

The Legacy of 4X Master Breeder Sunnylodge

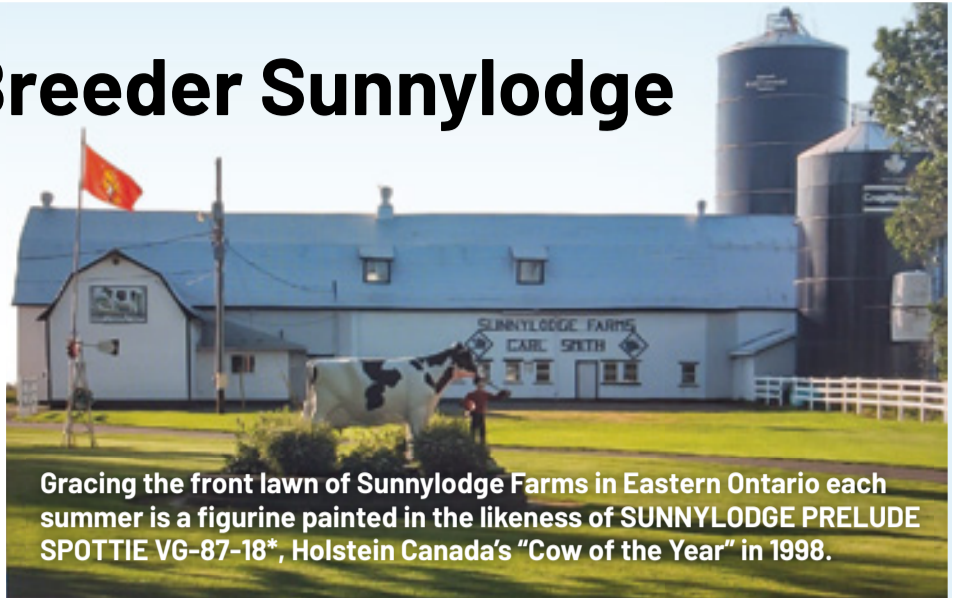
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Mark Smith and his parents, Carl and Muriel Smith, of Sunnylodge Farms Inc. joined a very elite group earlier this year when Holstein Canada announced that this highly respected Chesterville, ON, farm had earned its fourth Master Breeder Shield. Just the fourth Holstein breeder to achieve this coveted award 4X, it is a well deserved recognition for a herd that has had an immense impact on Holstein genetics in Canada and around the world.

The Sunnylodge herd was established by Mark's grandfather, Angus Smith, in 1950. In 1957, Angus and his son Carl formed a partnership, with Carl carrying on the operation with his wife Muriel and their three children after Angus's death in 1974. The family won its first Master Breeder Shield in 1978 in the names of Angus and Carl. Carl and Muriel won a second Master Breeder Shield in 1993. Mark, who began farming full-time with

marketing program, has resulted in the Sunnylodge prefix now being found at the core of an astounding number of prominent Holstein cow and bull pedigrees.

SUNNYLODGE PRELUDE SPOTTIE VG-87-18*, one of the most famous first-crop daughters of any bull, is the cow that truly put this Eastern Ontario farm on the map. Born on December 1, 1988, Spottie was the first milking daughter of RONNYBROOK PRELUDE ET GP-Extra-GM. A sixth generation VG/EX, Spottie's demonstrated transmitting ability to produce A.I. bull mothers, high LPI cows, Honor List producers, show winners, top sellers and outstanding sons allowed her reputation to remain unscathed during the turmoil that ensued when Prelude's #1 LPI proof tumbled in the 1990s. In 1998, Spottie was named Holstein Canada "Cow of the Year". She put 14 sons in A.I., including the popular SUNNYLODGE LINJET EX-ST, who



Gracing the front lawn of Sunnylodge Farms in Eastern Ontario each summer is a figurine painted in the likeness of SUNNYLODGE PRELUDE SPOTTIE VG-87-18*, Holstein Canada's "Cow of the Year" in 1998.

Holsteins, Daysland, AB, bought Spottie's 8-year-old Grand daughter, SUNNYLODGE JENNIFER VG-85-17*, who already had 14 A.I. sons and many daughters. Jennifer was Zimmer's first investment in higher genetics and her J family would go on to contribute valued points to his own Master Breeder Shield in 2017.

Spottie died a month after the dispersal at 13 years old. "We had a large metal figure of a Holstein cow on our barn roof," relates Mark. "After Spottie died, we took that cow figure down and had it painted like her. Now every spring we place it in my Mom's flower bed on our front lawn right alongside where Spottie is buried and her tombstone is."

