

# *Terry & Joanne Renn*

## Michigan

Terry and Joanne were dairy farmers raising Registered Holsteins in the Thumb of Michigan. They were milking about 100 head of cattle and growing approximately 280 acres of corn and hay. They were blessed with three children, Paul, Janet and Dean. In 1983, their daughter Janet wanted to take a pen of lambs to the fair for her FFA project. Little did they know that project would lead them on a journey of a lifetime. After the fair was over, Joanne and Janet decided that they could not let the lambs go to market, so they were brought home. Terry said if they were going to have two ewes, they might as well add a few more so they could raise their own lambs. They purchased a few ewes from the Ohio Suffolk Sale and some mature ewes from some prominent breeders in the Ohio area. As the flock began to grow, they decided to split the flock into two groups, frame and wether type.

It was apparent they had a lot to learn about raising sheep. The frame sheep started out slow because they had very little experience with fitting and showing, unlike showing cattle. As they observed others, the fitting and showing became a little easier. They did a lot of traveling and visiting established breeders and observing shows. Eventually they were selling at different places such as the Mid West Stud Ram Sale, Ohio Suffolk Sale and the Corn Belt Sale and were exhibiting at various state fairs and NAILE.

They hired a few different guys to take a show flock around to show, finally securing the services of Ashley Craun, who took them to the next level, having numerous champions at several state fairs. One of the greatest accomplishments was being named the first Grand Champion Slick Sheared Suffolk Ewe at NAILE in 2011. "Lady Godiva" was one of their best ewes. Another highlight was having champion on an ewe lamb at the Mid West Stud Ram Sale in 2015. In 2017 they had the best headed Ram at the Big E and the best headed ewe at NAILE. They were always proud of the Suffolk heads.

Father time was starting to catch up, so the flock was dispersed in 2019 and the sheep went to several different states.

Terry enjoyed learning and serving on different boards. They were able to start a local group for the breeders in the Thumb, Tri-County Sheep Breeders. Terry also served as past-President of the Michigan Sheep Breeders and the Michigan Suffolk Breeders. In 1987 he was named chairman of the National Junior Suffolk Show and was able to bring it to Detroit, Michigan, possibly the first time it was ever in Michigan. In 1992 he helped co-chair the National Show in Kalamazoo, MI. They were the first participants in the Starter Flock program of the Michigan Sheep Breeders. Applicants completed an essay explaining why they wanted to start a flock. The winner was able to receive a mature

ewe, yearling ewe and ewe lamb with breeding rights. It was so rewarding to help mentor an upcoming Suffolk breeder. For a time, they participated in sales to Israel and Canada.

One thing the Renn's will never forget is the great group of people that they have met over the years. These are lifelong friendships that will never be forgotten.