



OSU grades quality

Saddle and Sirloin Club stamps OSU 'approved'

Nine members of the Oklahoma State University family have been hung in Kentucky—and the Pokes are proud of it.

The OSU-connected folks are swinging away on the historic walls of the prestigious Saddle and Sirloin Club portrait gallery in Louisville, Ky. Their portraits are among 340 richly colored oil paintings adorning the club's halls and paying homage to the greatest leaders to impact the livestock industry since the mid-1700s.

"It humbles you to be included with people you have recognized as leaders over the years," said Robert Totusek, former OSU animal science professor and department head and a 1997 gallery honoree.

Totusek was recognized, among other things, for playing a key role in shifting the meat industry to the lean animals seen today, instead of the short, overly fat cattle that were popular before 1960.

Other honorees from OSU include:

- W.L. Blizzard, former Oklahoma A&M College dean of agriculture and 1939 honoree;
- Albert "Al" Darlow, former Oklahoma A&M College vice president and 1958 honoree;
- Hilton Briggs, OSU associate director of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and 1978 honoree;
- Frank Baker, OSU graduate, former OSU dean of agriculture and 1986 honoree;

- James C. Hillier, OSU Department of Animal Science head and 1993 honoree;
- Orville K. Sweet, OSU graduate, former chief executive officer of the American Polled Hereford Association and of the National Pork Producers Council, and 1998 honoree;
- Lowell Walters, former OSU professor of animal science and 2000 gallery honoree; and
- Dan Daniel, OSU graduate, University of Georgia animal science professor and department head and 2001 honoree.

"The OSU animal science department has always been very dedicated to serving animal agriculture through research, extension and teaching," said Totusek. "So whether that person was a member of the faculty here, or graduated with a degree from here, that commitment was instilled in them."

The effects of the leadership and vision of OSU's gallery honorees are apparent in the agricultural practices of today.

The honorees are responsible for founding the Beef Improvement Federation; coining the phrase "Pork. The other white meat;" initiating cattle tele-auctions; setting the standard for meat judging teams; expanding OSU teaching and research facilities; creating beef breed association performance programs and the list goes on.

"Above all, the honorees provided high-impact leadership throughout academia and agriculture," said Totusek.

Commitment to agriculture is a common thread among all of the Saddle and Sirloin Club gallery honorees. Founded in 1903 in Chicago, the gallery is the largest collection of portraits in the world devoted to a single industry.

From Isaac Newton, who is credited with founding the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to William Hatch, who authored the bill to establish agricultural experiment stations in every state, the OSU Cowboys are in good company.

"Anyone who has ever been in the Saddle and Sirloin Club in Chicago was in awe because they were in the presence of history and the people who made that history," said Totusek.

Originally nestled inside the Saddle and Sirloin clubrooms in Chicago, the gallery is a pictorial tribute to the first, last and best breeders, teachers, administrators, researchers, packers, auctioneers, financial advisers and other individuals who formed the history of the livestock industry.

The club itself was the idea of Robert B. Ogilvie, secretary of the American Clydesdale Association. With some help from Arthur Leonard, director of the Chicago Stock Yards, and Alvin Sanders, editor of the Breeder's Gazette, he founded the club as a meeting place.

"It was a club for people who frequented the Chicago



Lowell Walters (far left) was recognized by the Saddle and Sirloin Club in 2000 for his leadership and impact on the livestock industry. His winning record as a coach is still unequaled. (Photo of the 1953 OSU meats judging team courtesy of OSU Department of Animal Science)

Stock Yards, which was the largest livestock marketing facility in the world," said Totusek. "There were commission men, breed association people, buyers and packing house people; they all gathered there at various times to break bread and tip the glass."

Including a gallery in the Saddle and Sirloin clubrooms was also Ogilvie's idea. He donated the first portraits, mostly of early British breeders, to the collection. Other donations eventually followed, and eventually, a person was selected each year to be honored and enshrined in the gallery.

Life hasn't been easy for the gallery. Not a single portrait escaped destruction when the gallery burnt during the 1934 stockyard fire, which also destroyed most of the yards. The charred art was later re-created by commissioned painters and the club resumed activity before the year was out. The gallery also made a significant move.

"After the Chicago Stock Yards closed, it was no longer appropriate for the portrait gallery or the Saddle and Sirloin Club to be in that location," said Totusek.

The Executive West Hotel and West Hall of the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center are the new home of the Saddle and Sirloin portrait gallery. Portraits of past honorees oversee inductions of new honorees, announcements of winning livestock judging teams at the North American International Livestock Exposition and the passing of members of the livestock industry as they wander through.

Few of these spectators realize how much work is involved in the nomination process, but David Buchanan, OSU professor of animal science, and Brad Morgan, OSU associate professor of animal science, know the drill. Morgan and Buchanan were respectively instrumental in the nominations of Walters and Totusek.

They were members of the small committees that worked to develop extensive biographies of the nominees so selection committees would have an accurate account of what the nominee had accomplished. Then letters of support were collected.

"It took several months to gather all the letters," said Buchanan. "You end up enlisting help from people in the industry, in education and from former students."

More than 40 letters were collected for Totusek's nomination.

Once the nominations are made, an anonymous committee selects an individual for his or her impact on the industry and dedication to public service. Anonymous committees help maintain the integrity of the honor by preventing political factors from being involved in the process, said Totusek.

Once the nominee is selected, the local committee is responsible for raising money to fund a banquet in honor of its nominee and to have a portrait painted.

At least \$15,000 was needed to cover the expenses for Totusek's ceremony. His committee managed to raise \$30,000.

"The rest will eventually be used for scholarships for animal science students," said Buchanan.

Scholarships are just one way OSU's leaders who have made the cut and taken their place on the walls of the gallery continue to influence the future of the industry.

Will more OSU graduates grace the hallowed halls of the Saddle and Sirloin portrait gallery in the future?

"No question about it," said Totusek.

By Martha Ostendorf, Powderville, Mont.