

# BC DAIRY PIONEERS

## Passion for Breeding, Judging & Showing

### BRONDELL HOLSTEINS

Maybe the Brondell prefix doesn't carry the same momentum today that we recall from the past, but the Giacomazzi name is as familiar as ever! Bruno and Shirley have been prominent in the Holstein and Jersey circles for a very long time! The Brondell story grows richly from so much fertile ground, that it's impossible to harvest it all, but let's give it a try...



1990 was a great year for FREUREHAVEN MAJ REA – Grand Champion at Agribition and nominated All Canadian and All American 3-Year Old!



Bruno and Shirley had a fabulous time in Ireland in 2012.

Gilmore prize heifer (now milking) and her heifer calf to Aldergrove. "Both our Gilmore heifers turned into super production cows, but they weren't brood cows," Bruno admits. Bruno worked for his father until 1963 when he and Shirley bought the farm and cows and started the Brondell prefix! Those early trips to the Royal had imprinted on Bruno what modern genetics could do for conformation. "I fell in love with good cattle, but I was heavily criticized for bringing in semen from Ontario in those early years," he shares, knowing that he was right.

Bruno and Shirley's long and valued participation in breed and youth development activities led them to be recognized with Dedications from the 2002 BC Spring Show, and the 2018 WCC Youth Show. Bruno was one of the original founders of the respected and long-running WCC youth program. Other industry involvement included BC Branch directorship from 1961, serving as VP in '67-68 and President in '69-70. Bruno chaired many Show and Sale committees over the years, including the Holstein and 4-H committees at the PNE. For six years, he participated in BMO's Western Canadian Ag Advisory Committee as BC's rep.

Everyone helped on the farm, Donald, Jill, Tom and Terri; that's just the way it was. But then there was also 4-H!

exceeded at this skill over his entire career, starting with judging his first show in Duncan at age 19, followed by the Saanich Fair the next year. "Those were big shows in those days and included mature bulls!" His judging assignments covered judging schools, Open and 4-H shows, Holsteins and Jerseys. From shows all over BC, he also judged in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and his biggest show – the Quebec Spring show – which had the largest entries in North America at that time. "Besides judging shows in Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Utah, my best experience was in California where Pete and Paula Beck came to see and support me – that was very special," he shares with fondness. "I really enjoyed supporting youth. And judging showmanship was always exciting. It was a big honour to judge the Scotiabank Hays Classic, once as Associate Judge and once as the Official in 2001."

#### The Main Event

The cattle business has always been about networking – making connections that can find and develop great individuals. The friendship with Bob Shore of Shore Holsteins created a *cattle conduit* of mutual benefit. Bob sourced ADAMS HAVEN ROYAL BELLE, a Royal Mark that

won **both** the Premier Exhibitor and Breeder banners at the BC Spring Show! Bob Shore was responsible for two more impressive show individuals that garnered numerous winnings – FREUREHAVEN MAJ REA EX-1\*, and KNIGHTHOLM STARBUCK PRISM EX. Rea was nominated All Canadian and All American 3-year old in 1990. Other times, Bruno was the *conduit* – he spotted a leggy Endeavour heifer from Leyenhorsts when she was showing on Vancouver Island in 1979. "I think I paid \$5000 for her, which was a lot of money then, but I knew she had big-time show potential," Bruno rationalized his purchase. "I gave Pete a call and he was interested." In the hands of Pete Heffering of Hanover Hill, CORNWIL WILMA PATRICE won every Junior Yearling class at the big shows back east and was crowned with All Canadian and All American honours in 1980!

Merchandising cattle was always part of the business. Brondell held five sales between 1969 and their final Milking Dispersal in 1994. STARBUCK BAMBI EX, the 1994 PNE Grand Champion, sold to Holwell in Ontario for the impressive sum of \$15,000. But her herdmate and PNE Reserve Champion, Prism, set a record with her \$19,000 final bid, and could almost walk across the border to her new home at Markwell in Lynden.



A career, and life highlight, is receiving the Master Breeder shield at the 1993 National Convention in London, Ontario.



Judging the Scotiabank Hays Classic at the Royal in 2001 combined Bruno's love of judging quality cattle and showmanship.

