

2017 Elroy Fair Book Dedication



Robert "Bob" Franke

Robert "Bob" Franke has been involved in the fairs since he joined the Sumalinda (Summit/Lindina) neighborhood 4-H club in the fall of 1944. He bought his first animal—a spring Hereford calf—in the fall of 1944 for \$82.50 and then showed it at the 1945 Elroy Fair. He continued to raise and show Herefords but added registered Holsteins to his fair entries in 1947 under the prefix of Sprucecone. Sprucecone Farms showed at Mauston, Baraboo, Adams/Friendship, Viroqua, Wisconsin State Fair, World Dairy Expo, District Black and White Show, and the State Black and White Show; but Elroy was the "home" fair.

Bob recalls that in the 1950's 4-H members could purchase half of a registered calf from the local calf club. Then they could show it at the fair. After that the 4-H member could purchase the other half and become the sole owner. If they raised the animal and she had a calf, they could show the offspring. The offspring would be considered "bred and owned" since the exhibitor had owned the original animal at the time it was bred and because they fully owned the calf. This became popular, so Bob and his dad came up with the idea for the Sprucecone Award which was to be given to the best bred and owned Holstein at the fair.

The Sprucecone Award is still given out today exclusively at the Elroy Fair. It is now sponsored by Bob's son Joel. All registered dairy breeds are eligible. The exhibitor brings their registration paper to the ring at the given time and the overall top dairy animal bred and owned by the exhibitor is named the Sprucecone Award recipient.

The Elroy Fair is very special to Bob for another reason. Bob met Beata Zirk at the Elroy Fair when she was showing registered Guernseys. Bob eventually asked Beata to the prom, and they were married about 2 years after that. Bob and Beata's children all showed at the fair and many grandchildren continue to exhibit. Bob has shared his love for the Elroy Fair with generations of future fair exhibitors.

Until a few years ago, Bob used to show his Suffolk horses. He is shown in the photo with his horse Lester at the Elroy Fair. In recent years Bob has demonstrated his love for photography at the fair by taking pictures that he shares with the fair board to help record fair activities. Bob also served as the official photographer for the Wisconsin Association of Fairs Convention for over 15 years. He has attended regional fair meetings in South Dakota and Minnesota. In 2009, Bob traveled to the International Association of Fairs and Expos in Las Vegas with the group from the Elroy Fair.

Bob has a love for fairs and always has a fair story to tell. We thank Bob for being a huge part of the Elroy Fair for 72 years. It is an honor to dedicate the 2017 Elroy Fair Book to Robert "Bob" Franke!