

## GENE CROSS



Gene was raised on a diversified livestock farm in Martin County that had grade Guernsey cattle. At the age of nine he was given a grade Guernsey heifer calf, which he eventually sold to purchase his first registered Guernsey heifer calf. His herd slowly started to grow from there. After graduation from high school, he began farming, as he had rented 80 acres of land when he was a senior. He married Ione in 1953 and they rented a farm only  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from where he was raised.

They registered the Cross Lea prefix with the American Guernsey Association and developed the herd with the base tracing back to his original registered heifer calf. The farm was purchased and the barn was expanded to increase the herd size. The most notable cow family developed at Cross Lea was the Verna family. Verna was on the high CPI list from the completion of her first lactation until she left the herd at ten years of age. Her offspring consisted of seven daughters; six of which made the top CPI list; several granddaughters also graced the list. Several sons from this family went into AI of which three made the active list. Verna's most notable daughter was Cross Lea Fayette Chic, who was number one on the high CPI list in 1992. The Cross Lea herd was consistently on the Guernsey high herd CPI list, rising to as high as number three in 1991. He has consigned cattle to many major sales, with animals going into several states as well as Canada and Brazil.

Gene began showing cattle at the Martin County Fair in 1956 and then at the Jackson County Fair in 1957. He showed at the Martin County Fair fifty years, with children and grandchildren becoming involved over that time. Cross Lea also showed at the Southwest Minnesota parish show, Minnesota State Fair, National Guernsey show at World Dairy Expo and also the National Guernsey show at Louisville, KY. He was premier breeder and premier exhibitor at the Minnesota State Fair and won the herdsmanship award several times. He had Grand Champion at the Minnesota State Fair open show as well as Reserve Grand Champion of the National Junior show at World Dairy Expo. He has had numerous All-American and Junior All-American nominations.

Gene has served on many local, state, and national boards. Locally, he served on the Martin County ADA as president and secretary and as a board member of the Martin County Dairy Herd Improvement Assn. serving as president. On the state level, he is a member of the Southwest Minnesota Guernsey Breeders serving many years as president and secretary-treasurer and with the Minnesota Guernsey Breeders serving on the board twelve years, four of which he was president. Nationally, he served eight years on the national board, two years as second vice-president and two years as first vice-president. He also served as co-chairman of the National Guernsey Convention held in Minnesota in 2001.

He has received several awards over the years; most notably the Sherburn Area Jaycee Outstanding Young Farmer Award in 1967, Minnesota PDCA Outstanding Breeder Award 1989, Minnesota Guernsey Breeders Senior Breeder Award 2003. Two other awards presented from youth organizations are the Martin County West FFA Honorary Member Award in 2006 and the Martin County Friend of 4-H Award in 2008. Gene still works with the Martin County 4-H dairy youth and was recently the coach of the high school judging team.

Gene and Ione are the parents of four children; Linda, Dan, Sherri, and Steve and also have seventeen grandchildren. All four of the children and many of the grandchildren have carried on the tradition of exhibiting cattle at the Minnesota State Fair, the World Dairy Expo and at Louisville.