By Tars Cheema

#### Who Says You Can't Mix Holstein and Jersey?

Maybe some people back in the day wouldn't have felt comfortable about a girl of Irish descent meeting a boy of Italian roots...or a Jersey girl with a Holstein boy! But 4-H has a way of turning competition into cooperation, though it took a little time for that to evolve since they farmed in distant places – Bruno in Aldergrove, Shirley in Ladner. Both were ambitious teenage dairy judges whose paths would cross at competitions in Chilliwack and at the PNE, but it was at a judging day held at Shirley's parents' Glendowan Ayrshires and Jerseys, that they would **'meet'**. It was 1954, and Shirley was hauling manure...a pretty, hard-working farm girl who was a competitive judge – Bruno was smitten! But it was the following year at the PNE that their eyes would meet over a heifer. Perhaps Bruno's appeal was boosted beyond his charming smile when his Mt Bakerview heifer was tapped as 4-H Grand Champion! An even bigger deal was that this award came with a Les Gilmore heifer! Following the closing of the Delta Jersey 4-H club, Shirley joined the Richmond-Delta 4-H Holstein Club, which necessitated the acquisition of a Holstein heifer. She came armed to the 1956 PNE with an impressive Colony Farm heifer, and as if to show Bruno that she was not second fiddle, earned Grand Champion herself with this calf! Shirley's Gilmore prize heifer would be raised in her parents' Jersey herd. "In those days, Geurt Keur worked for my father, washing tails and brushing cows in the stanchion barn," Shirley reminisces.

"Chub Berry (Belmont Farm) was our club leader and judging coach, and we used to judge all the farm species

at the PNE in August," Bruno recalls with a glint in his eye. "I took to judging like a duck to water!" Bruno and Kathleen Barichello travelled to the Royal Winter Fair by train in 1954 to represent BC as a team at the National Judging Finals. It's a long train ride...and I'm not sure if Bruno's accordion playing made the ride seem shorter or longer...witnesses are hard to find today. After judging all four dairy breeds, Bruno emerged with a third-place ribbon – a spectacular outcome at a national event! "Shirley was always in the top placings in judging but didn't quite make it to the Royal." In 1955, Bruno, George Aylard, David Reid and Ian McCartney took the BC Jersey exhibit to the Royal – by train. It was seven days and eight nights riding **with the cattle** and coping with the November temperatures – both directions! Upon return, Bruno took a job milking for Shirley's father Bill for a year. His milking partner, Herman Korbeld, became a lifelong Holstein friend. During this year, Bruno was called upon to drive the cattle truck with Bill and eight Jerseys to Boise, Idaho for the Western National Sale – it was pretty much non-stop all through the night! "I gained a lot of experience with the Jersey breed, including showing Bill's cows at the PNE with John Malenstyn," Bruno remembers.

#### The Goal was Always to Farm!

The Giacomazzi brothers of Treviso, Italy came from a large, mixed farming family, that could not support all the children. So, in 1932, Primo and Leone left their sweethearts and emigrated to Alberta with two-year work permits to work in the underground mines in Cadomin, just east of Jasper in the Rockies. Once their permits expired, they returned to Italy, collected their now wives and returned to Cadomin once more. Brother Leone left Alberta first, finding work in Queensboro (New Westminster) while Primo continued in mining. But their goal was to **farm!** Not long after Bruno was born in 1937, Primo also moved his

family to the coast, where their friend Rousso, a businessman with resources, helped back their first farm purchase late in 1938. The Ellison farm on 264th Street had about 30 Holsteins and a lot of trees on the 80-acre plot which faced the stunning Mt. Baker across the US border. They had realized their goal, and the Mt Baker View purebred herd was on its way! Both families were raised in the one farmhouse, as was customary in many ethnic cultures a generation back. Ten years later the ambitious brothers bought the adjacent 60 acres to expand their dairy operation. Sadly, only a few years later, Bruno's uncle Leone died, ending his dream much too soon.

#### The Potato Famine Migrants

In 1886, Shirley's great grandfather brought his family to Canada like many others around that time, to escape the Irish potato famine. They homesteaded on Westham Island with their family of five boys and three girls. Farming continued through the next generations with Shirley's grandfather using the prefix Fawndale for his Jersey herd, and her father Bill using Glendowan. Shirley's mother Lily was born on Pender Island, where their family milked 20 cows. While it may seem onerous today to ferry your heifers to Pender Island for pasturing from Ladner, that's exactly what Bill's dad did, and he brought sheep on the backhaul! Except on one occasion, when the backhaul included Lily – who came to assist Shirley's grandmother with household duties. Fast forward about 40 years, Shirley's brother Alan continued the development of the famous Glendowan Jersey herd and eventually began the Jersey Farm processing plant, processing their own milk into yogurt along with milk from Anderlinis, Barichellos and Don Hendrickson's Jersey herds.

