

Engaged, involved and very much interested

Lylehaven's owner, Jerry Rappaport

By Karen Knutsen



Jerry & Phyllis Rappaport with Simonhof Charles Suzette (3E-93)

Jerry Rappaport is not the silent, absent type of investment owner. He's not the uninterested person simply writing checks to cover the cost of farming. This 80 year-old lawyer from Boston is as much a part of the day-to-day success at Lylehaven as any one of the employees, and he loves it!

A New York boy by birth, owning a farm was probably the farthest thing from Jerry's mind. Plans changed though, as he later moved to New England. Once there, he accepted a teaching position at Harvard, and taught with his friend, Ed Banfield. Ed owned a beautiful "summer home" in East Montpelier, VT, and the Rappaport family frequently visited the home for vacations. Ed persuaded Jerry to buy the neighboring farm to this vacation home, which he did, turning it into "Lylehaven 1." As Jerry and his family continued to spend time in the area, they came across another farm that was for sale and relatively close by. "Lylehaven II" was added, and is the farm where the familiar yellow barns now sit. This initial investment, some 45 years ago, would change the course of the Registered Holstein business and Jerry's life for the good. It wasn't in the grand plan for Jerry to be a farmer, but as with everything he's tackled in life, he invested in the project 100%. "I knew if you were going to have a farm, you needed to specialize in a particular breed. When I bought the place, the cows were a mix of Holsteins, Jerseys, Brown Swiss...a little bit of everything! If I was going to make this succeed, I needed to take seriously the 'breeding of a perfect cow'. So I got persuaded to buy a Registered Holstein herd to fill the barn and began from there." Jerry began to study pedigrees and as he calls it, "took on the assignment

very seriously and knew that I needed to buy smart. I used Bill Week's aAa system, and went through all the processes of mating and matching the cows. This fascination of trying to design the perfect cow had a great impact on me. It required skill, an intense eye and sound judgment." Jerry recalls that times were different then in the Registered Holstein industry, in particular, there was no heavy use of embryo transfer. He was tremendously inspired by people in the area who, like him, took the task of breeding a better cow very seriously. In fact, a neighbor named Cary Smith wouldn't use any bull (A.I. or not) without personally going to look at daughters first. "Bryce Metcalf and Dick Howe were other men who helped me see the excitement in trying to breed a perfect cow!"

Jerry hired Bob Fitzsimmons to be his herd manager and run the farm, and actually "lured Bob away from his job at the Holstein Association." Thirteen years later, Sue Brown stepped into the role and has been leading the charge ever since. "With Bob and Sue, I was lucky," Jerry says. "They made a good number of friends and acquaintances in the industry. They both came highly recommended and I have a great deal of respect for what they've accomplished. I met Sue when she was a young girl at the Maine State Sale. She was working with Mike Wilson or Steve Briggs, and she was this enthusiastic young girl who was very interested in good cows. What appealed to me was her dedication!"

Lylehaven, created from Jerry's middle name of "Lyle" and "haven" reflecting the renewal that comes from being at the farm, was created to be a sign of good breeding, and in fact, you'll see that phrase in their advertising and farm sign. "We've always tried to create that image...the image that when you buy from Lylehaven, you're buying cows that carry on this tradition. Obviously, when we first started out, that was our hope. But today, it's a reality. I have learned over time that a real sale includes selling your best, not just the bottom end of the herd. We take great pride in what Lylehaven sale animals have done for others, whether it's a 4-H project or a winner at Madison. To see buyers succeed with an animal that we've created is a good reflection of what we've built. It's my hope now that people will recognize that tradition."

Besides being an avid student of studying the breeding and development of good cows, Jerry is also one to experiment with new technology if that will enhance the presence and "saleability" of animals. "We were the first farm to sell cattle through a satellite sale that was broadcast around the globe. It was jointly sponsored by Holstein World and a publication in Europe. People were bidding in Florida and points in Europe, while being able to see the cattle sell live. We had a great time with the satellite sale, in fact we had two of them, and were the first farm to ever do that."

The cows

Jerry still has some favorite cow families that he realizes have made a tremendous impact on the herd. "C Metcalf Valiant Mist sold for a million dollars in a market that was much different than today's market. She was a great cow who transmitted well and was simply awe inspiring. When she died, she was cremated and you'll see her tombstone outside of the milk barn still." Mist sold in one of the satellite sales along with 13 embryos, and she was even featured in *People* magazine!

Della was another great cow who made her home in East Montpelier. Scored 97 points, Jerry says she was a favorite of Bob's. "Bob had a love affair with Della. She happened to be in the same group as

Charity and Bob brought her to Madison. Those two awesome cows were in the middle of the ring. The audience was quiet and waiting for the judge's words to come over the loud speaker. He finally said, 'Pull the white cow out' and with that, Bob walked Della out! It was a pretty funny thing considering they were both white cows. But eventually, Charity was named the winner that year."

