



Marcia G. Read

June 27, 1949 – November 9, 2017

The American Dexter Cattle Association notes the passing of long-time member and dedicated Dexter cattle breeder, Marcia G. Read, of Claysville, Pennsylvania. She was recognized by the ADCA for her outstanding contributions to the Dexter breed with the Talisman Award in 2008.

Marcia first learned about Dexter cattle from reading an article in a 1973 Rodale Press *Organic Gardening and Farming* magazine. The publisher of *Organic Gardening and Farming* magazine, also owned and operated the Rodale Organic Gardening Experimental Farm in Pennsylvania. In 1976, Rodale purchased Bob Bechtel's Dexter cattle herd for their Experimental Farm. More articles about Dexter cattle followed.

Marcia Read purchased her first Dexter cows (Peerless Chopper and Jane O'Callen) and a bull (Scott O'Callen) from Dr. H.E. Callen, Jr. of Butler, Pennsylvania. She later purchased Malach's Julie and her daughter by Parndon Bullfinch, Malach's Bridget, from Chester Malach of Elma, New York. Peerless Chopper's daughter, Charity of Old Orchard, ADCA No. 2058, born in 1978, was Marcia Read's first ADCA registered Dexter using the Old Orchard herd name. Old Orchard Surabhi, ADCA No. 035474,

born in 2013 was the last one. All in all, there are 234 registered Dexter cattle in the ADCA registry with the Old Orchard herd name.

Marcia endeavored to raise tame cattle. When they were young, her two daughters, Sarah and Jessica, trained and showed their Dexter cattle in 4-H. Starting with the very first calf born on her farm, Marcia bottle-raised every heifer and occasionally even some bull calves. She dehorned her cattle. She kept them on grass pastures on her 165-acre farm. Marcia focused on using Dexter bulls that came from dams with good udders. She kept a small milking group (about 10 Dexter cows), with some of the cows used as nurse cows and the others machine milked. Most of the Old Orchard bull calves were marketed as grass-fed (and milk-fed) baby beef, utilizing a travelling butcher to slaughter them on-site, between 6 and 12 months of age.

Marcia's influence as a Dexter breeder was international. In the 1980's, Pat Freeman, from Ontario, Canada, imported two cows (Honor of Old Orchard, ADCA No. 2533; and Royal of Old Orchard, ADCA No. 2532) from Marcia's herd in Pennsylvania, and established the Braco herd in Ontario, Canada. Royal of Old Orchard was later sold to Paul Taylor in Alberta, Canada, and contributed to his Shanidar herd in the 1990's.

Marcia Read considered Dexter cattle breeders to be ambassadors of the breed. It was important to her to properly match cattle with the prospective buyer's needs and abilities. She discovered early on that many of her buyers were purchasing their very first livestock, and that it was important to have a good fit between the cattle and their new owners. She mentored many Dexter breeders for years after they purchased cattle from her.

Marcia Read truly appreciated that the Dexter breed had much to offer, and that it had the flexibility of meeting the needs of many different farming operations. With over 35 years of experience, she thought that Dexter cattle should be promoted as the ultimate backyard cow.