



2008 Beef Improvement Federation
Annual Research Symposium & Annual Meeting
June 30 – July 3, 2008 Calgary, Alberta, Canada



NEWS RELEASE

Donald Vaniman Honored as Pioneer

CALGARY, Alberta (July 3, 2008) – The Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) honored Don Vaniman, the first Executive Secretary of the American Simmental Association, with the 2008 Pioneer Award on July 3rd during the organization's 40th annual meeting held in Calgary, Alberta, hosted by the Canadian Beef Breeds Council.

The Award recognizes individuals who have made lasting contributions to the improvement of beef cattle and who have had a major role in the acceptance performance reporting and documentation as the primary means to make genetic change in beef cattle populations.

Don Vaniman became the first paid employee of the American Simmental Association (ASA) when it was formed in 1968, shortly after the first Simmental cattle were imported into North America from Europe.

Born and raised in California, he graduated from Montana State University.

After working for a couple of large ranches in Montana and Oregon, he had contemplated returning to college to work on a doctorate in animal nutrition, but those plans were changed when he received his military draft notice. After his military service was completed in the mid 1960s, Vaniman became Executive Secretary of the Montana Beef Performance Association, an organization whose performance principles paralleled the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF).

When the ASA was formed by a group of cattlemen who were heavily focused on performance, Vaniman accepted the position of Executive Secretary. He was described by a member of the hiring committee as "completely dedicated to performance and a tremendous promoter." Initially, as the only employee, he was housed in a small log cabin and personally typed registration certificates on a manual typewriter. Within five years, he was managing a staff of 56.

As history has recorded, Vaniman was the right man for the right job. During his tenure, which ran until 1978, the ASA assumed a place on the cutting edge of the beef industry. Many of the innovative programs that were instituted during his watch have now become standards of performance throughout the industry.

For instance, in 1971, ASA became the first beef breed organization to publish a sire summary. Within a short span of a few years, every beef breed had followed suit. Today, breeding decisions throughout the industry hinge largely on sire summary data.

Under Vaniman's watch, other noteworthy accomplishments occurred:

- ASA was named winner of the first BIF "Association of the Year" award.

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- In 1973, a Cow Summary was produced, recognizing the contributions of outstanding females of the breed.
- He was the driving force behind the conception and ultimate formation of the World Simmental Fleckvieh Federation, an organization that now encompasses more than 30 countries around the world.
- Carcass Value Per Day of Age contests were established as a forerunner of modern carcass performance standards.
- In order to strengthen grass-roots involvement, he organized 40 state Simmental Associations, most of which are still active.

Since departing from ASA, Vaniman has not strayed from his agricultural roots, and has operated a successful real estate business in Bozeman called "Don Vaniman Ranch Broker." His wife, Cecilia, is a member of an architectural firm and their son, Shaun, maintains a veterinary practice in Oregon.

Throughout his lifetime, Don Vaniman has never wavered from his devotion to performance in beef cattle. That dedication assured that the Simmental breed, and indeed, the entire beef industry, would move into the future on a science-based foundation.

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For information on the Beef Improvement Federation visit: www.beefimprovement.org