

2022 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Dennis Schmig



By Twila Schmitt
Contributing Writer

Dennis Schmig of rural Stockholm humbly describes himself as an "old cow man." Others see so much more as Schmig will be honored during the 77th Annual Watertown Winter Farm Show.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, annually honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to their name. In 2022, two individuals will share the honor - Dennis Schmig and Al Raeder of Watertown.

Schmig was instrumental in establishing the first Simmental Show & Sale at the Watertown Winter Farm Show in 1981. He said at first they were nearly begging area producers to bring cattle. Eventually, they had to limit the number.

"It's a great place to showcase your cattle," added Schmig, who along with his wife Joanne, operates Schmig Simmental Ranch which is now in its 39th production sale.

The 77th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for Feb. 9-12, 2022, at the Codington County Extension Complex.

As a breed superintendent, Schmig has seen lots of changes over the years. He recalls the Simmental Association hosting coffee and cookies in the barn -- and the hospitality room at a local hotel where everyone from county agents to area bankers would gather to swap stories.

Now with the availability of video auctions, the purchasing audience is far greater. When a bull was sold to an Arkansas buyer, he and Joanne drove part way to make the delivery.

"It's amazing that we now have the ability to sell bulls all over the country."

Growing up, Schmig was one of nine kids in his family. He remembers attending the Farm Show with his uncles while it was still held in the City Auditorium.

"I started farming back in 1968. After graduating from high school in 1962, I had worked in meat packing plants and also drove milk truck from 1968 through 1970," he said. "Along with farming, I worked as an AI technician and eventually sold semen for an AI company for 25 years."

He and his first wife had moved onto the farm where he now lives in 1977. They had four children, Theresa, Denise, Nathan and Becky.

"When I started farming, I bought commercial cows, mostly Shorthorn. In the '50s and '60s we saw the major breeds, Hereford, Angus and the Shorthorn also, were going to the "belt-buckle high" type of cattle. I knew if we were to survive in the cattle business, we were going to need more pounds of beef to sell."

Schmig then started using Charolais bulls in 1970 and even bought some purebred cows. "I started using AI in 1971 with Charolais and Simmental. When we got our first half blood Simmentals in production, we went entirely to Simmental. We didn't join the American Simmental Association until 1975, so our ASA number is 7100."

In January 1982, he met Joanne Boone-- and in July of that year the couple married and he gained two more sons, Bob and Roy. Together, the couple has 15 grandchildren and 5 great-

grandchildren.

"Joanne and I have been best friends and partners and continue to run the ranch with help from time to time from family and great friends and neighbors who we help back and forth with working cattle," he said.

The pair still chuckles about the day Schmig was informed about being selected for this year's Farm Show dedication. "Keith Mack showed up at the house and we had some words and arm wrestled," said Schmig. Joanne said that her husband didn't tell her the reason for Mack's visit for several days.

"Of course, I knew she'd find out eventually," said Schmig.

Travis Nelsen, Ag Committee Chairman, said that it is truly an honor to recognize Schmig as one of the Farm Show Dedication recipients for his many years of involvement in the Watertown Winter Farm Show.

"Dennis has always been a strong supporter of the Farm Show and was very instrumental in the development of the Simmental Livestock Show," said Nelsen.

While the 2021 Farm Show had a limited agenda due to the COVID pandemic, Schmig said the Simmental sale day was "one of my brighter days last winter." He's looking forward to catching up with all the friends he's made over the years and seeing folks he doesn't get to see very often. The "old cow man" says he currently has no plans to retire.

"I maybe should have done something else with my life - but here I am," he said.

Congratulations, Dennis Schmig!