

Feature Article for Territory Magazine

Kansas Cattlemen's Association

By: Brandy Santos

For the second time in three years, Perry Owens is at the helm of the Kansas Cattlemen's Association, providing leadership and a sound and reasonable voice as President. Perry was featured in our 2010 Presidents' Edition, and in case some of you missed it, we will re-cap on Perry, but we will also introduce you to the organization of which he leads, the KCA.

Perry Owens is no stranger to the cattle industry. In fact, cattle are in Perry's blood. Growing up in Leoti Kansas, Perry's father was a farmer and brand inspector, and from the time Perry could walk, he was on a horse or in pens working along his dad on the family farm. Leoti is a place Perry is very proud to be from. That is where he met his wife Bonnie and also began his family more than 25 years ago. It is where he and Bonnie raised oldest daughter Jada, sons Cade, Paden and Tyrel and youngest daughter Jacee with the values and integrity that their parents raised them. Perry worked in and managed feed yards in western Kansas for more than 20 years, when nine years ago he was provided with an opportunity to manage Ottawa County Feeders in Minneapolis where he currently resides. Those who do not know Perry would be surprised that this six foot four giant of a man can be found in his pickup truck listening to classical music, is soft spoken, tender hearted, and is always willing to extend his hand. He is not one to jump to conclusions, but rather thought provoking and analytical. Yet, in a conversation, his wisdom and demeanor command attention. He is constantly reading about industry issues, keeping apprised of the latest happenings, and trying to stay ahead of the curve so to be proactive rather than reactive. As a respected industry leader, Perry volunteers his time in his community and throughout the United States. He was recently appointed by the United States Secretary of Agriculture to the Cattlemen's Beef Board. Only six positions are available in the state of Kansas.

As the KCA President, Perry works to better the industry as a whole, and when asked why he has chosen to take on such high responsibility, Perry states, "I do it for the next generation and generations to come, for my kids and my grandkids. I have already had my life. I want to give them better opportunities." With Perry's influence, KCA is doing that, providing opportunities for the next generation.

As an industry organization, KCA would be considered the new kid on the block. Founded by a group of cattle producers in northwest Kansas in 1998, KCA began on its

road to success with one major issue, captive supply. Watching the industry become more and more consolidated through captive supply, cattlemen took a stand and fought to maintain a prosperous cash market. As the organization developed, supporting and promoting USA Beef became a slogan for the group. "Demand USA Beef" license plates could be found across western Kansas and began to spread throughout the state. Focusing on a dozen core issues, cattlemen concentrated on changing policies through grass roots efforts, rallying fellow cattlemen and driving to Topeka to improve laws and challenge policies to provide profitability to the farms and ranches of Kansas.

As membership continued to grow, organization leaders made the decision to relocate the office closer to Topeka to provide a more consistent presence at the statehouse and with policy makers. Today, KCA is headquartered in Junction City, Kansas, maintains its grass roots efforts, and represents over 1,800 producer members in 100 Kansas counties.

KCA has become successful in such a short time frame. KCA has always stood its ground and lets everyone know where it stands, and that is something that has not changed and won't change. Yet, KCA continues to move in a positive direction. For the organization, success has not only been in growth but industry influence. Today, KCA is invited by government leaders to assist in developing strategies within the industry. KCA is asked by legislators to help them better understand how producers are affected by potential laws, allowing legislators to make more informed decisions. KCA is invited to consumer events to help educate the general public on the benefits of USA beef, independent producers, and the cattle industry. KCA is often contacted by producers asking the organization to assist them on numerous matters including environmental issues, tax issues, marketing issues, and fencing issues. Still, KCA continues to move forward with its support and work on country of origin labeling (COOL), improvements of the Beef Checkoff, and promotion of market reform. No matter who KCA is working with though, KCA representatives do not forget who they work for, and by staying grounded, maintaining its integrity as a group working for independent producers, and influencing improvements in the industry, success keeps coming. The livestock business was built on respect, and a hand shake seals the deal. This is also the foundation of KCA. KCA has taken the challenge, as a young organization, to gain the respect of the people while making a difference in the industry. And, that is how KCA defines its success.

It took a group of passionate men to begin a movement and turn it into a professional organization for the people. Perry Owens is among the select few who have led and guided the KCA into the influential power player it is today. Larry Brack-Leoti, Ken Winter-Dodge City, Eric Doll-Garden City, Allan Sents-McPherson, David Pfrang-Goff, Lee Robbins-Yates Center, and Paul Acton-Blue Mound are all former Presidents of KCA, and in fifty years, folks will look to the KCA as the group started by cattle producers still working for cattle producers and recognizing and thanking those leaders

who have shaped an industry for the better of the men and women who raise their families and work tirelessly to care for the cattle and make a living in the cattle towns of Kansas.