

Women of ASA

By Emme Troendle

Editor's Note: This is the fifth article in a series highlighting significant women in the Simmental industry.

An advocate for the beef industry and heavily involved with the Simmental community, Susan Schlickau Russell is one of many influential women in the Simmental industry.

Susan Schlickau Russell

Shaped by a family actively involved in the cattle industry, Susan Schlickau Russell, Sugar City, Colorado, credits the mentorship that she received as a child for propelling her to a lifelong affinity for giving back to the beef industry.

Growing up in south-central Kansas, Russell spent her childhood like many ranch kids, working cattle and doing chores in between school and homework. Russell fondly recalls traveling the US with her parents, attending livestock shows, cattle functions, and 4-H events, some even prior to being able to exhibit cattle herself. She recalls, **"Many volunteers were charitable with their time, helping shape my life, but my true mentors were my parents."**



Susan Russell

Her father was the American Hereford Association president in 1974, and her mother was the first woman president of the Kansas Board of Agriculture in 1988. Russell shares, "Being involved and giving back was something that was encouraged in my family. I was raised with the mindset that you give back more than you receive."

Acknowledged as a leader in the Simmental community, Russell served six years on the ASA Board of Trustees, including a term on the Executive Committee. She says, **"I don't see 'men' or 'women' jobs, but rather, tasks that simply need done. I believe that we all need to be a voice for agriculture, and we need to 'pay it forward' by helping to develop our future leaders."**

Heavily involved with Simmental organizations, Russell has been the secretary/treasurer for the Colorado Simmental Association since 1998; a primary coordinator for the National Western Stock Show in Denver; assisted at AJSA National and Regional Classics; is an active participant in the Colorado Cattlemen's Association; volunteers for her local 4-H and church, and many other community and beef-centered activities.

With a bachelor's degree in journalism from Kansas State University and master's work from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Russell worked for 15 years as a newspaper and magazine editor prior to starting Reflected R Ranch and WW Feed & Supply LLC with her husband, Curtis.

Together, Susan and Curtis run 140 head of registered Simmental near Sugar City, in southeast Colorado, and sell their top yearling bulls at the High Altitude Bull Sale. Dedicated to performance, they also consign bulls to ASA's Carcass Merit Program.

The feed mill and retail store, based in La Junta, merchandises and markets livestock feed and supplies, providing custom mixing, nutritional livestock consulting, artificial insemination services, as well as bulk feed and liquid nitrogen deliveries.

Her two sons, Jason and Chad, were active leaders and mentors in AJSA, 4-H, and FFA, in their youth. Today, Jason works for Ruger in New Hampshire, and Chad is finishing his dual bachelors in mathematics and animal science at Colorado State University-Fort Collins. Both of them help on the ranch whenever time permits.

Russell believes that the role she plays within the Simmental community is a reflection of what her parents and mentors encouraged her to do, and what she hopes to provide to others. "Everyone has a niche or talent, no matter which sex they are, but sometimes, people are a little wary of stepping out of their comfort zone," she says.

"Figure out your niche, what you are good at, and don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try those things."

Today, Russell continues to write for special projects, such as a contributor on the book, *150 Years of Kansas Beef*, and works on creating direct-mail quarterly newsletters for the ranch and retail business, while maintaining related web and social media sites.

"There are so many industry leaders who have greatly contributed to the beef business. I am just glad to be a part of the team, where I can use my organizational and communication skills to aid the beef industry," Russell concludes. ♦



Russell with Reflected R Simmental cattle.