

2012 Australian Ambassador

By Tyler Alden



Australia, where to begin....I could almost write a book through all my experiences and encounters during my six month stay in the "land down under", six months worth of traveling through five different states, visiting and staying on over 30 different Shorthorn operations, and witnessing things that could only be witnessed on the island of Australia. I will try to sum up the highlights of my trip in a brief article.

I will start with the 14 hour plane ride. I have flown on planes before but not for 14 hours over the Pacific Ocean strapped into a 747. Needless to say it took weeks to get over the jet lag. To add to that I was very nervous traveling to a foreign country for six months not knowing a single person in a country that is 8,000 miles from the place I call home. After the plane touched down in Sydney, Australia it was a great relief. I remember looking out the plane window and thinking this isn't how Australia looks in the movies. Before my departure I envisioned Aus to be a dry desolate, desert like place filled with kangaroos, crocodiles, cactus's and sand. It was more like a tropical rainforest, I started to get pretty excited about the next six months and my nervousness left me. Nic, Neilson, and Sue Job greeted me as I stepped off the plane, shortly after I sat in on the Annual Shorthorn meeting held at the Sydney airport the same day I arrived. At the meeting I met the Shorthorn Association board members which would help and direct me through the next few months. The Job Family and I spent the day in Sydney sightseeing then headed off to their family stud in Yeoval, New South Wales. I spent the next two weeks with Sue and Neilson Job, I would use the Job's stud as my headquarters for the next six months and head towards the state of South Australia from there.

Traveling through Australia was diffi-

cult at times without owning a ute (aussie term for car/truck), not that I would want to drive a ute as the steering wheel is on the opposite side as well as the road lanes which took a lot of getting used to. I relied solely on the host families I was currently staying with to help get me from place to place. I spent many hours on Coach busses and trains to reach my destinations. All of this worked out very well, the host families were more than glad to help me and made sure I had the opportunity to see all I could while I was in their area. While in south Australia I visited six different Shorthorn studs and witnessed my first Aussie bull sale in Naracort, SA. I had the opportunity to parade (aussie word for show), and clip bulls in preparation for the sale. The sale consisted of 48 bulls from over 15 different breeders mostly from South Australia. The champion and \$14,000 high selling bull was brought by Graham Ashby and Sons and purchased by John Manchec, Yamburgan Stud, New South Wales. After the Narracort bull sale I continued to travel throughout SA stopping next at the Carlton stud owned by Lynette Nitschke, located in the Adelaide Hills in a small German influenced town of Hahndorf. The Nitschke's run a 150 head purebred Shorthorn operation also owning the second largest drilling outfit in Australia drilling primarily for oil, water, natural gas, and various other minerals throughout Australia. During my stay with the Nitschke's I had the opportunity to tour the Adelaide Hills and the very popular and extravagant city of Adelaide (would compare to Hollywood or Beverly Hills), I visited the beaches of Adelaide which were like none I have ever seen. I really enjoyed my time in South Australia, which was also conveniently home to some of the nicest beaches in the world, a few of which I was fortunate enough to visit. My last stop in SA and maybe the most memorable was the stud of Chris Thompson also known as Bayview Shorthorns. The Thompson's were located in the middle of the Yorke Peninsula, the ocean was a 20 min., drive away from three directions. Bayview runs 100 head of Shorthorns, 800 head of Marino sheep and harvests 2,000 acres of canola and wheat crops. Chris has a tradition of taking all the Australian Ambassadors he receives on a fishing/lobster diving trip...This was the day I thought I was going to die in Australia...lobster diving can be a very dangerous hobby (no one told me this at the time). By getting started you strap on a wet suit with weights and flippers, fire up the old 1960's model air compressor that supplies your air while your 30 ft., below, string

out the air hose that runs from the compressor to the mouthpiece and hope your compressor doesn't die or your hose disconnects. Sketchy to say the least. After an hour of surfing the ocean bed digging lobsters from the coral, we surfaced and began fishing for whiting and red fins. While fishing Chris proceeded to tell me that South Australia beaches are notorious for shark attacks and he was surprised we didn't see a shark while we were lobster diving, I'm sure glad he told me this after the lobster diving. It was quite an experience one I will never forget and would probably never do again if offered. While in Australia I had the chance to pursue a great hobby of my own, hunting wildlife. I hunted various species of outback wildlife including kangaroos, wild boar, emu, ostrich, fox and fishing of all sorts. I can't forget my encounters with the King Brown snake, every state I visited I found the King Brown snake in numbers, which is also the third deadliest snake in the world, luckily with all the King Brown kills I racked up I didn't get a bite, if so I would have 20 minutes to make it to the nearest hospital or it would turn fatal.

After leaving South Australia I ventured north setting my sights on the 2012 Rockhampton Beef Show, the largest All Breed Cattle Show in Australia occurring once every three years. Rockhampton is located in North Eastern Australia along the coast and is one of the driest and warmest areas in AUS. My trip up to Rockhampton was definitely one for the books. Nic Job and I loaded up our 10 head of bulls and two cow/calf pairs in our cab-over truck and departed on the 14 hour drive north through what looked like an old western movie. Nic and I drove 14 hours on a single lane road that hadn't been serviced in what looked like 30+ years. For the first eight hours of the trip we didn't encounter a single car on the 10 ft., wide single lane road, the only sign of life were the camels, kangaroos, emu's (aka bush chooks) and various other outback creatures. It was a very long drive but all of the different sightings and discussions Nic and I exchanged while trying to keep ourselves awake made it well worth it. When we arrived at the Rockhampton fairgrounds it was quite easy to tell this was the largest show in Aus. Semi trailers were lined for a mile just waiting to unload and cattle were everywhere. Most cattle that enter in the Northern cattle shows are of the bos-indicus breeds such as Brahman, Santa Gertrudis, Drought Masters, Brangus and many other "eared cattle". There were a total of 34 Shorthorns entered between five different breeders and over 1,500



Brahman cattle entered. Nic Job won the Shorthorn Heifer Show with Royalla Margie 2115, which later placed in the top five in the supreme drive. After a week in Rockhampton surviving the 110 degree weather and getting burnt to crisp I was on the road again, this time to the well known Weebollabolla Shorthorn stud.

