

45 YEARS OF CHAROLAIS



Profile

PALMER CHAROLAIS

Candace By

Bob and Monette Palmer started in the Charolais business like many breeders of that era. They bought a Charolais bull to put on their commercial cows and were convinced the end result was worth pursuing. That was in 1971 and in the next couple of years they bought some E and F 7/8 females. "They were pretty good cows," Bob remembers. "We were so naive, we thought we could

would sell it. I gave him \$2500 for the calf and wrote the cheque. Then I had to figure out how to get the darn thing home. He asked where we lived and when we told him, he said they would drop him off on their way home. It was a Cabotin son," Bob tells.

"Then we went out to Pochylko's sale that fall and bought some females. We bought three cows with Mexican foundation bloodlines. They

He told the staff if I put my foot down I'm done. Nobody knew he was even bidding," Monette tells.

"Don Pochylko sold a share in Poker King Jr in their 4th SanDan Production sale in 1977. We, along with Jim and Marj Crabbe, Jim Cruikshank, Bill and Joe Wagner, Ken and Lorraine Qualman and Marvin McDonald purchased the 1/8 semen interest for \$9,000. There were six of us in the deal and Cruikshank was doing the bidding. They started to announce it to him and he started yelling 'No, no' and he started listing off all the names," Bob explained.

The bull worked in their program

"They bought a Charolais bull to put on their commercial cows and were convinced the end result was worth pursuing."

breed up to Full French, but Harvey Trimble straightened us out on that," Monette tells with a grin. They registered their first females in 1974.

"We bought a bull calf in 1975 at the second Canadian Western Agribition. Don Pochylko had it on the side of a cow and I asked him what he wanted for it and he said he supposed he

were big cows and we paid just over \$10,000 for the three. There were quite a few guys criticizing us saying they would never work. I just said 'Yeah, they probably won't, but we'll give it a try.' They really worked," Bob chuckles.

"That was the same year Pochylko bought Poker King Jr. 18G for \$18,000 at Agribition with his foot on the rail.





Miss RGP Perfection 1 125L sold to Stone-Del Farms and went on to be U.S. National Champion

and produced many champions and high sellers. RGP Perfection 1 125L sold in the SanDan sale in 1979. Don Phillips, of Stone Del Farms, Hartville, Ohio, bought the Poker King heifer calf for \$9000 and she went on to be the U.S. National Champion. "It was the place to sell cattle in the day, you couldn't move in that barn for people," says Monette.

RGP Perfection 1 125L was a granddaughter of one of the Mexican Foundation females that everyone said wouldn't work.

"In 1978, Henry Begrand, Ken Teneycke and Harry Fleury came to interview us to see if we were worthy of being members to the Hub Charolais Breeders club," Monette laughs. "We ended up in one heck of a party that afternoon and we were in the club."

"We participated in a sale in Saskatoon Kunkle put together. There was a little show before and they started the sale with the champion heifer and it only brought \$1500. I thought this isn't good. We had a decent heifer but I was no fitter. They kept selling and got down to 1100 and 1200 dollars. I thought 'oh geez, we're giving ours away.' Then she came in the ring and brought \$3200. After that we got Neil and Lorna McMillan to look after the cattle we took out," says Bob.

Miss RGP Kay 65M was also purchased inside a female and turned into a great success story for Bob and Monette. She was shown extensively and was the 1984 World Charolais Show Grand Champion Female with her twin Knockout heifer calves at side, Starlight and Starbright.

They sold in the Hub sale for many years and in the Sterling Collection for a couple of years. "We sold in the Copper Classic Sale at Crawford's place outside of Regina. The sale was held in conjunction with Canadian Western Agribition. We never dreamed that sale would be that strong. We sold some polled cows in that sale for \$3500-4000, which

was not expected, but there just weren't many polled cattle available."

"We didn't have a lot of cattle, so we only consigned a couple to sales, but we had a lot of fun participating."

The Palmer semen tank was very valuable. When they sold in a sale, the female always came with breeding rights to anything in their tank, and it went deep. They bought into a lot of quality bulls. "Probably the best bull we ever bought was E-CEE Katmandu 200B. He fixed every problem in the herd. We bought him out of the Sterling Collection sale from Emile Carles and kept the walking rights. Perrots and Rairdians had semen interests. He was a changer, he had some thickness to him. The breed had been going through some tall, lean genetics and Kat gave us a group of females that really worked. We later bought another bull from him that is still in use in the herd – the Rhapsody bull."

