

This Year's Catalog on our 31st Anniversary
is Dedicated to:

David Lawford

Our Mohair industry was fortunate in 1986 when David & Dee Lawford moved to Brady, Texas from South Africa. He served as the manager of the Texas International Brady Combing plant as well as the Stucken mohair buyer. The Roddy Scouring plant nearby and the combing plant complimented each other.

David's impact that he continues to help make on the USA mohair quality, preparation and marketing began prior to 1986. At an earlier International Mohair Association (IMA) meeting overseas, Joe David overheard Mr. Lawford talking to a mill owner from Austria: "Some Texas mohair is preferred by many because of the moderate lanolin content that protects the fiber that gives it a softer 'handle' even after the mohair is scoured."

When one looks at David's background, it is easy to appreciate his experience with the Angora Goat in the pasture, the raw fibers, lab tests, and the various steps in the processing to the finished fabric. As the different processors would relay their comments about the mohair from certain breeders, regions, or nations, David would point out to the producers and warehousemen the pros and cons of various clips.

In 1960 David began working at the Farmers Coop Union (mohair) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Lawrence Hobson, a pioneer breeder, was David's manager and mentor. Our HLRS group was privileged to purchase in 1991 our first South African angora imports from Mike Hobson and others. Mike's great uncle was Lawrence.

After 10 years with the FCU, David switched to a cement company. In 1979 Tony Hobson (son of Lawrence and the president of the IMA for several years) happened to see David in a hallway. Hobson mentioned the largest mohair top-maker (OSB) in South Africa needed an experienced person. So, the Lawford's, with their young family, accepted the new position. They have stayed with the mohair industry ever since. In 1984 OSB was purchased by Stucken & Co. (the 100-year-old wool firm from Germany) about the same time that the Brady operation was established by the Stuckens.

Even prior to David Lawford's career start overseas in 1960, the USA mohair industry's marketing system was gradually evolving away from just selling mohair by the pound in original bags. 'Extra grease and coarseness meant more pounds and \$.' Now our original bag mohair is in more lines with more uniformity.

In 1937 the Sonora Wool & Mohair Warehouse and Clay Achitson, the county agent, held the first Sonora Wool & Mohair Show. 4-H judging across the state after WW2 placed a more balanced emphasis on quality, pounds and fineness with size and body. Do you remember that Jackie and Fritz Landers, Gene Tongate and Carl Menzies? The TAGRA scorecard allocated 20 points for fineness – the most of any trait. The B & C type show ring classes were combined into one group. In the late 40's, most producers adult hair was still placed into just one line at the same price with the buyers insisting that the Brooks Sweeten, Busty Halbert and Joe Brown Ross's finer clips be included in the line at the same price. This finally led to Vander Stucken and Ross creating a small buying and sorting team with Walter Nesbitt, Howard Ragsdale and Boston, MA textile connections. The venture failed \$ wise and shut down prior to 1952, but it did help push the bar to creating more individual lots being marketed separately.

There were well over 70 warehouses (who knows) who handled mohair across the USA. The MCA was organized in 1962. The incentive program really helped the expansion of Angora flocks and sorting programs as there was indeed an 'incentive' to get the higher price for one's finer hair rather than leave it in the original bag. Fred Speck remembers when he was a Hayden Haby 4-H clubber in 1966-70, he would go to ranches to sort some of D.L. Cloudt's warehouse customers. Fred Campbell at the

Sonora Woolhouse started sorting with a team using both sides of a conveyor belt. In the 80's Joe Will, David Lee and Mary Ross really helped their Dad to sort mohair. We made a good assembly line team at the ranch. The Stott's sisters helped sort at the Rippy Warehouse, the Ross Ranch and with David Whitworth. Stephen Brawley helped at the Whitworth and Gary Gardners. At a TSGRA meeting in Uvalde Jess Lockart, Allen Stieler & Dan Davis were asked to give a slide presentation on how they sorted mohair at their shearing shed. Even when the original incentive stopped in 1991, mohair preparation continued. The MCA had helped to form the IMA many years earlier which brought together breeders, warehousemen, buyers, topmakers, spinners and fabric makers from around the world. There was more understanding of the big picture and transparency.

The TAMU Research and Extension started the Angora Performance Test in the 70's. Our thanks to the teams at the San Angelo & Sonora- Rocksprings Experiment Station. The test is still active. The MCA in the late 70's and the 90's, under Fred Campbell and Jack Groff (extension) leadership sponsored hands on workshops at various ranches and fairgrounds including the Holman, Quinn, Brownwood and Gatesville. Other MCA members, extensions, Texas Angora goat and mohair judges, hand spinners, breeders and processors continued to travel in and out of state to shows, workshops and yarn fairs – across our nation, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and the U.K.

Upon the Lawford's arrival to Brady in 1986, he first got acquainted with the combing facility and the team which included the sorting room group. Then David started making the rounds to the numerous warehouses to evaluate and bid on original bag lots (some of which were chute - cut more accurately), and sorted mohair that had been done at a ranch or at the warehouses. He noticed the variability of the different grades marked on the bags from different producers and warehouses. Ford Oglesby, who purchased for some French and Spanish topmakers and spinners, had already been showing interested producers some strength and weaknesses in their clips at the 'take-up' after a sale. Oglesby had also really encouraged proper coring procedure at the warehouses. The 'Bill Sims' San Angelo Research Lab team is always helpful at the warehouses, the performance test and for individual breeders. The Producers Marketing Coop (PMCI) at Mertzon continues their good grower's program.

