



Inducted: 2010

Robert "Bob" A. Prestage, a native of London Ontario, graduated from OAC in 1959. He began his agriculture career working for the Ontario Department of Agriculture where he developed and encouraged the progeny testing of beef cattle. Accepting a position with Western Breeders of Alberta led to Bob's association with the Alberta Angus Association. A founder of Wicklow Exports and a respected judge worldwide, Bob has been responsible for the selection, processing and exporting of thousands of head of cattle to over 20 countries in the past 30 years significantly improving the genetic pool of their cattle industry. On several occasions, Bob has been recognized for his unselfish contributions to youth, community and agriculture by his home community of Camrose Alberta.

ROBERT "BOB" A PRESTAGE

1936 –

Bob Prestage, the son of Abraham (Paddy) and Laura Prestage, was born in London Ontario in 1936. He was raised on the family farm located at the N½ of Lot 17, Con 4 of London Township, west of the intersection of Richmond St. and Fanshawe Park Rd. His father, an Irish immigrant, also operated a service station at the corner of Carling & Talbot St. It was while he was a student at Medway High School that his interest in cattle, and in particular the Black Angus, began. At that time, a 4-H beef club was offered by the agricultural teacher at Medway and with the support the Chairman of the School Board, William A. Stewart, 4-H members drew lots to purchase a Hereford calf.

Not to be outdone, Arva-area beef farmer Alex Edwards encouraged Bob to also use an Angus calf for his 4-H project. Both of Bob's 4-H projects were champions and both were eligible to participate in the Queen's Guineas' competition at the Royal Winter Fair that year. There was no rule in place that prevented Bob from showing both calves, but by the next year (1953) the rules had been changed so that a 4-H member could exhibit only one 4-H project.

His Angus steer won its class and was Reserve Champion selling for \$1 a pound and with his cheque Bob purchased 2 Angus cows for \$650. Since one of these cows had a strong pedigree, he was offered \$650 for her; now Bob owned one cow and still had his original \$650. This would be the beginning of a long and successful, agricultural business career.

In 1959, Bob graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, then part of the University of Toronto, with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Degree. He was subsequently hired by the Ontario Department of Agriculture in its livestock branch. It was here that Bob developed and encouraged the progeny testing of beef cattle, a program that significantly improved the beef cattle industry and whose benefits continue until this day.

When the Byers Flour Mills and feedlot in Camrose Alberta offered Bob the position of manager in 1962, he and his wife Margaret and their young family moved west. In 1971, at the age of 35, Bob Prestage became the manager of Canadian Beef Sires, responsible for its progeny test programs for beef breeds, a joint project of the four leading Artificial Insemination breeding units in Canada. Between 1974 and 1975, he was appointed manager of Western Breeders at Balzac Alberta and White Church Saskatchewan where he managed the distribution of semen throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Over the next 5 years, Bob represented the Alberta Angus Association as its field man, where he developed the beginning of a world-wide beef exporting enterprise that saw cattle exported from Canada to many international countries. His work with the Alberta Angus Association came at a time when the breed was near the bottom of its popularity in Canada but under Bob's leadership and marketing skills, it began to regain its recognition and has emerged as dominant breed in the beef cattle industry today.

With an extensive knowledge of livestock management and with his outstanding communication skills, Bob Prestage was able to work with many Angus breeders in developing breeding stock that met the changing demands of the commercial livestock industry. But perhaps of greater importance, he always encouraged breeders to "clean up their act" and to improve their marketing skills not only for the domestic market, but for the benefit of foreign buyers who came to their farms in search of Canadian Angus breeding stock.

Whether it can be considered the "Luck of the Irish" or simply being in the "right place at the right time", Bob's work with Canadian Beef Sires and Western Breeders provided him with the opportunity to learn and understand the rules and regulations required for the exporting of semen, and eventually of embryos, worldwide. In the early years, embryos were difficult to acquire as it was necessary to slaughter the donor females in order to harvest their fertilized eggs. As the technique for acquiring embryos improved, the demand increased and this eventually led to a greater demand for live cattle exports around the world.

