

Bill and Marion Barlass

Bill and Marion Barlass, Janesville, Wis., have been chosen as the 72nd recipients of the Distinguished Service Award of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA).

The Distinguished Service Award is presented by the Board of Directors to *as many living AJCA members and/or members' families, who, in their opinion have rendered outstanding and unselfish service for many years and thereby made a notable contribution to the advancement of the Jersey breed in the United States.*

"Bill and Marion represent an amalgamation of two outstanding Wisconsin Jersey breeder families that have experienced unanimous success in the Jersey business for generations," writes Calvin Graber, Parker, S. D., a past AJCA and a National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ) Board member.

It would be difficult to find two people more passionate about serving and mentoring the Jersey community than Bill and Marion Barlass. Each was born into notable Jersey families in Wisconsin. Bill grew up on Gil-Bar Farms which was started by Bill's grandfather, Alfred, and his grandfather's brother. The first Jerseys in the herd were brought over from the Island of Jersey. When Bill was preparing to graduate from high school his parents decided to branch out from the family farm and create their own herd. Today's Barlass Jerseys was established in 1968. Marion was born and raised on Owens Farms Inc., now owned and operated by three of her brothers, Wilfred, Walter, and Roger.

With their shared background it was only appropriate they were brought together at the Wisconsin State Fair while showing Jerseys. Bill and Marion were married in 1975 and after college both began work on the Barlass farm. In 1987, the pair bought their current farm from Bill's parents where they have expanded the herd to 525 head. Over the years, they have raised three children whom also have

a passion for the Jersey breed.

The Barlass herd is enrolled on REAP. Their AJCA m.e. lactation average is 19,415 lbs. milk, 968 lbs. fat, 713 lbs. protein in 2021. Their 2022 appraisal average is 81.9%, with 11 Excellents and 283 Very Goods. The herd's somatic cell count is 200,000. All of their heifers are raised at three different satellite farms and



additional pasture is used during the summer. The Barlass herd has been exhibited at shows on the local, state, and national levels, including World Dairy Expo, from its beginning through 1998 and the All American Jersey Show from the start until 1999. The Barlass family also farms about 1,350 acres. The family is also busy cultivating this year's crop of alfalfa, corn, soybeans, wheat, sweet corn, and lima beans.

"I have enjoyed an acquaintance with the Barlass family for nearly 40 years and have come to the conclusion that if our beloved Jersey nation indeed had a Royal family, it would probably be the Barlass Family," said Graber.

Graber continued in his letter of support, "All three of their children enjoyed unmatched success in Jersey youth programs, and all three are deeply invested in the Jersey business as young adults. Brian and his family currently operate the Barlass Jersey dairy herd and farming operations while daughter Kristin Paul capably serves AJCA/NAJ as Director of

Field Services, and youngest son, Brett, is a very successful Jersey herd manager in the Hilmar community."

Their dedication to the Jersey cow does not go unnoticed by fellow Jersey enthusiasts.

"Bill and Marion have led a life dedicated to family, farming, Jerseys, and the agricultural industry," noted Jersey peers,

Bruce and Laura Vander Veen, Sharon, Wis.

Bill and Marion have both served on the NAJ Board of Directors, Bill for 14 years and Marion for over 10 years. Marion is one of three women to take on a director roll for NAJ. She has sat on numerous committees that are generally male populated. Though her demeanor is quiet and reserved, her voice is well respected when used and insights well received. They both served on the steering committee for the AJCA Annual Meetings in Wisconsin Dells in 2011.

Bill has served more than 25 years on the World Dairy Expo Board of Directors as well.

The couple has been very involved in the All American Jersey Show in different capacities. Marion was the 1971 National Jersey Queen and has been a chair for the National Jersey Jug Futurity Committee. Bill has been a member of the All American Open and Junior Activities committees. They both have served as Inspectors of Election during annual meetings for many years as well. Alone Bill and Marion are influential volunteers, but together they are incredibly impactful to the dairy industry.

