

John Ascuaga

John Ascuaga, son of a Basque shepherd, grew up in Idaho along with his three siblings on a self-sustaining farm raising pigs, chickens and commercial sheep. John continues to be connected to his roots, owning Jacks Valley Ranch, just south of Reno in Carson City, Nevada. He had a commercial sheep flock, utilizing Suffolk rams until recently, dispersing due to uncontrollable coyote problems. John's children were involved with the sheep; his son, Stephen, showed sheep for many years. John and his wife, Rose, still reside on the ranch today, along with his commercial Angus and Hereford cow herd.

John's formal college education was in hotel and restaurant management. He was hired as the Nugget's General Manager in 1955 and purchased the business in 1968. He and his family owned and operated John Ascuaga's Nugget Casino until 2014 when the casino was sold to Nevada based Global Gaming & Hospitality.

The Nugget All American Suffolk Show and Sale was the brain child of Bob Paasch of Donner Trail Ranch, Edwina Wagner who served as the Secretary of the California Suffolk Breeders Association and John Ascuaga. They had seen the success of the Hereford Sale at the casino and wanted to provide the same prestigious sale and venue for Suffolk breeders in the west. The first sale was held in June of 1980 with over 450 head of Suffolks entered and over \$10,000 in premiums were offered. Many Suffolks sold through this sale would go on to become champions and top sires, impacting Suffolk flocks across the country.

The Nugget All American sale continues today and has expanded to more breed divisions. The sale continues to attract breeders and buyers from across the country, selling hundreds of breeding stock each year.

When asked what his memories were for the first sale John mentions that there was a lot of interest in the sale and knew it would be successful but it would take a lot of work and the attendees experience would make the difference. The show was held in the parking garage and sheep were sold in the Celebrity Room, and when that curtain was raised the stage of Suffolks was a sight to remember...and still is today.

John remembers all of the nice sheep people he met through the years, specifically mentioning Bob Paasch and Bill Heggemeier.

John is a self-made businessman who stayed connected to his roots and helped build one of the most successful sheep sales in the Western United States. He states that his employees are what made the Nugget casino what it is and his business specifications are what made the business/customer experience top notch...including his requirement for lamb served in the casino – must be American Lamb.