Before Spottie, another homebred female destined to have a huge influence in the breed, SUNNYLODGE ELEVATION JAN VG-87-13*, started her career here. In November 1985, the Smiths held a "Sunnylodge Farms Top 40 Sale" which averaged \$6839 and was Canada's best herd auction that year. Heading the buyers' list was Jan, a first lactation, fourth generation VG heifer. She was purchased by Terry Beaton and family of Braedale Holsteins, Cumberland, ON, who came to Carl after the sale to ask if he would remain partners in her. Flushed extensively, Jan's embryos were divided amongst her owners. One of Jan's subsequent daughters, SUNNYLODGE CHIEF VICK VG-86-31*, is the granddam of BRAEDALE GYPSY GRAND VG-88-37*, the incredible brood cow who was Holstein Canada "Cow of the Year" in 2003 and dam of five Class Extra sons and a host of daughters who were fixtures on Canada's LPI/GLPI lists. A family that needs little explanation, Gypsy Grand's Storm daughter, BRAEDALE BALER TWINE VG-86-34*, was "Cow of the Year" in 2007 and is the dam of BRAEDALE GOLDWYN GP-EXTRA-GM, the former #1 LPI sire and Canada's top Conformation bull 11X, as well as Premier Sire at World Dairy Expo 11X and the Royal Winter Fair 8X. Baler Twine's identical full sister, BRAEDALE SECOND CUT VG-86-23*, was purchased as a calf by Ferme Gillette and is the mother of GILLETTE BLITZ 2ND WIND VG-88-74*, Canada's highest Star Brood cow, a former #1 LPI leader, 2011 "Cow of the Year", and dam of five Class Extra sons including GILLETTE WINDHAMMER EX-97, WINDBROOK EX-97 and STANLEYCUP EX-95.

Internationally, examples of Sunnylodge bloodlines abound. The Smiths bred SAMMY, a well-known breeding bull in France in the 1980s from whom MOUNTFIELD SSI DCY MOGUL EX-93-USA-EXTRA descends. In 2000, the Smiths sold a granddaughter of Spottie, SUNNYLODGE SKYCHIEF AMY EX-95-2E-20*-GBR, to the United Kingdom after being Reserve Grand Champion at the Eastern Ontario/Western Quebec Championship Show in 1999. Amy became All-Britain Mature Cow in 2003. A granddaughter of hers in Italy, TOC-FARM ALLEN AMYLY EX-96-ITA, was World Champion Cow and National Italian Holstein Champion in 2007 and is the dam of GOLDSUN, a former #1 bull for Conformation in Italy.

Despite never having another active milking herd after their 2001 dispersal, the Smiths have remained enthusiastically involved in breeding and owning cattle, with "friendships" and "partnerships" with people that do milk cows helping them to attain many of their latest Master Breeder points. "There have been two stages since 2001," explains Mark. "Prior to the dispersal, we had flushed members of the Spottie family so had over 100 embryos in our tank. We kept about 50 recipients in our heifer barn and then put the resulting special heifers in our main barn. An Allen embryo from SUNNYLODGE RUDOLPH SCARIET resulted in SUNNYLODGE ALLEN SWEETY VG-86-16* who we owned with Brian Groot-Lipman of Greenlane Farms, Russell, ON, and is the dam of SUNNYLODGE STARMASTER EXTRA. Another Allen embryo eventually became the grandam of DOMICOLE CHELIOS VG-EXTRA. We also remained partners with Stephane Villeneuve of Vioris Holsteins, Hawkesbury, ON, on a 5-year-old Red cow who sold through our dispersal, SUNNYLODGE R F GERALDINE EX-2E-10*, the dam of SUNNYLODGE GLACIER-RED EX-93-USA. We got into these two partnerships, continued flushing and away we went again," exclaims Mark.

In the second stage, the Smiths had a chance to partner with Dominique Merminod of Misty Spring Holsteins, Little Britain, ON, in working with MISTY SPRINGS SHOTTLE SATIN VG-86-17*, a #1 GLPI cow in 2009 from the GLEN DRUMMOND SPLENDOR VG-86-39* family. Two Satin daughters who resulted from flushes, MISTY SPRINGS MAN O MAN SATIN VG-86-9* and MISTY SPRINGS OMAN SATIN VG-86-15*, would establish family lines for Sunnylodge. Tracing to Oman Satin is SUNNYLODGE SIDEKICK ABBY, who was second Fall Yearling in Milk at World Dairy Expo for Sunnylodge and Pierre Boulet, Montmagny, QC, and nominated for both All-Canadian and All-American in 2023.

Mark is extremely proud to have been the co-breeder and co-owner of both the Champion and Reserve Champion heifers, SUNNYLODGE DIAMONDBACK KINSELY and WINRIGHT SL SIDEKICK JADE, respectively, at the TD Canadian 4-H Dairy Classic at the Royal last year. A long supporter of 4-H and youth programs, Mark says, "I think one of the biggest things we can do as Master Breeders is try and support our youth and keep the next generation coming into our business."