Along with their national board participation they also are cheerful hosts for dairy enthusiasts near and far. "Hospitality has always been a way of life for Bill and Marion, something that was passed on by both the Barlass and Owens families," wrote Sydney Endres, Lodi, Wis., secretary of the Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association.

They have hosted exchange students

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from several different countries and employed many high school students who are interested in the industry, along with many 4-H clubs and FFA chapters. They even held a post conference tour for the 2018 World Jersey Cattle Bureau where they caught up with old friends and made new ones. Their hospitality goes deeper in their shared knowledge with Jersey breeders just starting out.

“Their insight was instrumental in our decision to purchase our first Jersey and were continually helpful as we expanded into the Jersey business,” stated former NAJ president, David Endres, Lodi, Wis.

Bill and Marion being the distinguished individuals they are, have also had a more persuasive impact on their Jersey breeder peers. In the late 1980s, Bill helped organize a group of colored breed herds in southeastern Wisconsin to join forces, pool their milk, and leave a processor that wasn't paying high component herds a fair price.

“From fighting to establish MCP nationally to maintaining markets for Jersey milk now and into the future, Bill and Marion have left an indelible mark,” noted the Vander Veen's.

On the global scale the Barlasses have donated to a very unique cause with the help of AJCA. “In the late 1990s, they were a part of a Wisconsin contingency that donated animals to help reintroduce Jerseys to China through an AJCA partnership,” added Sydney Endres.

Bill and Marion have encouraged many new breeders to get involved and participate in state and national Jersey programs.

“She [Marion] encouraged my father and I to sign up for the Wisconsin Jersey Breeders. Many years later, I had the privilege of appointing her to the NAJ board,” wrote former AJCA President Chris Sorenson, Pine River, Wis.

Along with their extensive participation with the AJCA and the global dairy industry, Bill and Marion are also National Dairy Shrine members, Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association vice president and president, Wisconsin dairy committees, Rock County 4-H boards, and Janesville Rotary Club member. “Their dedication as ambassadors for the Jersey breed and U.S. agriculture ranges from the worldwide stage down to their local 4-H club,” stated the Vander Veen's.

In addition to this award, the couple has also been recognized with many accolades over their years of involvement. Bill's participation in their home state was recognized with the Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association Distinguished Service Award

in 1998 and the state association's Senior Breeder Award.

Marion received the Distinguished Service Award in 1989 for being the editor of the Wisconsin Jersey Booster for 15 years. She was also named Wisconsin Farm Woman of the Year in 1997. On the national scale Marion was named World Dairy Expo Woman of the Year in 2008. Together they received the American Jersey Cattle Club Young Jersey Breeder Award in 1984 and the A.C. Thomson Herdsman Award at World Dairy Expo in 1994.

“Breeders like Bill and Marion have obviously been a significant influence on the Jersey breed,” acknowledged Sorenson.

“Each is qualified on their own merits and personal achievements and together as a couple, there is no doubt that they are deserving of such an award,” wrote the Vander Veen's.