#### Brondell Beginnings and Industry Involvement

Bruno and Shirley were married in 1959 and they brought Shirley's

Jill and Terri particularly enjoyed the competition at the end of the halter, enjoying success with Brondell heifers that earned them Championship ribbons on several occasions and both achieving Grand Champion Showman standing. Tom joined the girls for two years in the Beef club in their final 4-H years. Both Bruno and Shirley served as 4-H leaders for 10 years and were heavily involved in WCC as well. Though adding to the dairy workload, the 16 years of poultry farming was both interesting and rewarding. Shirley loved her time in the Holstein business and for many years, wrote a column in the early years of *BC Holstein News*, titled 'Reflections' where she shared insights and news.

#### An Eye for Cattle and Showmanship

Judging came naturally to Bruno and he



Bruno and Shirley joined a WestGen crew at UBC's Museum of Anthropology to photograph ONWARD INQUIRER LONI EX-5\*. Bruno bought her as a 2-year old young sire daughter on Vancouver Island.

later proved to be a Ned, and the dam of Brondell's most influential cow – CITATION BELINDA EX-10\*. "We really had two cow families that built our herd – the Belindas had type, production and transmitting ability, and the Ilsa's, who were average producers but made for a lot of fun in the show ring!" VERNWAY PEACHUM ILSA was a powerhouse cow whose legacy included numerous Excellent and champion show cows with their frames and well attached udders. Many will remember WARDEN INFLUENCE EX, ADORE INDIANA EX and SULTAN INDONESIA EX – three generation Excellent cows that kept Brondell steadily standing in Championship classes for many years.

With the help of ET and sires like Elevation, Warden, Sheik and Astro Jet, Belinda was responsible for the vast majority of points earning the 1992 Master Breeder shield – just 13 years after she first calved! Belinda also impacted many other herds around BC where breeders were anxious to acquire some genes of this 3-year old Canadian Milk Champion. Her last natural calf, WARDEN BELINDO, went on to become Grand Champion bull as a Senior Yearling at Madison in 1985, the last year of bull classes. Owned with Pete Heffering, Belinda eventually sold to Japan.

Brondell exhibited competitively in BC, the prairies, Ontario and Washington, receiving numerous championships and many premier breeder and exhibitor awards. From 1985-89, they

#### After the Dispersal

The 1994 Feature Classic was not the end of the journey for Bruno and Shirley. The well-bred heifers were farmed out to Dwayne Schwaerzle and Sandy and Lilian Stewart because Bruno appreciated their caring cow-skills. By 1999, they found a suitable partner in Richard and Carol Fisher, to join them on a small dairy they had acquired in 1995 just a few kilometres away from the home farm. With about 40 cows and Richard and Carol taking the daily responsibilities for the operation, they were partners for 10 years. Over the years, many Brondell females worked in Jill and Greg's herd in Alberta, until they sold in 2015. The remaining Brondell cattle returned to BC and currently reside in Ralph Anderlini's herd... Bruno's not quite ready to be completely out of the cattle business!

There's a final side-story that makes one stop and consider the mysteries of life that are beyond our vision. Back in the 70's, the Giacomazzi family was adopted by a little guy when he met them at a Cloverdale Fair Holstein show. His mother was struggling, and young Bradley was welcomed into the Brondell tribe, where he nestled into their hearts and home until he moved on at age 16. His life meandered around the country and eventually settled in the horse racing business of Florida where he met a Swedish girl, Sofie, with similar interests. As life happens, they returned to Sweden to be nearer her family as they started theirs. The great irony is that they have since taken over her family's dairy operation. They proudly milk 100 purebred Jerseys in a modern freestall/parlour operation.

"As I look back, I appreciate even more that Shirley came to nearly every show I ever judged, and we could discuss the cows and placings after. We're so thankful for the great friends and wonderful times we have shared in the dairy industry," Bruno sums up.



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