The Jersey story for Christy began when she started 4-H. Growing up with a mixed herd of Holsteins and Ayrshires she purchased her first Jersey in 1979, at the age of 9, from Dannie and Jean Richardson in Kansas—Richland Neva ASM was just the beginning of her Jersey career. Over time, she expanded her herd with purchases from many other local Jersey breeders.

"The day that young, red-headed, freckle-faced girl came to our farm to buy some bottom end cows on her small budget, you could tell she had the will and drive to be a success in this business," wrote Cathy Yeoman then at Stateline Jerseys, Mo., and later at Sandy Dale Farms, Okla. "Coming from those humble beginnings, she has bred and developed cows that are now household names among Jersey breeders."

When Christy and Ron married more

than 20 years ago, it was that determination and passion that caught his attention. Today, he, along with Christy's brother, Mike Kennedy, assist Christy in developing



a world-class herd.

Christy has progressed beyond the days of milking with a portable milker in her horse barn, to the herd now residing in a pack barn with the show side of the barn being split into box stalls. Feed is pushed up in the alley by "Ronnie" the Lely robot.

She also has upped her budget, but still has that strong determination in what she chooses as genetics to add to the herd.

"She has a very well-planned purpose for purchasing that animal," observes Stanton Warren, Trans Ova Genetics in Missouri. "I guarantee you she is thinking two or three, if not four, generations down the road when she is buying."

Two important purchases that showcase her buys are Avonlea D Jude Karmel and Arethusia Primetime Deja Vu-ET—cows that have provided a strong foundation.

"Karmel" was purchased in 2000 from Avonlea Genetics in Ontario. She is among breed leaders with 84 registered sons and daughters. She has 18 Excellent and 17 Very Good daughters. Of her 61 appraised offspring in two countries, 90% of them are Excellent or Very Good. Many of the

animals merchandised from the herd trace back to the "Karmel" family.

"Deja Vu" was purchased in 2006 from Peter Vail of New York as a young calf. She is appraised Excellent-95% and placed in the top 10 at The All American Jersey Show and World Dairy Expo twice. Her story has really begun to unfold the past few years with the emergence of her daughters.

In 2011, Ratliff Sambo Demi-ET, owned by junior Cassy Krull of Wisconsin, finished third in the National Jersey Jug Futurity. She is appraised Excellent-92% and produced over 19,000 lbs. milk and 1,000 lbs. fat.

A year later, Ratliff Action Dazzle-ET, Excellent-93%, owned by Herby, Amanda and Hobbs Lutz, Chester, S.C., was named Reserve All American Senior Two-Year-Old Cow. Both young cows were purchased in the first sale that Ron and Christy hosted, the Ratliff Proof of Progress Sale.

"While Christy is a fierce competitor that shows up to win, she is maybe even happier to see cows they have bred do well for others," said Ted DeMent of Illinois.

Things have only continued to look up for the "Deja Vu" family as last year another daughter, Ratliff Impression Donner-ET, was named Reserve Winner of the National Jersey Jug Futurity for Ron and Christy.

But this was not the beginning of the Ratliff cows winning shows and going to other herds and standing out in those herds.

In 2008, Christy wrote in her AJCA young breeder application that her dream was to breed a cow that would earn National Grand Champion laurels at the All American as well as be named Supreme Champion at the World Dairy Expo. Just a few months later, part of that dream came true as Ratliff Price Alicia won her first of three National Champion titles (2008, 2009, 2010)—the only Jersey in the breed to accomplish this. In 2017, a daughter, Ratliff Sambo Alison-ET, placed fourth in the futurity and another, Ratliff Apple Jack Ansley-ET, was named Reserve All American Milking Yearling.

"Alicia is an excellent example of Ratliff's vision to breed not only cows that show, but cows that are productive in

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any environment, with a focus on showing longevity," said DeMent. "I had the honor of making "Alicia" grand champion the first of her three times with that status."

