



A Message to the Membership

President Alan Chittenden, Schodack Landing, N.Y., spoke to the membership at the recent 155th annual meeting of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) annual meeting in LaCrosse, Wis. Below is his message to you.

As I look around the room this morning at the many familiar faces, both young and old, I am reminded of the passion and dedication for the Jersey cow that runs through the veins of us all. As I was deliberating on what comments I wanted to make this morning, I decided that by the virtue of my last name, I had the unique opportunity to bring in a little history.

What a long way our Jersey cow has come. When my grandfather, Stanley, stood in this position in the early 60s, he had the challenge of uniting a group of breeders who were not all focused on one common goal. Fortunately, he had the privilege of working alongside some other breed icons like Joe Lyon, Amzi Rankin and Mr. Jim Cavanaugh.

The message that they were selling was 3-fold:

1. Sell the dairy industry on the value of Jersey milk
2. Dramatize the efficiency of the Jersey cow
3. Increase the production average of Jersey cows to make them viable for the commercial dairymen

Move forward a generation to the late 90s, and my father Paul had the good fortune of serving at a time when a little thing called Multiple Component Pricing was implemented in 85% of the country. Thank you, Calvin Covington, Mr. Richard Clauss and the other leaders at this time. The great demand created for Jersey cattle also meant that they had to take some heat over the Jersey Expansion Program. And, being consistent with his predecessors, in his address to the membership my Dad stated: "The first item on my list is to continue to focus on profitable production. We must insure the Jersey can produce a pound of fat or a pound of protein or a pound of cheese more efficiently than any other breed. Most of today's and future dairy producers will select the breed of cow they milk not for the color of the cow but for the cow that makes the most money."

Enough reminiscing about the past.



Where are we today in this current generation? You can read in your annual report that last year we had all-time records for cows and herds enrolled on REAP. Production continues to increase and we surpassed 1,000 pounds of fat for the first time in history. Our net income from operations was able to stay on the positive side of the ledger. Our directed research updating the Capper-Cady Sustainability study indicated that we still have the 'greatest' cow, best suited for the future of the dairy industry.

But don't be mistaken. Your board and your staff are not comfortable or complacent about our position. In reviewing the old notes from previous years, more than once I came across Mr. Amzi's southern philosophy warning 'the most dangerous time in a hog's life is when he is real fat.'

And why the uneasiness about the future? You all know the trends of the dairy industry and agriculture in general. How does your milk price today compare with a year ago? At what point do simple economics challenge your loyalty to our association and its programs? And what about those new to our association that might not even share those loyalties we have forged over time?

Genomics, sexed semen, beef on dairy and the plethora of new technologies available to help us manage and monitor our herds have changed the way we think and operate as breeders and dairy producers. Recently completed studies on the risk of culling and sustainability have provided useful information as some of our committees work to update and refine the indexes and formulas to help you breed a more complete and profitable cow.

Directors and staff continue to challenge each other on ways to collect and assimilate data and then return it to you through services and programs that provide value. What changes to existing programs or new ones need to be created to remain relevant in this rapidly changing industry?

In closing, I would like to say that we still have the cow, the product and the staff that is second to none. I ask that you as breeders, members and Jersey supporters continue to work with us by sharing your thoughts and ideas as we strive to keep our Jersey cow at the head of the class for future generations.