Distinguished Service Awards

- 1954 W. W. Trout, Springfield, Ohio*
- 1955 Harold J. Turner, Bethel, Vt.*
- 1956 Judge Peter J. Shields, Sacramento, Calif.*
- 1957 R. C. Calloway, Baton Rouge, La.*
- 1958 Lynn Copeland, Nashville, Tenn.*
- 1959 Chester Folck, Springfield, Ohio*
- 1960 Ernest Greenough, Merced, Calif.*
- 1961 Paul Jackson, Wilmington, Ohio*
- 1962 Harriet J. Groos, Vancouver, Wash.*
- 1963 R. K. Stout, Lansing, Mich.*
- 1964 Herbert G. Myers, Boise, Idaho*
- 1965 Charles S. Kelly, Hudson, Wis.*
- 1966 Joseph F. Sawyer, Galt, Calif.*
- 1967 Henry P. Knolle, Sandia, Texas*
- 1968 H. I. Sawyer, Hughson, Calif.*
- 1969 M. L. Baird, Springfield, Ohio*
- 1970 E. Lea Marsh, Jr., Old Lyme, Conn.*
- 1971 Stanley N. Chittenden, New Lebanon, N.Y.*
- 1972 Arthur Dieterich, Sherman, Texas*
- 1973 Amzi Rankin, Jr., Faunsdale, Ala.*
- 1974 Capt. T. J. and Elizabeth Bay, Lynden, Wash.*
- 1975 Mrs. Thomas H. Carruthers, III, Glendale, Ohio*
- 1975 Paul Sparrow, Athens, Tenn.*
- 1976 Wyatt A. Williams, Orange, Va.*
- 1977 Dr. J. H. Arnold, Newnan, Ga.*
- 1977 Reuben R. Cowles, Statesville, N.C.*
- 1978 Jean E. Lemmermen, Tiffin, Ohio*
- 1979 John Weir Jr., Geuda Springs, Kan.*
- 1980 Clyde K. Chappell, Knoxville, Tenn.*
- 1980 Newell Mills, Fallon, Nev.*
- 1981 Harold Wright, White River Junction, Vt.*
- 1982 C. L. Collins, Jr., Sylacauga, Ala.*
- 1983 Ray Chamberlain, Wyoming, N.Y.*
- 1984 Dr. C. A. Ernstrom, Logan, Utah*
- 1985 J. F. Cavanaugh, Columbus, Ohio*
- 1986 W. Charles McGinnis, Mountville, S.C.*
- 1987 G. Joe Lyon, Toledo, Iowa*
- 1988 Dr. John Wilk, Raleigh, N.C.
- 1989 Robert Lord, Woodstock, Vt.*
- 1990 Dr. H. Duane Norman, Fulton, Md.
- 1991 Edwin L. Crotty, Trenton, N.J.*
- 1992 Richard A. Riggs, Evansville, Ind.*
- 1993 Maurice E. Core, Columbus, Ohio*
- 1994 John Giacomini, Eureka, Calif.*
- 1995 W. R. Lutz, Newton, N.C.*
- 1996 Max Gordon, Winchester, Ind.*
- 1997 Harold Owens, Frederic, Wis.*
- 1998 Richard Clauss, Hilmar, Calif.
- 1999 Elmer D. Larson, Burlington, Wash.*
- 2000 Dr. J. J. Malnati, Newberry, S.C.*
- 2001 Harold W. Roller, Weyers Cave, Va.*
- 2002 Ray R. Schooley, Marshfield, Mo.
- 2003 D.L. Strandberg, D.V.M., Alma Center, Wis.*
- 2004 Neal F. Schirm, Canal Winchester, Ohio*
- 2005 J. Lawrence Benson, New Lebanon, N.Y.
- 2006 Ted Luther, Mount Ulla, N.C.*
- 2007 Alvin Moss, Litchfield Park, Ariz.*
- 2008 David W. Spahr, Findlay, Ohio
- 2009 Dr. Robert C. and Helene C. Dreisbach, Mercer, Pa.
- 2010 Paul Chittenden, Schodack Landing, N.Y.
- 2011 Donald Sherman, Hilmar, Calif.*
- 2012 John Palmer, Cornish, Maine*
- 2013 James Ahlem, Hilmar, Calif.
- 2014 Glen and Marilyn Easter, Laurens, S.C.

- 2015 George and Shirley Barlass, Janesville, Wis.
- 2016 Charles D. “Chuck” Ahlem, Hilmar, Calif.
- 2017 Craig Rhein, Pine Grove, Pa.
- 2018 David Endres, Lodi, Wis.
Chris Sorenson, Pine River, Wis.
- 2019 David Norman, Liberty, Pa.
- 2020 Clint Collins, III, Gulf Shores, Ala.
- 2021 Calvin Graber, Parker, S.D.
- 2022 Bill and Marion Barlass, Janesville, Wis.

* deceased