Looking back, much has changed in Canada's Holstein industry over the course of Sunnylodge's four Master Breeder Shields. Gone are the booming export orders for live cattle and embryos that Canadians once enjoyed. Sales of bulls by breeders to A.I. companies has dwindled. While breeders now have easier access to semen, the days of going out and looking at a group of first-crop daughters from a bull before you used him rarely occur anymore. As Mark contends however, "Over the years, I've learned when it comes to sire selection you should never close your eyes and ears to anybody and should always listen to what

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SUNNYLODGE SIDEKICK ABBY, who traces to MISTY SPRINGS SHOTTLE SATIN VG-86-17*, was second Fall Yearling in Milk at World Dairy Expo in 2023 for Sunnylodge Farms and Pierre Boulet, Montmagny, QC, and was nominated for both All-Canadian and All-American last year.



SUNNYLODGE PRELUDE SPOTTIE VG-87-18*, the most famous first-crop daughter of any bull, helped to put Sunnylodge Farms on the map through her ability to produce a long line of outstanding daughters and many sons in A.I. like SUNNYLODGE LINJET EX-ST, 2002 Premier Sire at World Dairy Expo.

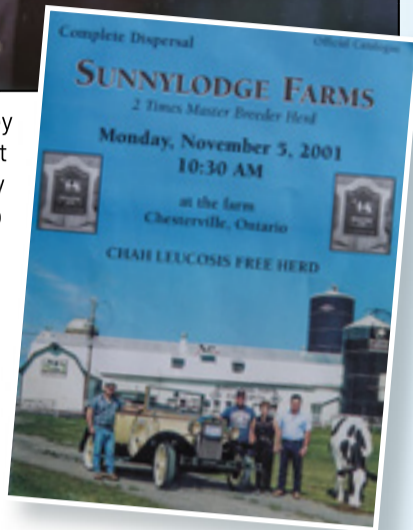
his parents in the early 1990s, has played a lead role in the winning of their latest shields in 2007 and now 2023. A humble, hard working family, the Smiths' passion and love for the Holstein business is boundless.

Emphasis on solid cow families with type and production, along with use of the day's top bulls, has always been central to the Smiths' successful breeding strategy which has produced generations of highly sought after genetics. One of the first Eastern Ontario breeders to utilize Embryo Transfer, the Smiths used ET extensively to multiply their best animals, working with the talented Dr. Roger Sauvé of Embryobec. One of their first ET flushes produced the top selling calf in the 1977 Eastern Ontario Calf Sale. All of this, combined with an astute and active

was Premier Sire at World Dairy Expo in 2002 and Canada's top Conformation bull in 1997-98. Spottie had two EX and 17 VG daughters. She was flushed 36 times and produced over 400 embryos, of which over 225 were exported overseas.

On November 5, 2001, the Sunnylodge herd was dispersed with 150-head selling for nearly \$1.3 million and an average of \$8593, making it the best Canadian dispersal that year. While Spottie did not sell, 60% of the day's offering traced to her. A 3-year-old granddaughter of Spottie, SUNNYLODGE RUDOLPH SCARIET EX-92-3E-10*, topped the sale to Ferme Gillette Inc., Embrun, ON, while Scariet's dam, SUNNYLODGE JED SHERYL VG-89-10*, was the highest selling of eight Spottie daughters. Duane Zimmer of Zimmer

From left, Carl, Muriel and Mark Smith of Sunnylodge Farms Inc., Chesterville, ON, who will be accepting their fourth Master Breeder Shield from Holstein Canada in April.



people have to say about bulls and how they work. I don't breed many cattle anymore so I can't make too many mistakes! I still want a bull today who can make a good one, that special bull who can sire solid feet and legs and 'showing style' because I firmly believe shows are still important for marketing and putting your name out there."

As 57-year-old Mark reflects on Sunnylodge's latest Master Breeder achievement, he says, "We have had a great life. I give my Dad, now 81, credit for always understanding the 'big picture' and letting me do things, like sending me up by train to the Royal Winter Fair when I was 15 to work for Quality Holsteins and later Burnacres Holsteins. We are proud of the cows and bulls who have come from our breeding program and the herds we have influenced. We are deeply appreciative of the exporters, marketing companies, and breed magazines like the *Holstein Journal* that helped us market our genetics in the past. A special thank you too to our family, friends, neighbours, veterinarians and partners who have helped bring it all together for us, because without them it ain't going to happen."

As Mark Smith says in closing, "The biggest thing about winning a Master Breeder Shield is that it is the highest award you can win amongst your peers. But in truth it is the Holstein cow, and the friendships, partnerships and people you meet along the way and will cherish for the rest of your life, that are the most important of all."

The Sunnylodge herd was dispersed in November 2001 and gracing the cover of their sale catalogue was, from left, Mark and Craig Smith and their parents, Muriel and Carl Smith, along with two of their most prized possessions - SUNNYLODGE PRELUDE SPOTTIE VG-87-18* and a 1930 Model A Ford Cabriolet Deluxe roadster.

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