

Royal Agricultural Winter Fair worth the trip for Indiana farmer



Larry Whinery of Huntington, IN, visited the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair for the first time this fall, but as a 4-Her in the 1950s he had sent to the Royal a soybean field crops entry. His soybean exhibit, which was taken to the Fair by someone else, took top honors that year. Photo by Sarah E. Miller, MacMillan Photography

By Kim MacMillan, Freelance Writer

Ninety-seven years and counting, the 2019 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair welcomed around 300,000 visitors from November 1 – 10 at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds on the lakefront in Toronto, Canada. Fair attendees had the chance to see over 6,000 head of livestock including beef and dairy cattle, sheep and goats, swine, poultry, rabbits and horses being shown. Other competitions included classes for field and garden crops, beer and wine, butter sculptures, maple syrup and the like.

Among the masses going through the doors at this year's Royal Winter Fair was Larry Whinery, 82, Huntington, IN, who was seeing the prestigious event for the first time. Yet, he had been "connected" with the Royal for over 60 years. In the mid-1950s Whinery had carefully prepared an exhibit of soybeans which made the trip from Huntington County in Northeastern Indiana to the Royal in Toronto and won first prize there. But at that time Whinery, who was a freshman at Purdue University studying animal husbandry, did not get to go to the Royal to see his field crop entry top the class.

His soybeans went undefeated in every show entered, first at the Huntington County 4-H Crops Show, which happened after harvest in the fall of 1956. Then, the beans won at the Indiana Crop Improvement Association Show at Purdue University a few weeks later. This drew the attention of a Purdue staff member who arranged for Whinery's soybean entry to go on to the Royal Winter Fair in November, and later the same month to the International Livestock Exhibition at the Chicago Stockyards, winning at both of those. The next summer his soybeans went on to capture the championship at the Indiana State Fair.

"In my last (10th) year of 4-H, I took the time—many hours—to sort all of the 'ugly stuff' out of a peck of Wayne soybeans for our local 4-H Crop Show. A peck is a 1/4 bushel or 15 pounds," recalled Whinery. "The preparation of the peck was simply sorting through a pile of Wayne soybeans that we had raised on the farm. Wayne was a relatively new and particularly good-look-

ing variety; Wayne beans had dark hilums or 'eyes'. As a result of doing the sorting onto a cloth laid on a table, the beans tended to have a nice shine about them."

Whinery found that there was much to see and do at the Royal. Live entertainment ran the gamut from magicians to singers and dancers to culinary classes. Hundreds of retail shopping booths lined the rows of the main exhibition hall offering Canadian-made products, tack and equine supplies, home improvement and gardening items, health and beauty products, clothing, jewelry, artwork, furniture and more. Agriculture educational areas for adults and children were part of the fun as well. Dining options ranged from a fine-dining restaurant overlooking the horse show to the large food court at one end of the exhibition hall offering everything from butter tarts and tea to poutine, pizza, sandwiches, stuffed cabbage rolls, ethnic foods, apple dumplings, ice cream and other tempting treats.

He spent two days at the Royal strolling the exhibition halls, visiting the livestock barns and watching the Royal Horse Show from a skybox in the evenings where he was fascinated by watching the efficiency of the ring crews in changing the show jumping courses in very little time. He tried the Canadian-invented dish poutine, which is essentially French fries topped with cheese curds and brown gravy, and the famous Royal apple dumplings. He spent time visiting with the Sheep Barn office staff and watching the dairy show. He also really enjoyed the many

educational displays teaching fairgoers about agriculture.

"I was very impressed with the effort by the show management, and the willingness of the exhibitors, to explain the onlookers what was actually happening. Beyond the producer competition was the obvious effort on the part of the Royal to explain and educate the throng of visitors, most of whom I guessed had no, or very little, understanding, of what really happens as we in agriculture produce their food. There were so many displays of agriculture production separate from the livestock show competition and there was a huge press of the visitors around those exhibits. I was really impressed by the University of Guelph exhibits. They had a robotic tomato picker set up to actually demonstrate how it worked," said Whinery of the education mission of the Royal Winter Fair.