In 1976, Bob Prestage founded Wicklow Angus of Camrose Alberta. The following year he was asked by the general manager of the Canadian Angus Association to attend a major stock show in Brazil to promote the Canadian Angus. While at this show, Bob met the judge of the Holstein show, Bob Shore an auctioneer and exporter of dairy cattle from Glanworth Ontario. Bob Shore had been attempting to assemble a large shipment of Angus heifers from Ontario but could not find the numbers he required. He asked Bob Prestage he could find about 100 Angus heifers in Alberta, Bob found 600 heifers and this became the foundation of a long and a very successful export-component of Wicklow Angus, a business that Bob and Margaret have operated for over 30 years.

In May of 2003, the dairy and beef cattle industry in Canada was devastated by the BSE crisis. Producers were forced to look at other options for cattle sales as they faced rejection from many of their former markets. With the assistance of the Canadian government and Russian authorities, in 2007 Wicklow

Exports, in conjunction with the Canadian Beef Breeds Council, the Canadian Livestock Genetics Association and Alta Exports International, assembled a shipment of 2200 head of beef and dairy cattle. With an estimated value of \$7.5M, these animals became the basis for embryo and semen production in Russia as that country attempted to renew its beef and dairy industries. The following year saw another 4,000 head shipped to Russia on two separate occasions.

It has been noted that the success of Wicklow Exports has been the result of Bob and Margaret personally providing selection, assembly, preparation and documentation of all the required domestic and export paperwork. On several occasions, Wicklow Exports have made follow-up visits to overseas' customers in order to analyze past shipments and to make changes for future shipments. Over the years, Wicklow Exports has exported to over 20 countries and many of these shipments have not only included Bob's favourite Black Angus, but many other beef breeds, all dairy breeds, heavy and light horses, pigs, and ostriches.

Bob has hosted many delegates from other countries when they have come to Canada to purchase stock, semen and embryos. He has driven them to farms and assisted them in the selection of their stock, supervised the testing and necessary quarantines, and documented and assisted with the shipments. And over the years, Bob and Margaret have developed many friendships. But perhaps more important, foreign student cattlemen have been hired by Wicklow Angus in order that they could learn about Canadian cattle management skills. These students when they returned to their countries would continue to apply and share their management and livestock skills.

Several national, provincial and community organizations and committees have benefited from the knowledge and expertise of Bob Prestage over the years. He has been described as an individual, as large as life with a strong urge for living life to its fullest. On many occasions, his Irish heritage has come front and centre. His work ethic has enabled him to become involved in many outside activities both with his family and with other business and recreational activities. With no previous experience, he served as Reeve of the County of Camrose from 1983-1989. When he considered that the government of Premier Don Getty was not financially responsible, he ran unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate. He has served as chairman of the Alberta Lotteries and as a director of the Western Canada Lotteries' Corporation. Bob holds a Life Membership with the Camrose Chamber of Commerce where he was a member, director and served as its President in 1996.

He was actively involved with the Canadian National Junior Heifer Show at Bashaw Alberta from 1975-2000 and was its chairman between 1990 and 1996. Bob was chairman of the Camrose County Fair in 1990 and 1991 and was an active director of the Canadian Western Agribition from 1980-1988. As well, he also served on the International committee of Fairfair in Edmonton. For over 50 years of commitment and dedication to the Angus breed in Canada, Bob Prestage was inducted into the Alberta Angus Association Hall of Fame as a Breed Builder in 2007.

Bob has also been a hockey referee and a baseball, fastball and football umpire. He presided over these athletic events with the same level of honesty and fairness as he did with his export business. He has been described as "big-enough, strong-enough and loud-enough" to enforce his game decisions and always in a respectable manner and with a sense of kindness. In 2005, Bob Prestage was inducted into the Camrose Sports Hall of Fame.

As a man who gives unconditionally to youth, community and agriculture, Bob was named as Honoured Guest at the 2003 Canadian National Junior Heifer Show at Bashaw. He was inducted into the Camrose Agricultural Wall of Honour in 1990 and also into the Camrose County Exhibition Association Honour Roll.

In 1996 Bob was invited to judge the first Angus Show held at the Japanese government's Erimo Ranch at Hokkaido Japan. He was presented with a life membership in the Hokkaido Angus-Hereford Club and was awarded for his involvement with 4-H and in 1989 he was recognized for organizing the first fully loaded Japan Air Lines' 747 shipment of cattle to that country.