Weebollabolla is owned and operated by Sandy Monroe and managed by Steve and Jen Monroe. The operation was established in 1917. Weebollabolla was the largest and oldest operation I got the chance to visit, and second largest Shorthorn herd in the world. Consisting of 150,000 acres on three different properties each an hour apart. The operations main income was 20,000 acres of flood irrigated cotton, 4,000 acres of wheat/sorghum/canola, 3,000 meat goats, 2,800 head of Shorthorn cattle along with an annual 200 head purebred bull sale and an annual 500 head online heifer sale. To top it off a 700 head purebred Shorthorn feed lot, all beef produced off the feedlot is sold to local and commercial grocery stores. Before Sandy's father's death Weebollabolla owned over 800,000 acres 500,000 acres being in the northern territory running over 20,000 Shorthorn/Brahman cross cows. Sandy said they checked their cattle once every two weeks, not by truck, but by helicopters and planes which I found very interesting.

While in Australia I recognized many American and Canadian genetics that have been influencing the Australian herds for years. Bulls like JR Legend, Waukaru Patent, Deerpark Leader 13th, Alta Cedar Samari, along with some of my own families breeding. In the late 1980's Neilson Job imported Shannon

Margie 924 eggs which to my disbelief, I found Shannon Margie descendants in 26 of the 30 studs that I visited. I think it is amazing how such an old cow family can be one of the most successful to this day not only in the States but in Australia as well. I didn't find many bulls that caught my eye in Australia but wow can they raise females. Almost every stud I visited I found cows that could produce awesome offspring if bred to our more modern genetics in the States. Females in Australia are super sound, easy calving, easy fleshing, and resemble what we are trying to produce in the states but are a few steps ahead.

Not only did my six month tour of Australia open my eyes to overseas cattle operations, it gave me an insight as to how successful the Shorthorn breed is and how it can adapt and flourish in any type of climate, especially the sometimes harsh climate of Australia. Many consumers in the U.S. think the Shorthorn breed of cattle are strictly "show cattle" and have below average value hanging in the meat locker or in the commercial market. My experience in Australia proves this theory wrong. Shorthorns were the first breed of cattle introduced to Australia in the early 1800's...the harshest driest continent in the world, And can still be found there today in massive numbers. Shorthorns have not only withstood the test of time, but the test of mother nature at its worst and yet still produce some of the best beef on the market today. If that's not commercial I don't know what is.

Traveling through the Shorthorn operations in Australia I acquired many different customs and techniques of doing things such as marketing, promoting, breeding low maintenance cattle, and get-

ting the most out of the land your operating on. AUS Shorthorn breeders are very practical and economical in running their operations. Of course you have to be when all of your equipment needed for daily tasks is twice as expensive as is in the U.S. not to mention hard to get when the nearest town is two hours or more away so Australians have to improvise. Shorthorns in Australia are shown strictly to promote the operations cattle on the meat market. Cattle showing isn't as popular in Australia as the U.S., but for good reason. Australian breeders are more concerned with meeting the demands of the commercial meat market, which sounds more practical in my opinion. Aussies are very good at keeping herd records/data which is the basis they use in culling and improving their herds EPDs, similar to the way we run our operations in the U.S. but to a more extreme. Most AUS breeders have their own udder scoring system, disposition scoring, body type scoring, structure/hoof scoring, and muscle scoring systems. These records are vital in keeping a low maintenance herd. A 1,500 head operation doesn't have time to pull calves, trim feet, and treat every sick cow or calf in the paddock (pasture) the 5,000+ acres these cattle are ran on. Most of these cows get checked once a week if that, so obviously low maintenance is crucial in a successful Australian herd. In calving out cows in Australia it's quite simple, either the cow lays down and has a calf naturally, or if she is having trouble she lays down to die without the help of a puller. Sounds harsh, but by doing this breeders minimize the calving problems in years to come by simply letting the problem breed itself out. Needless to say Australians very seldom have calving problems. Americans have a thing

or two to learn from Australians in terms of breeding low maintenance cattle that don't require a five gallon bucket of corn a day to survive. Australian cattle may not be the heaviest muscled, stoutest, fattest or as "showy" as our cattle in the States but from a commercial and breeding standpoint have many more positives than our cattle in the States.

In conclusion, applying for the 2012 Ambassador exchange may be one of the best decisions I have ever made. There are so many positive things that came out of

my trip I couldn't list them all. Not only did it open my eyes to overseas cattle operations and introduce me to hundreds of foreign Shorthorn breeders that will now be long time friends but my trip helped me grow as a person. For any AJSA member who is thinking about running for the Australian Ambassador exchange in the future I would highly recommend it. As I stated earlier, I was very unsure and nervous about traveling to a foreign country even up until I boarded the plane to Australia. It resulted in being one of the most

life changing and best experiences I've ever had. I would like to thank the AJSA for the opportunity, there aren't many organizations out there that can offer this kind of experience. The AJSA has not only taken me across the United States but across the globe, all of us as juniors are very lucky to have grown up in an organization like this with the rewards AJSA has to offer if we take advantage.