



Dr. Robert E. Walton Named 2012 Distinguished Leadership Award Honoree

Dr. Robert E. Walton of De Forest, Wis., is Holstein Association USA's 2012 Distinguished Leadership Award recipient. Dr. Walton was recognized during the final banquet at the 2012 National Holstein Convention in Springfield, Mo. The Distinguished Leadership Award recognizes an individual who has made a career of providing outstanding and unselfish leadership for the betterment of the dairy industry.

Dr. Walton was raised on his family's dairy and livestock farm in Shattuck, Okla. He went to Oklahoma State University for his bachelor's and master's degrees, then onto Iowa State University for his Ph.D. From there, he headed to the University of Kentucky where he was a professor and successful dairy judging coach. His teams won the 1958 Chicago International and the 1959 National Championship at Waterloo.

In 1962, Dr. Walton moved to De Forest, Wis., to work as a geneticist for American Breeders Service, today known as ABS Global.

Wanting to find a way to measure the genetic value of bulls, he pioneered Progeny Test programs. Through his use of this population genetics data, he came up with a calculation for "Estimated Daughter Superiority" which was adopted in 1965 by USDA, and known today as "Predicted Difference." Walton's role expanded at ABS, and he was pivotal in implementing marketing and distribution changes, and designing the first computer mating system, which used linear breakdowns to mate cows on functional type. Dr. Walton eventually was named President and General Manager of ABS.

His passion for animal breeding didn't stop at the office. Dr. Walton operated his "Simmenthal Valley" farm, just east of De Forest, raising polled Simmentals and Angus from the 1970s until he dispersed the herd in 2011. Proving a master in the art of breeding, his herd was consistently top-ranked in the Wisconsin Beef Improvement Association's bull test.

Dr. Walton is quick to credit those who have had a positive influence on him throughout his career, including Dr. Harold Schmidt, who endorsed the genetic concepts Dr. Walton was introducing in 1966, when most purebred breeders were skeptical of the idea, and California Holstein breeder Doug Maddox, who worked with Bob in developing Golden Genes

and their progeny program, when his budget was being cut at ABS. He also credits Dr. Jay Lush at Iowa State University, Gene Meyer of *Hoard's Dairyman* and John Louis Schrago as individuals that impacted his successful career.

A considerate, thoughtful, and interested member of the dairy community, Dr. Walton gave his time to several organizations. He was a founding member of the Holstein Foundation board of trustees, serving from 1990 to 1997, and he remains a

generous supporter today. He also is World Dairy Expo's longest seated board member in their history, serving on the Expo board from 1971 until 2008.

This is not the first time Dr. Walton has been recognized for his leadership and dedication. He was the 1982 World Dairy Expo Industry Person of the Year, 1985 National Dairy Shrine Guest of Honor, 1986 National Association of Animal Breeders Distinguished

Service Award winner, and received the 1991 American Dairy Science Association Distinguished Service Award. A culmination of his career at ABS, their distribution center was named in his honor in 2005.

Dr. Walton leaves a lasting impression on those who have the opportunity to work with and get to know him. Dennis Funk, ABS Chief Scientific Officer, says, "Despite all his accomplishments, Bob is best known around ABS as the president who knew everybody's name and their family. His passion for the industry and love and concern for people is something we all admire about Bob."

Steve Larson, *Hoard's Dairyman* Managing Editor adds, "After being a part of the U.S. dairy industry for more than 40 years, I look back on a small cadre of individuals who have made lasting impressions on me as being visionary, progressive, respected, and unselfish as well as being wonderful people. Bob Walton is one of them."

Dr. Walton is proof that hard work and persistence pays off, and his work has no doubt benefited Holstein breeders worldwide. Leading the dairy industry forward for decades, his legacy will be lasting.



Holstein Association USA CEO John Meyer, Dr. Robert E. Walton, and Holstein President Chuck Worden