A former member of the highly successful Purdue University Livestock Judging Team, Whinery also made note of the "look" of winning livestock entries. "I was struck by the type prevalent in the beef cattle—much more toward the thick, beefy, although much taller, version of 'good' cattle when I was a kid. For a while there was a movement toward tall, rangy—some said meatless—cattle and that has finally turned. Also, many of the sheep were bigger than some ponies!" he observed.

The 2020 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair runs November 6 – 15. For more information visit their website at <https://www.royalfair.org/>.



A young woman shepherds her pig around the 2019 Royal Junior Swine Show ring. Photo by Shelley Higgins, MacMillan Photography

Two local equestrians capture Royal Championships in Toronto

By Kim MacMillan, Freelance Writer

Larry Whinery wasn't the only person from the Farmers' Advance coverage region to make the trip to this year's Royal Winter Fair. Several horse show exhibitors at the Royal were from Indiana and Michigan as well.

Ross and Nicole Honsberger, Bellevue, MI, continued their winning ways at the Royal Horse Show with Percheron draft horses. In previous years they have won the Six-Horse Hitch Overall Championship and Percheron Six-Horse Hitch Class on a number of occasions with the All Star Hitch (owned by Honsberger's in laws Doyle and Renee Dingman at Belle Vue Percherons in Michigan and the Nick and Cherie Wagner family in Ohio). This year brought a major change for the Honsbergers, however, as Ross is now driving Percherons for a new owner, businessman Joe Ricketts and his Jackson Fork Ranch from in Bondurant, WY.

The Honsbergers remain in Michigan and horses for the Jackson Fork Ranch were sent to them for training. Ricketts also purchased five mares from the All Star Hitch to add to five geldings he purchased from other farms. The Dingmans and Wagners are still breeding horses and expect foals in 2020, but the All Star Hitch is currently on hiatus.

Ross Honsberger guided the Jackson Fork horses to win the 2019 \$25,000 Six-Horse

Draft Hitch Championship on Saturday night, assisted by Nicole acting as groom. Earlier in the week they had also won the Percheron Six-Horse Hitch Class, the Percheron Two-Wheeled Cart Class, the Percheron Unicorn Hitch Class, the Percheron Four-Horse Hitch Class, and placed third in the Percheron Two-Horse Team Draft Class. Nicole took her own turn as driver winning the Lady's Percheron Cart Class and the Royal Lady's Draft Cart Championship and taking second in the Royal Classic Cart Series.

Honsberger shared the success they've had thus far with the Jackson Fork Hitch and plans for 2020, "We won the Governor's Cup at the Ohio State Fair and the Six-Horse Hitch and the Eight-Horse Hitch at the Indiana State Fair which was also our National Show. Then, just a couple weeks ago at the Michigan Great Lakes International we won the Open Six there out of 22 entries and then we won this. We've had a great year. We are excited to try to compete in the Classic Series with this hitch in Oklahoma City in 2020. We've won that twice with the All Star Farms Hitch, so that's kind of our goal for next year. We'll be going to Denver in the January and then to Ocala, FL, in February to compete in addition to our normal show schedule."

Shanna Gish, head trainer at Russ and Jeanette Quilhot's Indian Creek Farm in Colum-

bia City, IN, rode the eight-year-old Morgan gelding Tomeri the Regalest, to win the Battle of the Breeds Championship during this year's Royal Horse Show. Tomeri is owned by Renee McLean of Dearborn, MI. The Battle of the Breeds was a three-day saddle-seat competition that attracted entries from the U.S.A. and Canada. Representatives from the Arabian, Dutch Harness, Friesian, Morgan and Saddlebred breeds participated this year. Gish and Tomeri won two out of three classes, the first class on Thursday afternoon and the final class on the last Saturday night of the Royal. Gish's assistant trainer Mallory Tracy took over the ride on Tomeri on Friday night when they took second in that class which was won by the Dutch Harness Horse stallion Graaf Kelly ridden by Tara E.A. LaFave, New Palestine, IN, and owned by Cumberland Mountain EQ, St. Joseph, MI.

"Morgan horses are very friendly, they love their people and they are attention seekers. So, they are just kind of pocket pets really, as game and dynamic as they are in the show arena. 'King' is very much a ham and very friendly. He likes all of the treats, the rubs and all of that kind of stuff. It's been a bit of a learning curve [here at the Royal], but we would come back. Everyone has been so nice here!" said Gish after winning the Battle Championship on Saturday evening.