El-Dor Saber Pansy was a third influential cow who was "one of my favorites and one of the most dairy cows we've ever had here on the farm." She was scored EX-95, GMD-DOM, and eventually found her way to the west coast where she was owned by Wilcox Farms.

More recent brood cows in the herd include Thiersant Lili Starbuck and Belroux Storm Cristal. "Lili was purchased by Sue, and purchased with great nervousness I might add! She got off to a slow start and was only 85 at the start. But she went on to win at shows, and as we know now, she's one of the greatest brood cows of all time and is scored 4E-94." Lili's granddaughter, Lila Z (named after Jerry's granddaughter Lila), was originally purchased from the farm and then resold for one million dollars. It was the talk of the town as this beautiful young Durham was purchased by a large syndicate of buyers. She's now scored EX-91, 2*.

Cristal was also a big-time purchase for us and, like those listed before her, has been a great transmitting individual. Scored EX-96, you'll find daughters and granddaughters listed on the Lylehaven website, www.holsteinworld.com/Lylehaven.

Besides producing tremendous brood cows and families, along with show winners for others, Jerry comments that one of his favorite parts of the farm is showing their own cattle. "We've won several Premier Exhibitor banners over the years, but getting the Premier Breeder banners was the big accomplishment! Don't get me wrong, they're both very indicative of success in their own ways. But earning the Premier Breeder banner shows that you have advanced the breed."

"All in all, it's been such an enjoyable journey! I've loved being part of this industry. Even though I don't live at the farm full time, I get there as often as I can, and talk with Sue on a frequent basis. When I do get to visit, I love walking through the cows and heifer barns. It fills me with a sense of pleasure and pride and is also a nice change of pace! My grandchildren have led animals at shows and that's exciting to see! Showing has taught them some great life lessons, especially in the battle of wills. And the friends that we've all made throughout the years are among the very best!"

World-wide impact

"Just before the famous "protests" at Tiananmen Square, my wife and I went to China and were in Beijing. When you're there, you simply must have a guide to help you navigate the area and also understand the language. I had gotten a business card from someone at the Holstein Association for a contact to call when there, so I had a phone number to call. I dialed and said this is Jerry Rappaport and I'd like to talk this certain person. The person on the other end of the phone didn't speak English, so I waited for a minute and then someone else gets on the line. So I repeated myself, saying this is Jerry Rappaport from Vermont. He asked where in Vermont? I said Lylehaven and he recognized that name!

It hit me, right then, of how international our farm is. It's simply amazing.

“Holsteins have been a universal connection for me, and I enjoy that very much. The relationship between farmers and their cows is very different than any other area of agriculture. It may not be the most efficient business I've been involved with, but it's a way of life. There's certainly easier ways to make money than be involved with the dairy industry, but the people involved wouldn't do anything else!”

From successful lawyer, to husband, father and founding member of an influential Bostonian foundation, the man behind Lylehaven still has the heart of a dairyman. His love of competition and passion for breeding success will be evident on May 15th at the Lure of Lylehaven Sale. Come and meet one owner who firmly believes in the “hands-on” approach to everything he does.

The Rappaport Foundation (<http://rappaportfoundation.org/>)

Jerry Rappaport has been a mover and shaker in the greater Boston area for more than 50 years, investing his energy and fondness of the city and the region into his successful career.

A native New Yorker, Rappaport began his involvement in public policy while a student at Harvard College and Harvard Law School. He was an integral part of John Hynes' campaign for mayor of Boston and served in Hynes' administration. In 1950, he created the New Boston Committee, an organization that became an essential element in the revitalization of Boston. After four years of policy-level public service, he left government to start his career as an attorney. Rappaport also returned to Harvard, receiving his Master in Public Administration degree in 1963. In addition to his three Harvard degrees, Jerry Rappaport received an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Suffolk University in 1989.

In 1993, with sons Jerry Jr. and Jim, Rappaport founded the New Boston Fund, which owns, develops, and operates over 15 million square feet of office, research and development, warehouse, and residential real estate. He is Chairman of the Board.

Jerry Rappaport has spent a lifetime as a political activist, real-estate developer, and philanthropist with a single goal in mind: to shape a better future for Boston and the region. His unwavering attention to the betterment of the city in both business and personal interests has manifested itself throughout the region in innumerable ways. That effort culminated in 1997, with the creation of the Jerome Lyle Rappaport Charitable Foundation.

Over the years, Jerry Rappaport has been a dedicated and generous contributor to numerous charitable and civic organizations in Boston, and the Rappaport Foundation will continue that tradition. His wife and 10 children have also provided substantial leadership to various communities and public service endeavors locally and nationally.