

RICHARD APEL

MIMOSA, FOUNDATION STUD.



Honorary Life Membership was awarded to former presidents and foundation members Richard Apel and Noel Perry at the Townsville dinner on July 2, 1990 by president Eddie Rea (centre)

IN THE BEGINNING. It was almost like preparing and sitting for an exam! The classifiers were coming. They were to inspect, hopefully pass our Droughtmasters, branding a D on their rumps. I felt the tension. The classifiers were experienced cattle breeders from "up North".

I can't say "in the beginning" as Richard, with his father in 1956, had already begun the process of upgrading their British Hereford herd (the smell of the plunge dip still lingers) with Bos Indicus genes. By the time I arrived as a new bride in 1961 - new to Qld, new to cattle, new to heat - they had purchased Brahman bulls and Santa Gertrudis Risdon bulls.

"We feel that this will minimise dipping as ticks are our biggest problem - 13 dippings per year." Richard was excited, listening to older breeders who had begun evolving a new breed of cattle. He joined the Society although I don't think they had decided on a name for their breed at that stage. They wanted Beefmasters but the Americans had that! Each meeting brought new enthusiasm. Mimosa Stud became well known.

In 1960 Rockhampton sale they sold their first Santa x Hereford bulls for an average of 235 guineas.

They continued selling Brahmans - Santa bulls under Mimosa Stud name. In 1963 they purchased a Brahman, Cherokee Burma. Mimosa Stud conducted its own sale in Rockhampton in 1964 as a Tropical Breed Sale, top price 440 guineas. Sales continued and then we were into showing, beginning with local shows. A sudden decision one day before the Gayndah show Richard decided to show one of our yarded bulls. By the end of the day, he was leading it up the front steps. It performed beautifully next day amongst the public.

In no time I became accustomed to climbing on the rails during auctions, sitting on hard forms at The Rocky sale ring, hay bales at field days. Planned our lives around the Droughtmaster events. With 3 small children we drove around local Shows with Richard attending sales and later Shows. It was promotion, promotion for Droughtmasters and our own cattle of course.

Zone meetings where ideas and other were thrashed out to send to the Committee, letters for promotion - no emails then, every possible opportunity to explain the virtues of Droughtmaster cattle. Mimosa hosted field days, a bus load of ag students from Gatton each year, local schools, a Solomon Island cattle manager,

numerous overseas representatives from agricultural departments.

When the promotional film was made, Richard and I took it around the islands in the Pacific. He had already sold cattle to New Guinea, Philippines, China and then the Solomon Islands. Years later he sent by plane, cattle to Samoa.

An exciting promotional trip we did with John Boydell and Eustie King to China for an Agricultural World Expo was listed under the name of Queensland, for the Australian Government didn't join but Joh Bjelke-Petersen promoted Qld and it's Ag produce. I was the only female in our contingency. Walking the Beijing streets, I stopped the locals in their tracks looking at my white hair amongst all their black heads and then my red tartan sneakers. There are many stories from that trip, train trip sitting in the wrong seats, not knowing where to get off but the whole carriage of people standing and nodding, clapping for us. No one to meet us so we found our own hotel only to be told in the middle of the night when our phone rang "YOU ARE IN THE WRONG HOTEL. WE WILL PICK YOU UP IN THE MORNING"

Mimosa separated their Brahmans to our cattle property Barlyne near Gayndah. Mimosa had become a solely Droughtmaster property. No longer needing to be classified Richard was a classifier. Having our own plane helped the Society when classifiers were able to be piloted by Richard to inspections for new breeders. That brought stories - quickly erecting a temporary race and crush to brand the cattle, overnight stays, talking, promoting, giving advice, receiving new ideas. I had returned to teaching so that our children could still be at home but have education in Gayndah. By the time I retired I estimated I had driven over our bush dirt road almost 3 times around the equator.

The biggest undertaking was the cattle droving trip west to our purchase of Nummery Station in NT east of Alice Springs where Richard had shown cattle at their yearly show competing against the established British breeders. About 800 head of cattle made the journey, first by train to Dejarra and then over land to Nummery. It is recorded in Hugh Lunn's Book "Behind the Banana Curtain". He, as a journalist with The Australian, travelled with the mob. Richard met the team at points where

they spelled bringing food, beers, cooking meals and cheer. We all spent school holidays at Nummery.