What was unusual was that this new overseas buyer offered to have a hands-on grading workshop at Bill Whitworth's ranch which was followed up with another one at the Lockhart ranch. Grower turn out was good. Most of us 'pooled' our kid hair at Kerrville and the AK & FYG lines at Sonora for two years. It was educational to us to see similar quality larger lines and working together. To quote Lawford: "The US has some great mohair but not a nationwide, rather simple consistent grading guideline."

Along these same lines in the late 80's the MCA continued its efforts to help improve the uniformity of mohair grades. A committee was formed that was composed of MCA members, warehousemen and mohair buyers. Among those included Lawford, Oglesby, Le Roy Keese and Glen Fisher (Sonora Wool & Mohair). Fisher and Lawford took the lead with the group that came up with the grades of adult, fine adult, fine young goat, average kid (graded out from 18 month and older goats), true spring kid #1 & 2, and true baby kid # 1 & 2. In general, 2 microns separated each grades fiber diameter; not just the age of the goat.

Different factors may help the breeder or sorter to place some locks from a fleece in separate lines if the fleece is not uniform: 1) the softness, 'handle' ; 2) the width of the lock especially at the base (do not just look at the pretty tip; 3) how many 'waves' are in a 6 inch lock (style & character) 4) if some is 'sheepy', make sure that the fibers when stretched out are not shorter than 4 inches; 5) if possible have the shearer to throw heavy stain off to the side for a separate sack; 6) Chute – sorting & then fine – tuning prior to running that particular group into the shearing shed so that the particular grade will be placed in a separate marked sack. Some pick-up people do not realize the reasons. 7) these same principles apply for those who sell original bag lots. If in doubt

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or if there are some coarse necks, place the goat (fleece) in a lower grade group. You are developing your reputation. We do not need a microscope in the pen. Consider starting to look at the individual fibers for comparison.

Lawford was the one who showed us and stressed the importance of uniform staple length and to avoid the triangle 'tippy' flat lock that had the variable short fibers within the same lock. It was also suggested that goats with shorter staple length on the back and lower britch be shorn later or placed in a separate sack. 4.5 inches on the goat is the usual accepted minimum fiber length. Shorter lengths have other uses as well as those over 7 inches. Lawford and Pierre (the U.K. – Bradford) strongly emphasized placing chalky ear & face goats with kempy fleeces (especially down the top line & britch) in a separate bag. True crossbred fleeces should (be in another sack) but still be divided up into adult, yearling & kid.

The Brady Combing plant closed in 1998. The Stucken family asked the Lawfords to go back to S. Africa for 2 years to help the Stuckens to enlarge their sorting and topmaking facility to also include the spinning of yarns. And, to help with the younger generations family transition. David and Dee then returned to Fredericksburg in 2000 to continue being the buyer for Stucken & Co.

They also ran a Bed & Breakfast for several years in Fredericksburg. Their daughter Jan works at the C of C. Their son Greg and his wife live in Flower Mound, TX. Julie Carson Lawford was raised in Ozona on the ranch. More history! Julie's 2nd cousins are Bob Childress and Carmen Sutton who have traveled the mohair world representing the MCA. Now that is a small world!

David has served as an MCA director. He has made grading demonstrations at the Performance Test. David has been a judge for the for the Hamanaka Mohair Contest. Like Jimmy Cahill mentioned, "Lawford really helped us at the Ol' Sonora Trading Co. (mohair) in the 80's and 90's." Glen Fisher, "David, as a buyer, felt a responsibility to the producers also." Seco Mayfield, "we sure want to get Lawford's comments". Lawford, "Joe David, do not get too detailed with your sorting." Robin Giles, "He has not only helped other producers and us, but David is a close friend." Bonnie Naumann, "As we developed our combing and dyeing business at home we noticed that fleeces that had middle of the road lanolin remained softer after processing." Steve Haynes, "he helped us to develop the grading standards years ago and has kept us on tract, so the rancher can make more \$, with the four grades." Carlon Stapper, "We grade at the ranch; get the bags of mohair core tested. Then David goes over the lab results with us so that we can keep improving." Fritz Kuebel's comments in the July 1989 Ranch magazine, "We do not like excessive oil or a dry straight lock after a few years."

We all have benefitted to have our mohair buyers to compete against each other in the offerings and sales, but they all respect each other. We are lucky to have Jason Bannowsky, Darrell Keese and Justin Stieler as our buyers also. They certainly appreciate David's broad experience. All three were raised on the land in our area with Angora goats and are well – rooted in mohair and wool production and topmaking with their firms.

In these few paragraphs, as we have reviewed some of the history of our mohair industry in the last 70 years, it is easy to see that David Lawford has helped make a difference in our own operations and warehouses. With David Lawford's long term dual-citizenship in the world's two largest Angora goat producing nations he has helped us to understand that we are part of a truly international business. At the same time there is still a need for the entrepreneurship of our own mohair products to be made right here in the USA. Bottom line - mohair's characteristics add a special touch to many textile products and the land needs manageable livestock raised in balance with its carrying capacity.

Thanks Dee for 'sharing' David with us. We sincerely look forward to your continued support and willingness to share your observations with us Mr. Lawford.