

# 2016 National Western Stock Show Marketeers Honored

## Birk, Chastain and Stromberg added to Livestock Marketeers Hall of Fame.

by Kim Wolfe



The Livestock Marketeers inducted three industry professionals into their Hall of Fame during the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver this January.

The 2016 honorees were Don Birk of El Dorado Springs, Mo., and Jack Chastain of Fort Worth, Texas. Tom Stromberg, Manhattan, Mont., was honored posthumously.

The Livestock Marketeers — an informal fraternity of livestock fieldmen, auctioneers, sale managers and related livestock business leaders — met for their 51st Annual Banquet at the National Western Club Jan. 16. The event was hosted by American Live Stock, and master of ceremonies was J. Neil Orth, executive vice president of the American-International Charolais Association and a 1984 Hall of Fame inductee.

The Livestock Marketeers group was initiated in 1965 by Harry Green, Ross Miller

and Claud Willett. Their purpose was to form a fraternal organization of livestock professionals, and to make annual awards in order to encourage younger members of the industry to succeed in their chosen profession.

### Don Birk

Camera in hand, Don Birk has been a fixture at livestock sales across the United States since the early 1970s.

Don made his mark at the University of Missouri-Columbia, both as a member of the high-ranking livestock judging team and later as a successful coach. From there, he joined the *Drovers Journal* field staff, taking over the Missouri territory in 1972. He went to work for Eddie and the late Dale Sims of National Cattle Services in 1978, working in the sale management business until he started Don Birk Enterprises in 1982.

Don has been self-employed for more than 40 years, offering livestock photography and ringman services. Birk's name has branded photos of superior seedstock for decades, and he's been ringside for many of the landmark auctions in the nation. Additionally, he's built a reputation as a mentor in the livestock marketing field.

"Don's been a great friend. He took me under his wing and helped teach me the business, he's a great Marketeer," said auctioneer Eddie Burks of Park City, Ky. He was joined at the lectern by Jack Hedrick of JDH Marketing Services, Columbus, Miss., who also considers Birk to be a role model in the sales field.

He's known for his calm demeanor and ability to work with the crew, according to Montie Soules, now executive secretary/CEO of the American Shorthorn Association and former manager of Star Lake Cattle Ranch,

where the Birk stamp appeared on Hereford photos for 30 years.

Don grew up with Polled Hereford cattle, and today has a registered-Angus herd. He and his wife, Linda, have been married since 1973.

"It's been great to work with so many good people in this business. It's a real honor to be here with the Livestock Marketeers, because you guys are probably the people I love most of all," Don Birk said. "When I think about this group, to paraphrase the Lacy J. Dalton song '16th Avenue' ... God bless the boys who make the noise at auctions all across this country!"

### Jack Chastain

For more than 40 years, Jack Chastain has

dedicated his professional career to the Texas Hereford Association.

A native Texan who grew up active in 4-H, FFA, Boy Scouts and more, Jack



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► The Livestock Marketeers inducted Don Birk, El Dorado Springs, Mo., and Jack Chastain, Fort Worth, Texas, into their Hall of Fame Jan. 16 during the group's 51st Annual Banquet, hosted in conjunction with the National Western Stock Show in Denver. Tom Stromberg, Manhattan, Mont., was honored posthumously. Shown here are Don Birk; Master of Ceremonies Neil Orth, Kansas City, Mo.; and Jack Chastain.

graduated from Texas A&M University in 1970 with experience on meats and livestock judging teams, and a degree in animal science. He went to work for the USDA Meat Grading Service before being drafted into the U.S. Army later that year, working with meat purchasing contracts. He served in South Vietnam as a vet-tech and food inspector.

After he returned home, he went to work as a fieldman for the Texas Hereford Association (THA) in 1972; he was named secretary-manager of THA a year later, and continues in that position today.

“‘Smilin’ Jack’ is probably the cornerstone of the Texas Hereford Association, and an all-around nice guy,” pointed out auctioneer Bruce Miller of Bedford, Texas. “He’s travelled across the U.S. to represent THA, and has done so with professionalism.”

A 50-year American Hereford Association Golden Hereford breeder, Jack is an American Hereford Association (AHA) Life

member, THA member and permanent advisor to the Texas Junior Hereford Association. He’s a lifelong partner with wife Lyn on their family cow-calf operation that includes a registered-Hereford cow herd, as well as a small pecan operation.

“My dad’s advice has always been to find a thing that you love, and for him that has been Hereford cattle and the cattlemen who raise them,” said son Lee Chastain, who presented Jack with a pocket knife to commemorate his induction into the Livestock Marketeers Hall of Fame. “I’m very proud of my dad.”

Jack noted that he’s had the honor and pleasure to work with and be mentored by some of the most respected auctioneers and breed/publication representatives in the industry, including Forrest Bassford, Stanley Stout, Walter Britten, Humberto Reyes, Jim Boyd, Roy Richerson, Dean Spensor, Ray Martin and many more.

## Tom Stromberg

Tom Stromberg (1950-2015) of Manhattan, Mont., was honored posthumously. Born in North Dakota and a longtime resident of Montana’s Gallatin Valley, Tom started and ended his career with the AHA.

“Tom had a firm handshake and a big grin when he arrived at your ranch,” noted Jay George of Lebo, Kan. “He had a keen eye for cattle, and took care of breeders and their customers. He was a real western man who sat straight and tall in the saddle, and always rode for the brand when he was on your ranch.”

Tom’s passion for agriculture and the cattle industry was surpassed only by his love for his family, including his son, Travis, and four grandchildren, as well as his wife, Pam.



**Editor’s Note:** *This announcement was provided by the Livestock Marketeers.*