

Happy Helper

Legend Award winner gives selflessly of time and talents to benefit fellow breeders

by Chel Terrell

The success of an organization is deeply rooted in the cooperative efforts of its members to achieve the vision and purpose for the group. From vocal leaders to the quiet, steady behind-the-scenes members, each carries an important role in accomplishing goals and helping the organization march ahead for the long term.

This year's Live Oak BBA (LOBBA) Legend Award recipient exemplifies the ultimate example of dedication and reliability so essential to successful organizations. As his fellow LOBBA members will attest, Elton Lieke is the first to raise a willing hand to volunteer to help in any endeavor, jumping right in with a hard-working attitude and selfless purpose.

"Elton probably does as much as anybody out there, but he does it quietly and without the need for recognition. He's the most unselfish person you'll ever meet," said Anthony

Mihalski, long-time auctioneer and sale manager. "As long as I've known him, he's always been the first man to step up and say 'I'll take care of that' or 'I'll do this.' He's the first one to show up and the last one to leave."

Lieke and his wife Sandra, New Braunfels, Texas, have been raising Beefmasters for over 20 years. They run their herd in the heart of the South Texas brush country just outside of Pawnee on land that has been in Sandra's family for generations.

The pair started their cattle venture while working as school teachers and raising their young children. In the mid-1990s, they decided to incorporate Beefmaster genetics into their commercial cow herd after witnessing the benefits that Sandra's father and her brother, Billy Welkener, had with the breed. They joined Beefmaster Breeders United, becoming lifetime members, and participated in the BBU Upgrading Program to transition their herd into a

purebred operation.

"Sandra's dad used Beefmaster bulls, so that was a good way to help us upgrade. We then bought Beefmasters at different Live Oak and South Texas BBA sales and from individual breeders, too," Elton said. "Beefmasters are easy to handle and work with and are just good all-around cattle."

Shortly thereafter, they joined LOBBA and became very active in the satellite association. In addition to consigning cattle to LOBBA sales throughout the year, Elton has served as an LOBBA board member for many years, helped weigh in cattle prior to sales, and has spent plenty of time at the pit cooking up delicious food for social gatherings and pre-sale events. He also shares his woodworking talents by making the Legend Award recipient plaques that are hung in the sale barn in Three Rivers.

"Elton is a good helper for LOBBA and is always the first to volunteer to work and never says no. He's very

10 The Beefmaster Cowman | January 2021

sound in his judgement, which I certainly appreciate," said current LOBBA President Melvin Scherer Jr. "His cattle are consistently getting better and better, too, which is a sign of good management."

To continue improving herd genetics, the Liekes participate in BBU's Whole Herd Reporting and Weights and Measures programs, ultrasound scan their cattle and have used artificial insemination in the past. They also send the young bulls they plan to consign to special sales to Brown Ranch outside Beeville where they are fed and developed to optimize growth and performance.

"We try to do all we can to improve our breeding program and raise good Beefmaster cattle," Elton said.

"They've always used top end genetics and their cattle are extremely well known and have always sold well," Mihalski said. "They're wonderful family people and have brought their daughter and grandkids into the business with them as well."

"Sandra would say that I'm a workaholic, which I probably am," Elton said. "But we love the



Lieke enjoys the easy handling of his Beefmaster cows, including this lady above at the ranch in Pawnee. You'll also find him with a smile on his face helping out in many ways such as working the gates and moving cattle for Live Oak BBA activities.

breed and we think Beefmaster breeders are such good people. The Live Oak group has been great to work with and we are more than happy to be involved however we can.

"People know they

can depend on Elton. Just call on him if you need anything," Sandra said. Lieke's dedication to LOBBA is invaluable to his fellow members.

"If there's a hard job to get done, I could always count on Elton to be there. Most times you didn't even have to hint or ask him," Mihalski said. "He's one of the most dependable guys that's out there." ★



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