In 1981, they were struck hard by drought. They had no pasture and no feed. They were forced to sell fifty cow/calf pairs. They were really worried, as droughts don't affect one operation alone. Wagners also sold

"In 1983, Bob and Monette were named the Saskatchewan Charolais Association Breeder of the Year at the Saskatchewan Royal."

animals in the sale. "We had a pre-sale party the night before and it was quite a party. We had dancing girls and everything. It was quite a night and the stands were full the next day." They still get choked up thinking about the support they experienced at that sale. "Breeders from Alberta and Saskatchewan really came out to help us that day."

continued on page 20



The Buffalo Days show crew in 1985: Lorna and Neil MacMillan, Monette, Calvin Booker and Velon



Miss RGP Kay 65M – 1984 Grand Champion Female World Show in Red Deer

In 1983, Bob and Monette were named the Saskatchewan Charolais Association Breeder of the Year at the Saskatchewan Royal. This was an annual event that included the AGM, a very strong sale and a dress-up banquet where awards were presented.

In June, 1990, they hosted a successful sale on their farm the day after the Moose Jaw Royal. It was called Palmer & Friends and everyone just sold one or two lots.

Monette served as a director on the Saskatchewan Charolais Association board for a term. They supported the work of the association by making sure fundraisers went well. They are proud owners of many quilts auctioned at the Saskatchewan Royals over the years. They also did their

share of judging. Bob judged the PNE show in Vancouver for Charolais and Simmental in 1987. Together they judged Ag-Ex in Brandon. Bob also selected cattle for the Agribition Sale on behalf of the SCA in 1984, 1987 and 1989. In 1989, they worked together to select the cattle for the Sask Royal in Lloydminster. In 2001, Bob and Monette were named to the Saskatchewan Charolais Association Honour Scroll.

The memories from their early days are vivid and colourful. The industry was full of really strong characters of all different shades. It was an era where a lot of investment money was spent in Canada from the United States. There were lots of suspicious money sources for sure, but everybody enjoyed the excitement.

Bob and Monette travelled a lot through out Canada and the United States and believe the people are the best part of the business.

Velon Herback is their nephew and spent all of his weekends and holidays on the farm with his grandparents, Hazel and Gordon Palmer. When he was born, his mother was still in university, so his grandparents helped out. As he got older, he would ride the bus out on Friday and go back on Sunday night. Their place is just four miles west of where Velon lives now.

"My Uncle Jack used to feed a bunch of pigs for butchering and my Grandma gave me a weanling pig for doing chores. I wasn't very old, but I sold that and the following summer I bought a Holstein calf. My Uncle Jack picked it up for me at the stockyards and I bottle fed it all summer. I sold it and did that for a couple of more summers. When I had enough money, I bought a purebred heifer from Bob and Monette in the Hub Breeders Sale. I would have been about 11. She just stayed with their cows and I got hooked up with Neil and Lorna McMillan showing cattle at summer shows," explains Velon.

"I kept some daughters from her and had the odd bull calf that got sold and that was how my herd started. I bought my first quarter of pasture when I was sixteen out in the valley. Bob bought two quarters and I bought one. I couldn't have done it without him, I had no collateral. Having no



RGP Cyclone 120C – 1993 Agribition Reserve Junior Futurity Champion, sold to Reich Charolais, ND



Bob and Monette received the SCA Honour Scroll in 2001 from Cam Sparrow

“Having no children of their own, they generously made a place for me in the operation and helped me get started.”

children of their own, they generously made a place for me in the operation and helped me get started. Once I was old enough to do more than simple chores, I spent most of my time here and stayed in Bob and Monette’s basement.”

“When I graduated, I took welding and I knew I didn’t want to do that my whole life. I talked to Bob and Monette and Bob cosigned a loan through Farm Credit so I could buy more cows. Bob and Monette had a production sale on the farm in 1990 and I think I was volume buyer in the sale and that is when I moved here full time. Bob gave me free reign to breed my females from his semen tank.”