Richard was asked to judge at Shows, proving his decision at one Show when accused of picking the wrong bull as the better one. He proved his point with a piece of string, measuring that his choice was a longer length!

Mimosa cattle went to all States in Australia except Tasmania. These were followed up with visits to the breeders. Sometimes the recording process was a mystery to them

On a trip to Indonesia again with John Boydell, a highlight was boating down a river from Buroo in a dugout canoe and seeing Droughtmaster cattle on the banks as we glided past. Richard had developed flu. Our Ag companion took him to the local village doctor before we set out. Giving antibiotics, the Doctor then produced what Richard described as a horse needle and pumped a whole syringe of eucalyptus into him. He reeked of eucalyptus for several days but it fixed him! Stranded on the Island for several days we had time to watch village life. Women swept their front porches with big straw brooms. The Army marched up the street once a day, our cook went to the market and brought home a scrawny hen. One evening meal Richard commented that one dish was dog by the texture, John just pushed his plate away and reached for the bananas. We eventually sailed from the island after waiting for a "suitable" boat. The beds were built for small Indonesian passengers. Great shouting in the middle of the night where we thought it must be pirates, but it was just a broken rudder. Early in the morning still out to sea roosters began to crow. The cargo was a mixture of goods for the market and barrels of pure eucalyptus oil. After roughing it for a week we lapped up the luxury of a Bali resort for a night before flying home.

Deciding to hold our own Bull and female sale at Mimosa a good strong sale ring was erected. It proved ideal also for inspections, field days and Max, our son's horse breaking.

It was a wrench to sell Mimosa and Barlyne but large areas of land in Queensland were too costly. Mallina in WA, although far away, gave us room to expand with our two sons who then learnt to fly,

take over from Richard. It was a busy and interesting life. Hot and hotter. Dry in areas but interesting Aboriginal areas from early times. We joined the Station Home Stay list. Grey Nomads, cyclists, townies weekends away. Some visitors liked to sit and listen to the men when they came in from mustering for the day to hear about punctures, runaway sheep, scrub bulls and the race in bull buggies to catch them, crab holes, busters and join in with a beer. Dinner at night was very enjoyable for them if we had a roast. They had no facility for cooking one. Some Nomads had their worldly possessions with them. An interesting mix of people.

Again, Richard organised a Mimosa Droughtmaster Bull sale on Mallina. It included the first auction by phone hook up in WA. More heavy promotion to have the Station cattle men/women change to Droughtmaster bulls instead of purchasing bulls fed on lush green paddocks down South of the State. He promoted and promoted with beef carcass days, taking bulls to Race days, Landor, before becoming a member of the Port Hedland Progress Association. That got him introducing the idea of sending cattle from Port Hedland instead of from Broome, less cost, less stress on the cattle and more control over their business. For his ideas and work including organising new cattle holding yards at Port Hedland and the Export market he was awarded Rural Achiever of the year.

When the Mabo ruling came the future for graziers in the north was uncertain. Richard decided to leave, set up a bull depot in the South. Moora was ideal, good rainfall, close to town, 2 hours from Perth and facilities established, Hospital, schools, medical centre. We took the best Mimosa Droughtmaster females he had bred, reaching the colour he wanted. Again, field day promotions, private sales and after a trip to Botswana with an Ag group he sent over some females and a bull to a private breeder in Botswana.

During the time in Moora we both became involved in the Art world, me with establishing a Gallery in Moora with workshops, Richard full time in the stained glass he had been doing up North - large murals in Newman's Tourist Centre, Port Hedland Airport, private glass classes and private windows. Mimosa Stud continued with us until we retired back to Qld. Our lovely cattle were dispersed until his very favourite cow was left. Our family went on their own. We came back for grandchildren and family time. Even so Richard still found glass opportunities in Brisbane. I had asked him when he turned Fifty what he would do when he retired. He didn't ever retire, just went in a different direction.

Contribution by Mrs Joan Apel

Richard Apel passed away in March 2022.



Life member and breed icon, John Boydell, Richard and Joan Apel and former Droughtmaster Australia CEO Neil Donaldson with the stained glass window designed and made by Richard Apel for the opening of the new Droughtmaster Australia Office building in 2012.