

The 2019 Fair book is dedicated to...

Donald R. Thompson-

a Bourbon County FFA honorary Chapter Farmer, began his farming career upon graduating from Bourbon County High School in 1949. Donald was Bourbon County FFA's first American Farmer Degree (highest award for FFA) recipient in 1952. Crops of corn, hay, tobacco, sheep and cattle were raised and managed at the four corners of Houston Antioch and Bryan Station Roads. Raising and preparing top quality breeding sheep began in the early 70's, when Mike, the oldest of three sons, became an FFA member at BCHS.

Donald stated, "When I was in FFA, I never won a blue ribbon, and I made a vow to myself that my children would succeed in winning blue ribbons. After purchasing three registered Suffolk Rams in 1973 from Robert Hall Suffolk's I bought the two boys two registered Suffolk ewe lambs each, six lambs every year for three years."

That initial start began a history of award-winning ribbons and trophies throughout the various summer shows and fairs. The Harold Barber Memorial trophy at the Kentucky State Fair (award for overall top Sheep Exhibitor) was won eight consecutive years by Mike, Paul, and Gary. In 1976 and 1977, Paul and Gary won the Grand Champion carcass lamb at the State Fair. The original Kentucky State Fair Sale of Champions was started in 1980 where Paul exhibited the Grand Champion. 1983 and 1984 were return trips to the Sale of Champions for Gary with the Reserved Grand Champion Market Lambs. Donald was a member of the Sale and Show Committee for five years.

The tradition continued with a nephew and all nine of his grandchildren. Granddaughter, Brook, and grandson, Kris, won State Fair scholarships. Showmanship and market lamb awards were won by grandchildren. Josh, Jacob, and Seth were recipients of overall Grand Champion Showman and many Champion market lambs across Kentucky and the Kentucky State Fair. Jacob and Seth ended the family era, showing their last year in 2017.

What started as a small sheep farming operation grew to a flock of as many as 500 head. Purebred Suffolks and Hampshires as well as Crossbred lambs were raised to sell to 4-H and FFA members for their projects. Some youth sheep exhibitors that couldn't afford to buy lambs were loaned lamb to show as a project during the show season, then return them back to the farm after shows concluded.

In 1978, the FFA presented Donald with an award in recognition for his contribution and assistance to the FFA. In 1993, the Bourbon County Schools honored him with the "Give More of Yourself" award. Donald often sup-

plied awards for the annual Bourbon County Livestock Club banquet and the Bourbon County Fair sheep shows. The Round Robin Showmanship Award given at the Bourbon County Fair is named in his honor, "The Donald R. Thompson Supreme Showmanship Award," started in 2006, won in 2007 by Josh and 2012 by Jacob, both grandsons.

Even though Donald did not receive a blue ribbon while in school, he always gleamed with pride seeing his grandchildren bring in blue ribbons, rosettes, and banners and has been instrumental for many 4-H and FFA students to do likewise. His knowledge and dedication to the agricultural livestock industry has been appreciated by many.