Originally the farm was Gordon Palmer and his sons Larry, Jack and Bob. Before Gordon and Hazel passed away, they dispersed their land to their kids. So when Velon decided he was going to farm, his Mom (the only daughter of Hazel and Gordon). made a deal to see that Velon got her half section. “That really helped because I could use it for collateral on other land.”

Larry, Jack and Bob continued the family operation and now it is being taken over by the next generation. Doug, Lenny and Velon are three cousins who are getting it done.



A sample of the commercial herd

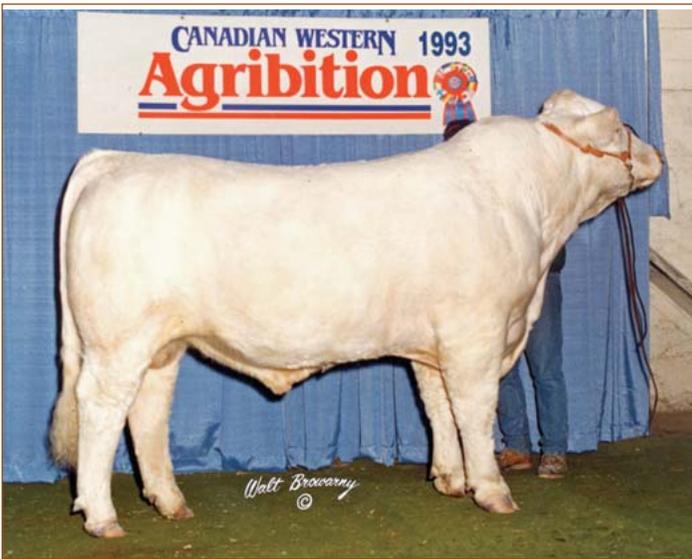
“I first moved into a little house by the highway and rode my dirt bike back and forth. Then I moved an old house trailer where the house is now, but I showered and ate at Monette’s, as I couldn’t afford to get the plumbing and electricity done until near the end of summer.”

“Once I moved here, I started to

buy a bit of land here and there. Bob and Monette both taught me about cows. At that time, Monette spent as much time outside as Bob. I never was in 4-H, but I did go to CCYA attending the Regina, Ridgetown and Waterton conferences. I was on the Saskatchewan Charolais Youth Board for a few years with Robyn Carles, Victor Rosso and maybe Layne Evans. We decided to have a goat raffle at Agribition to make some money. Layne and I went and bought this goat and we sold raffle tickets. It was the kind of raffle where you bought a ticket and put someone else’s name on it and it was supposed to be fun, but we got into so much trouble. The darn goat got away and ran down the front of the stalls and cattle were spooked and jerked back on their neck ropes and ropes were breaking. George Anderson made the draw and Dick Carmichael won. He donated it back to the juniors, so we sold it in the Agribition sale and an Ontario breeder bought it. Then we got in trouble from the goat breeders because they thought we were making



Bob and Velon believe in breeding performance



Two of the most influential bulls in the program in the last 20 years were E-CEE Katmandu 200B (left) and Merit 7879U (Rhapsody) (above)

fun of their breed. It didn't turn out as we had hoped."

Velon started dating Leah in the summer of 1997 and they were married in 2001. She convocated from U of S and is a Chartered Professional Accountant. In January, 2002, the opportunity to open her own firm in Davidson arose when a lady who had been doing a lot of bookkeeping retired. Leah started her own business renting a space in a law office and later bought the dental building and renovated it. "It works great because it has a little suite in it and the kids can come after school and go to their music and dance lessons and come home with me when their activities are finished," explains Leah.

"The first summer after I started my own business I found out I was pregnant, so I hired someone to work for me and I think I took two weeks off when Hunter was born. Thank God for my Mother as she helped me a lot. I have the same full time employee now and we put some long hours in during tax season, but we work well together. I do municipal audits, corporates in town, bookkeeping, payrolls and village audits but the farm corporates are the majority of my clients."

Now Velon farms about twenty quarters of grain land and fifteen quarters of pasture. He has about

160-170 commercial cows and 90 purebreds. Bob has about 60 purebreds. Hunter, the oldest son of Velon and Leah, has started building a herd. Bob has let him go in and pick some heifers from his pen for doing chores and stuff. He has six purebreds and one commercial cow now. I also bought a Stars donation heifer last year and gave it to Hunter for all the work he does to start his commercial herd."