"Alicia" is appraised Excellent-95% and has produced in excess of 20,000 lbs. milk and 1,000 lbs. fat. She finished eighth in the 2015 *Jersey Journal* Great Cow Contest.

Perhaps the most telling of Ron and Christy's achievements is that they are eight-time Premier Breeders of The All American Jersey Show. Only one Jersey breeder in the 65-year history of the show has more wins, Waverly Farm of Virginia. Ron and Christy have also won the same award at World Dairy Expo seven times.

Ratliff Jerseys are a strong profitable herd at home as well. The 42-cow REAP herd had a 2017 AJCA lactation average of 20,816 lbs. milk, 1,127 lbs. fat and 783 lbs. protein. They ranked ninth nationally for fat in the herd size of 40-79 cows. After the 2018 appraisal, the herd had 29 Excellent and 28 Very Good cows with an average appraisal score of Very Good-89.6%.

Ratliffs have bred more than 180 cows appraised Excellent-90% or higher, including seven at 95% or higher. Ratliff D Dean Allie-ET is the highest homebred cow at Excellent-96%.

The Ratliffs employ an intense flush/IVF program in which donor dams are flushed on a weekly basis in the spring, fall and winter. A majority of the embryos are implanted into recipients from the couple's 150-head beef cattle herd. The practice has allowed the dairy herd to grow without giving up genetics. Due to the success of their work with Trans Ova, the couple has been able to host a sale every two to three years to sell young stock from within and maintain herd size.

Production sales in 2015 and 2017, were great success stories as the two sales offered more than 200 animals and averaged just shy of \$4,000. In both sales, the high sellers were consigned by Ron and Christy, but both had been purchases selected to be members of the Ratliff herd previously.

K&M Tequila Galalee-ET topped the 2015 sale for \$19,000 and went on to be named Reserve Intermediate Champion later that year for her new owners, Kilgus Dairy/Carla Kilgus of Illinois.

At the 2017 sale, Peter Vail and Budjon Farms of Wisconsin, purchased Billings Impression of Boo Boo for \$34,000. In October she was named first place senior two-year-old in Madison at World Dairy Expo.

Besides these few cows mentioned, more success stories are still unfolding in herds across the U.S.

In addition to the couple's Registered

Jersey herd and their beef herd at home, they also own and manage the Anderson County Sales and Livestock Auction. It has been in Ron's family since 1939 and they host a weekly feeder cattle and calf sale and special cow sales monthly.

Christy is president of the Kansas Jersey Club and serves on the Kansas Dairy Commission. She is on the The All American Show committee and the Dairy Cattle Exhibitors committee for World Dairy Expo. She serves on the Farm Bureau State Agriculture Commission to help evaluate the impact of dairy in Kansas Agriculture.

They were the 2010 Kansas Distinguished Dairy family and in 2016, they received the DFA Milk Drop Quality award.

"Realizing she comes with a slightly different resume, we believe her total immersion in the Jersey breed and subsequent successes, merit her recognition this year," said Eric Lyon of Iowa and 2015 Master Breeder award recipient.

