

Local Cattle Buyer Honored At USDA Millennium Celebration

WASHINGTON, May 30, 2000 -- On May 10, George Martin, a local cattle buyer, received national recognition for his accomplishments and contributions to the farming industry during the past 60 years. The award ceremony "Celebrating the American Family Farm" was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) as part of the USDA's Millennium event series, which are exploring American agriculture in the 21st century. The event was held in Kansas City, Mo.

Upon presenting the award, James R. Baker, GIPSA administrator, said, "George Martin is a true professional, confirmed cattleman who has lived a life based on principles he got from his parents, friends, and men of character that he came in contact with. His traits, sound working knowledge, and desire earn him the status carried by few others, The Professional Order Buyer. George brought the market to the people." Baker went on to say "George Martin has been active in buying cattle for the past 60 years. No other person has been so dedicated to the job, and to the livestock industry, left his mark in so many places and expected only a fair trade in exchange."

Mr. Martin's career started in 1926 in Coffeerville, Kansas at the age of 21 when he managed Valelga Shipping Association, where he learned the foundation of the cattle business. The Depression drove him from Kansas to the West Coast, moving to LA Union Stockyards in 1936. Then he moved to Sterling Meat Corporation and Alpha Beta Food Corporation. After serving three years in the Army during World War II, George returned to Alpha Beta Corp. He spent the next 25 years traveling the Southwest and High Plains, later joining California Cotton Oil Company, and then in the 60s joined Torpey Cattle Company, still shipping cattle to the West Coast from the Southeast region. Nelson Crow owner/publisher of Western Journal gave credit to George Martin for shipping the first Okie cattle from the High Plains to the West Coast and starting the Okie movement.

In 1994, the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City awarded George with the Chester A. Reynolds award, which recognizes a person whose lifestyle represents a distinct contribution to Western Heritage, the only cattle buyer The Cowboy Hall of Fame has ever honored. In 1993 a book about his life was written by Gary Schabb entitled, "Handshake and Heartaches, the Life and Times of George R. Martin, Cattlebuyer." Today George lives in Coffeerville, Arkansas.

At the ceremony, USDA recognized farming in America and honored century farmers and farm families who have made significant contributions to the farming industry in America during the past 100 years.

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