The commercial cows are basically Simmental/Red Angus. They started out Charcross cows but they are slowly switching over and any replacements they buy are red and red baldies now. Velon has been buying replacements out of the Agribition Commercial sale and also from a bull customer in a Swift Current sale. "I stay with the people I know are raising their own and not people that go out and buy groups to make packages. Then I know what I am getting. I like to use bigger performance bulls on them. I would say the cows are 1500 to 1700 pounds. I have been buying more Simmental influenced females, so they do get a bit bigger."

"Our commercial and purebred herds calve at the same time and we start in January. When we breed, our commercial cows get two fresh bulls everyday. We rotate them through the

herd, pulling two out of a pen and putting two fresh ones in. We do that for the first cycle for sure so the bulls are always fresh and don't get run down. Then I usually have some extra bulls that I put out with them when they go to pasture. The bulls are always fresh and it keeps them in shape and keeps your calving tightened up. You can't do that with the purebreds."

"Our commercial calves probably average 108-110 pounds. If my cows can have that calf, I want it, I don't want a 90 lb. calf. In my opinion, it is like having a 50 bushel canola crop and throwing 10 bushels away because your bin won't hold it. You want as much out of them as you can get. It is January when we calve so we are around to make sure we don't lose ears. I don't think I would have any trouble calving on grass, but the last few years we have weaned calves that were pushing a thousand pounds. We wean as soon as I can get off the combine and we sell at SLS in Saskatoon. I have marketed my calves privately. I wanted to market my calves in a pre-sort weighing them off the truck because they are old enough. I would lose too much with shrink on an overnight stand. I also wanted to sell as a package, not mixed in with anyone else's cattle. Saskatoon allows me to do that and we have topped

continued on page 24

"In my opinion, it is like having a 50 bushel canola crop and throwing 10 bushels away because your bin won't hold it."



RGP 481P – A 12 year old female that shows the soundness and udder quality in the herd. She is out of a Katmandu daughter.

their sale for that day. We may keep smaller or later cattle or twins and feed them to finish. Those are the ones you make the most money feeding anyway.”

“We used to finish all of the calves here. The way the markets have been with calf prices so high, it just hasn’t been worth feeding them. I know what these calves will do. I think anybody that sells bulls should have to fatten and market them once in their life. They should see what they rail and what they get in return. I think it might change some guys’ opinions on what they want to raise.”

Palmers used to sell their bulls privately. They sold some through Regina Bull Sale and some through the SCA sale in Saskatoon. They sold some in a sale in Cereal, Alberta, with George Anderson for four or five years. He took the black bulls and Palmers took the whites. When they started their own sale, some of those customers have continued to be customers by traveling to the sale.

“We don’t buy a lot of females, maybe one or two a year. We keep our own replacements. We used to do a lot of A.I.ing, but we have moved away from that. We have our own bulls that walk and for the most part the bloodlines that we use are exclusive to us. There isn’t a whole lot of it out there.”

“We completed our fifth sale in 2016 and I will never go back to not having one. It just saves so much time. It is a

little stressful at the time, with the weather and wondering if anyone is going to show up, but it is so much better. We don’t sell any bulls after the sale. We probably could sell one or two more but I just refuse. If people want something from here they have to be here on sale day.”

“I think anybody that sells bulls should have to fatten and market them once in their life.”

“We used to show a little bit but I didn’t really enjoy it. I like going to the shows but I didn’t really enjoy the hours you have to spend getting them ready. I like the cattle, but I like the way we do it now. When I was on the road we used to do all the summer shows and I didn’t have to miss school. We went to Davidson, Hanley, Buffalo Days, Swift Current and Prince Albert. Everything has gotten so much bigger and busy. When I first came here we only farmed 3000 acres and it was half and half. You had time to do other things, it isn’t like that now.”

“All of our calves get weighed when they are born - commercial and purebred. Everything goes through the barn and before they leave they have been weighed, tagged, dehorned, vaccinated and castrated. We have enough buildings here that if it is really cold they can stay in somewhere until they are a week or

ten days old. I have a little chute that has a scale under it where I can clamp the head down to dehorn. I don’t record the commercial weights, but lots of times when you are pushing a calf up we like to guess at their weight. When you look at the scale, we are often surprised.”

