

The Legendary David Patrick

By: Becky Payne



We should be doing lots of great things in this year of 2020, yet the pandemic keeps sidelining us from activities we enjoy. Like shows and sales. Like World Dairy Expo. Like honoring the legendary David Patrick of Woodbine, MD as the National Dairy Shrine's Distinguished Dairy Cattle Breeder. This prestigious honor is presented to an active, progressive dairy breeder whose expertise in managing a dairy herd is a model for others.

David Patrick has been in the Ayrshire business for 79 years! His path with the breed started at the young age of 11. He remembers their county extension agent in the late '30s to early '40s was an Ayrshire man named Warren G. Myers. All dairymen in their county were introduced to the Ayrshire breed by Mr. Myers. In 1941, David's father purchased two Ayrshire heifers to give him a fresh start in the purebred dairy cattle business, and so marked the beginning for Maple-Dell Ayrshires.

Family brings great pride to David and Ann, his wife of many years. They raised seven children, have 12 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. They operate Maple-Dell Farm with sons Mike and Denny and grandson Derek. David and Ann don't miss a beat, and assist with milking daily. David also does all of the Ayrshire matings for Maple-Dell.



Today around 165 Ayrshires and Holsteins are milked in a double-eight parlor, and roughly the same number of heifers are raised. The cows are fed a TMR and housed in free stalls with sand

bedding or a bedded pack. Maple-Dell has been enrolled in official herd production testing for 60 years and have been classifying for 40 years. Participating in registered dairy herd programs and living a life of service has been important to the family. David served on the ABA's Board of Directors for many years and one term as president.



In addition to many industry-wide honors, the Ayrshire accolades to David and Maple-Dell Farm are significant. Highlights include:

- ABA Distinguished Service Award, 2002
- ABA Master Breeder Award, 2010
- 14 Constructive Breeder Awards
- Over 100 EX cows
- 17 All-American and 18 Reserve All-Americans
- Numerous bulls in AI service
- Many cows ranking on the Elite CPI list

Two favorites carrying his prefix are Maple-Dell Hi-Kick Sweet Pea and Maple-Dell Zorro Dafourth. Both have made an impact on the Ayrshire breed. "Sweet Pea" was EX-91 3E and was the Ayrshire featured in the Purina Mills "Dairy Breeds of North America" painting by Bonnie Mohr. She was a national show grand champion and dam of the well-known AI bull Maple-Dell Soldier. "Dafourth" was EX-95 3E, was a national show grand champion, had two sons in AI (Drew and Diego) and one grandson (Dixon) in AI. Four generations of this family have ranked on the Elite CPI list.

David has mentored and influenced many people over the years. Maple-Dell Farm provides at least 20 lease calves to youth every year. This commitment is possibly the result of the appreciation he has for his own mentors.

Part of what makes David so special is how much he values others. He recently reflected on the Ayrshire influencers in his life. John Dalton of Hartland, WI has impressed David with his promotion of the Ayrshire breed over the years, and he considers him a good friend. He admired the leadership and administration abilities of Jim McConnell of Wellington, OH. The late Ralph Shank Sr. of Hagerstown, MD inspired David with his love of the Ayrshire cow, and they had a great friendship for many years.

With more than six decades working in the AI field and with the Ayrshire/Holstein mix at Maple-Dell, David has worked with many breeds and has literally seen it all. He considers the Ayrshire to be a competitive and beautiful cow, and has noticed an improvement in the breed's disposition over the years. He says, "We have more issues with the Holsteins at Maple-Dell than our Ayrshires." The Ayrshire has long been noted for her longevity, and David feels that production in those mature cows has now increased significantly.



The improvements in the Ayrshire breed over the years are notable for him, particularly production and type. David feels that Burdette has been an influence on that big picture, especially as cows mature. He also thinks Kellogg made an impact for type.

David is astute with his understanding that people see things differently. He reminisces that Ralph Shank Sr. bought a cow 40-50 years ago, and people just couldn't understand why he did. That cow ended up being a great foundation cow at Palmyra Farm and was a good asset.

Speaking of assets, whenever there is a Maple-Dell animal in a sale, everyone looks twice. This is definitely because of the pride the Patricks have in their breeding program and their philosophy on selling only what they're proud of. Type is always of concern because people like to look at pretty cows. "Breeders should try to buy and sell the good ones because it helps the breed when you can bring new people in," explains David. "Not everyone can afford World Dairy Expo champions, but you can still buy solid Ayrshires for a reasonable price." He also feels that Ayrshires are selling as well as, if not better than, Holsteins right now.

His all-time favorite Ayrshire cow was "Bonnie" at Palmyra Farm because of her high production and type. He said, "If you're into production, you have to have good feet and legs so they can get to the trough for high production."

The seasoned dairyman's advice to young breeders is, "Start out with a balance of production and type. Be selective in your breeding program, and don't be afraid to ask people for their opinion. Make sure to develop, and never stop developing, your management skills. In your life, you're always going to meet negative people. As long as you believe in yourself and your program, you should just let the negativity roll off your back."

You can't leave an interaction with David Patrick without feeling good about something! This interview was done with the help of his daughter Rhonda; and like always, we had lots of

laughs. We asked David if there was anything unique about himself that others might not know, and he answered that his faith is number one. This wasn't news as anyone who knows David at all would say he's lived life letting his light shine. He did reveal a fun tidbit. He recently found his 1947 school yearbook. Under his name, it said he was known for being friendly and for his leadership ability. His horror was listed as Holsteins!

David feels very humbled to receive the Dairy Shrine Award, saying "I know a lot of great dairymen across the country who are just as deserving and have never gotten the award." When asked what keeps this 90-year-old youngster going every day, David says "I feel blessed. I feel great. All of the people I have worked with and surrounded myself with have made me the man I am today. I'm going to keep going as long as I can. I feel better mentally and physically to be active and to do what I can to help other people."

David retired this past summer from Select Sire Power after 65 years of service, and is still inseminating cows for dairy and beef producers in the area. He has earned respect far and wide in the dairy industry, and his humble personality has made him the subject of numerous feature articles over the years. The All-American Dairy Show paid tribute to Maple-Dell Farm in a story as one of six herds who had participated every year for their 50th Anniversary celebration. David was crediting the All-American show's outstanding showmanship contest when he said, "You see the true character of a person in the show ring. It takes a true man to stand at both ends with grace. And while I admit it is more fun at the top, I've stood at both ends and try to do so in good character."

This good character is the legend that is David Patrick.