REMEMBERING BILL WEEKS AND AAA

By Merlin Carlson

Growing up on a small dairy farm with grade cows, I began farming in 1950 with my soils. Marilyn and I used 40 cows at Prairie Grove in northern Illinois. We had become interested in Registered Holsteins from our neighbors, such as Don Ellingson, Clyde Curtis, Lawrence Larson and George Crawford. We decided to invest into purchasing some registered cattle. In 1954, we bought 10 registered heifers but because we were new in the business, they had been mispronounced to us. I became discouraged and told my friend Don Ellingson I was going to quit. Don encouraged me to attend the Boone – Winnebago Black and White Banquet which we did.

Bill Weeks was the speaker, explaining his A.A breeding program using “sharp” and “round.” After the speech I talked with Bill and he offered to come look at our heifers. I remember at the coffee table he wrote some notes on what the daughters of these heifers would look like and what the calves they were carrying would look like. As these animals calved in, it turned out to be like what Bill had predicted.

As Bill had just moved to Rockford, he asked if he could come out and work on the new profit system of apportioning numbers after the letters identifying the biggest need in the mating. He said I spent many hours in my Square Paws Holstein herd. I think for every mating we looked at, the offering turned out precisely as he had predicted.

Bill and I became good friends and continued to develop my registered herd. He helped me select a Raven son that was RRS registered herd. He helped me as I continued to develop my predicted.

One of my first jobs at Arlinda was to go to that sale and look over the herd. I was really put the bone and strength in the cattle, what they still milked well.

The most interesting part was that she was bred to an R.R R bull that made the AI stud the production.

We called the son she had for as Panama Farm Arlinda Chief, named after our friend that was head of the dairy department at Modesto Junior College, a full blooded American Indian. As Chief matured, he developed into a very strong cow 4 bull. When his daughters were weaning, we thought they were too round front-ended to work well enough, but when they freshened, our milker, Joe Silva, said Wally and I, “We’ve got a bull whose daughters like to milk.”

Bill Weeks was right again. As Arlinda Chief daughters developed around the country, he became the highest production bull of the breed. Even more importantly than that, I think he sired more high production sons and grandsons than any other Holstein bull. I thank Bill Weeks and A.A for guiding me through my journey with Registered Holsteins. It’s been a great life spending 40 years with Registered Holsteins, helping some of the finest breeders in selecting and merchandising their cattle.

I want to send greetings and thanks to Bill’s daughter, Mary. I remember the day you were born. For many years, I drank a lot of coffee at your mother and father’s house in Rockford.

And thanks to Holstein World for a great tribute to Bill Weeks, a great cow man. 

Editor’s Note: An Illinois native, Merlin Carlson spent much of his Holstein career in California where he managed Arlinda Farms in Turlock and then was a Holstein auctioneer and sale manager for many years. He has retired back to his home state at Rockford, IL. He wrote this letter in response to the focus on Bill Weeks featured in the April issue of the World.

Looking Back