Master Breeders

1944	William MacPherson, Thomasville, Ga.*
1945	W. R. Kenan, Jr., Lockport, N.Y.*
1946	George W. Sisson, Jr., Potsdam, N.Y.*
1947	E. S. Brigham, St. Albans, Vt.*
1948	Guy Miller, Modesto, Calif.*
1949	Dr. Howard D. Odum, Chapel Hill, N.C.*
1950	Judge J. G. Adams, Asheville, N.C.*
1951	N. M. Tibbles, Independence, Ore.*
1952	Frank W. Barber, Fayetteville, Tenn.*
1953	Herman F. Heep, Buda, Texas*
1954	Dale Dean, Ridgeway, Mich.*
1955	Maurice Pollak, Lincroft, N.J.*
1956	J. L. Hutcheson, Jr., Rossville, Ga.*
1957	John R. Sibley, Spencer, Mass.*
1958	J. Chester Elliff, Tulia, Texas*
1959	A. W. Sweet, Sixes, Ore.
1960	Col. H. G. Wilde, Lenox, Mass.*
1961	C. Edward Knolle, Sandia, Texas*
1962	Russel Hoar, Newark, Ohio*
1963	William Ross Proctor, Pittstown, N.J.*
1964	Clifton F. Russell, Rossville, Ga.*
1965	Chester Folck, Springfield, Ohio*
1966	C. Scott Mayfield, Athens, Tenn.*
1967	E. E. Greenough, Merced, Calif.*
1968	Henry Uihlein, Lake Placid, N.Y.*
1969	Charles S. Kelly, Hudson, Wis.*
1970	H. Fowler Hupman, Springfield, Ohio*
1971	Milton Humbert, Cleveland, Tenn.*
1972	Willis Rupert, New Waterford, Ohio*
1973	Earl Hutchinson, Tunbridge, Vt.*
1974	Antone J. Regli, Ferndale, Calif.*
1975	Mrs. Diana Ryan, Newport, R.I.*
1976	James and Georgia Pappas, Modesto, Calif.*
1977	Mrs. H. G. Wilde, Lenox, Mass.*
1978	Henry W. Black, West Baldwin, Maine*
1979	John Bishop VI, Columbus, N.J.*
1980	Mrs. A. G. Rankin* and Sons, Faunsdale, Ala.
1981	W. L. Payton, Stephenville, Texas*
1982	Curtis Hobson, Athens, Tenn.*
1983	Stanley N. Chittenden, New Lebanon, N.Y.*
1984	Walter H.* and Joan Brown, Hughson, Calif.
1985	Newell Mills, Fallon, Nev.*
1986	John R. Owen, Lewisburg, Tenn.*
1987	Robert S. Pike* and Family, Cornish, Maine
1988	Ray Chamberlain, Wyoming, N.Y.*
1989	Ralph* and Betty Reichert, Riley, Kans.
1990	Stanley K. Bansen, Dayton, Ore.*
1991	Henry P. Knolle, Sandia, Texas*
1992	Phil V. Fanelli, Hilmar, Calif.*
1993	Dr. J. J. Malnati, Newberry, S.C.*
1994	Walter and Sally Goodrich, West Danville, Vt.
1995	Edward*, Harold, and Donald* Wright, White River Junction, Vt.
1996	Elmer D. Larson, Roy, Wash.*
1997	Albert Bradford, Turner, Maine*
1998	Robert Stiles Family, Clear Brook, Va.
1999	Robert and Barbara Howard, Tillamook, Ore.*
2000	Charles L. Lutz, Newton, N.C.*
2001	Duane Kuhlman, Snohomish, Wash.
2002	Duane Wickstrom, Hilmar, Calif.
2003	James Chaney, Bowling Green, Ky.*
2004	Charles J. Steer, Cottage Grove, Tenn.
2005	William G. Mason Family, Buhl, Idaho*
2006	Aaron F. Richards, Farmington, Utah*

2007	Robert Bignami, Orland, Calif. and Harlan Askeland*, Orland, Calif.
2008	James S. Huffard III, Crockett, Va.
2009	Ahlem Farms Partnership and Ed Fisher*, Hilmar, Calif.
2010	Donald* and Elsa Sherman, Hilmar, Calif.
2011	Dan Bansen, Dayton, Ore.
2012	Dutch Hollow Farms, Schodack Landing, N.Y.
2013	Bearl and Joanne Seals, Cloverdale, Ore.
2014	Silver Spring Farm, Syracuse, N.Y.
2015	Lyon Jerseys LLC, Toledo, Iowa
2016	Eric Leonard Silva, Beaver, Ore.
2017	David Allen, Reedsburg, Wis.
2018	Ron and Christy Ratliff, Garnett, Kan.

* deceased

