

# PAUL'S HAT

*...recommended reading for those who know Paul Good—or for those who have been unable to part with an old, too-well-worn particularly favored hat.*

by Alice Poling Good

He was a young man aspiring to be an auctioneer of pedigreed livestock. After a successful Texas Angus sale, the rancher promised he'd send him a new Stetson, that prestigious hat of all livestock men.

Following this sale, each time he'd return from the circuit, he'd ask, "Did a package arrive for me this week?"

At last when he arrived home one day, I reported, "There's a large box here from a Mr. Hap Shahan of Texas."

He tore at the wrappings and carefully lifted from the box a beautiful tan beaver hat. He read from the inside label "Stetson 100, PLG" embossed in gold.

He held it up, scrutinizing it from all angles. He stood before the mirror, affixing it on his head. Fit, brim width, height and color—all perfect. And a Stetson 100! Never had he possessed such a hat! He molded the crease to please and the hat became a part of him.

As he wore it to Timmonium, west to Denver and Calgary, south to Lexington, north to Toronto, to Perth and Palermo, it waited on the racks of Delta, United, Western Airlines, Braniff and TWA. He retrieved it from restaurants and from the homes of friends when he'd leave hurriedly to catch a plane. Between trips I'd brush and sponge it. Seasonally I'd box and mail it to the factory to be cleaned and relined. Soon scars and blemishes failed to disappear even with this tender care.

Finally, he replaced this hat with a new one for special events. The old one was no longer kept in the big box. You'd see it on our hall tree by the open stairs, collecting dust as feet moved up and down the steps while Paul traveled.

When home he'd wear it on errands to town, eventually on his pasture walks and finally to the barn. The brim began to droop. It didn't snap back into the original position after shedding the drenching showers. A tiny hole grew bigger in the permanent block. A child anticipated his funny answer when he'd ask, "Dad, how'd you get the hole in your hat?"

They'd laugh when he'd answer, "Oh, I think someone tried to shoot me once. He missed."

When he'd take the hat off, he'd give it a quick toss into a back porch corner to be easily accessible for his next trek over the farm.

When he'd return from a trip and start for the barn, he'd ask, "Where'd you put my hat, Alice?"

"On the back porch closet shelf where I always put it. When are you going to get rid of that old hat, Paul?"

No answer.

Between our younger daughter's junior and senior high school years, we had no herdsman. She looked after the cows and calving that summer. When she returned to the house on cool mornings, I saw she had adopted her dad's hat while he traveled. It served as her security blanket four years in college. In summer I'd grab it for a quick run in the rain to the garden. The battered hat was a permanent family fixture.


Still, when I'd clean the porch closet, "Paul, may I burn this filthy old hat?"

"Why, no, that's a good hat. It cost \$100!"

In February 1978 Paul had heart surgery at Cleveland Clinic. We didn't return home until May. Paul would never walk his pastures again.

One hot day that summer I cleaned the back porch closet. "Oh, Paul won't be needing this old hat any more!"

I gave the hat a quick toss to the burn box. My gaze lingered a moment as it lay there. I quickly retrieved the old battered hat and hugged it to my breast.

Today it occupies a special place in the corner of the back porch closet shelf. Forever. 



• Long-time auctioneer Paul Good and his wife Alice reside at ArtAnna Farm, Van Wert, Ohio. It is estimated that Good, the second eldest of the well-known Good brothers (Byron, now deceased, Don and Fred), sold around \$50 million worth of livestock before he underwent open heart surgery in 1978.