“Our cows stay out in pastures until pretty much Christmas. When we bring them home they get vaccinated and ready for calving. Our purebred and commercial cows run together in the winter. If they can’t hold their own with the commercial cows, they shouldn’t be here. They stay separate in the summer so the bull power is sorted, but in the winter they are together.”

“The get Scourguard, Ivomec and IBR once a year a year at Christmas. We switched over to using a live vaccine on all our cows, which you aren’t supposed to be able to do. Once they have been vaccinated open, you can vaccinate them as a bred for IBR. My vet talked me into trying this about ten years ago and we haven’t

had any trouble. We make sure all of our replacement heifers are done before we put the bulls in with them. Anything we buy gets vaccinated with a non-live vaccine when they get here and we write it down on the board to vaccinate that animal with live before the bulls get turned out.”

“When we process, I give all of the needles myself. Quite a few years ago, we had a guy working on the other side of the chute and about an hour later I looked at my empty bottles and his, and he only had about half as many as me. We had one of those guns that was self loading and his was bugging up and squirting back in the bottle. Ever since then, we threw those guns away and we use single needles and give them all. We have our chute setup beside a little shed with a sliding window and there is a table and a heater inside in case it’s cold and that is where the kids are.

continued on page 26

They fill the needles and line them up by the window for every animal. It takes us about 3 hours, we do about 100 per hour."

"There are two uncles and three cousins farming together. Everybody owns their own land, and everybody decides what they want to seed on their land but all of the equipment is shared on the grain side. We crop around 10,000 acres. The two uncles, Bob and Jack, are semi-retired. They don't run any equipment anymore, they just tell us what they want done and we do it. We all work together to get the job done. Everybody runs their own piece of equipment and you are responsible for the maintenance of it. You don't have to guess who or when the oil was changed in a tractor, for example."

"They each kind of have their own jobs, too." Leah explains. "Len has always run a drill, Velon keeps everybody working by running for seed, water, chemical, etc.; and Doug runs the sprayer. They all know their job and it just works."

"Now we have a couple of hired men and one trades off on the drill with Len. The other one runs a drill and I trade off if he needs it," says Velon. "When we trade a piece of

equipment, the guy that is going to drive it kind of gets the final say in what we get."

"The cost of the equipment, including insurance and repairs, is pro-rated per acre for each owner. It all runs through us and I sort it all out," explains Leah. "All of our crew grain farms and we all have cattle except Doug. So I have to figure out who has shares in each piece of equipment and allocate expenses accordingly." Her accounting knowledge is necessary to keep all of it straight.

They built a house in place of their house trailer and moved in with their four children in 2013.

Hunter is into hockey, football and basketball and he is 14. He can run all kinds of equipment on the farm, he runs the payloader, cleans corrals, combines, cuts most of the hay, picks bales and he knows the cows. "We did a sort through the pens one day for how the cows were going to get bred. He came home from school and didn't think it was good enough, so he pulled his cows out and moved them around to be bred by different bulls."

Halle is 12 and is interested in dance and volleyball. She likes cleaning and cooks a bit. She has been babysitting since she was nine. She helped a lot

since she was six. She does do some outside work but her preference would be inside. She keeps the office clean, fills all of the needles when they process and she can drive a payloader.

Hayla is 9 and she does dance and loves to swim. She loves to be outside and helped Velon sort this spring. She will be able to do more in the coming years when she gets a little older.

Hinton, better known as Mitt, is 6. He mimics the work on the farm in his play. When they are sorting cows, he has his corrals set up in his room and sorts cows. When they are seeding, he is seeding his fields. He rides around all day with Hunter or Velon in the field. He enjoys picking bales with Hunter. He is in tune with what is happening on the farm.

This summer Leah had a swimming pool built outside their house. It saw a lot of use and will be enjoyed for many years.

Bob and Monette really enjoy having the 'grandkids' around and recognize their hard work, encouraging them in school and on the farm. Seeing the next generation show interest in their life's work is rewarding.



Photo: Lee Gunderson