

# Albert E. Darlow, 1899–1966: A Brief Biography

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Albert E. Darlow was born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, on April 24, 1899, the son of William and Margaret (Wall) Darlow, and was raised on a Payne County farm north of Stillwater. He worked his way through college at Oklahoma A&M College (OAMC), graduating in 1918 after being on W. L. Blizzard's livestock judging team. As a student, he won the coveted Block and Bridle Kennedy Cup, so named for Iowa State College's prominent coach who retired the first Bronze Bull of the International judging contest. He was a private in the U.S. Army in World War I.

Al Darlow asked for and was given permission by ASAS to discuss the contributions made by livestock shows, and the judging done at these shows, in the improvement and change in livestock type and conformation during the past 50 yr. His article appeared in the 50th anniversary issue of the *Journal of Animal Science*, in 1958. He wrote, "Stock shows during the past 50 years have proven to be the outstanding classrooms, or laboratories, for the assimilation, coordination, and dissemination of information in the art and science of animal husbandry. . . . Each of these men [academic livestock judges] who has walked into the classroom of the arena, for all the world to see, has proved to be a master teacher." Al was a tough, cigar-chewing, master livestock judging coach and beef cattle judge as well as a department head and vice-president of a college of agriculture.

He joined the Animal Husbandry faculty in 1919, and 3 yr later he received his M.S. For 5 yr, he was assistant judging team coach to W. L. Blizzard. Then for 10 yr, starting in 1924, he was the coach. He attracted attention in the state, and nationally and internationally, as an excellent stock judge and coach. During his decade as coach, he produced four national champion teams and five high individuals in the annual contest at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago, as well as two second- and one third-place teams. Simultaneously, his teams made impressive records at national and regional contests, such as the American Royal at Kansas City, the Kansas National at Wichita, and the Southwest Exposition at Fort Worth. His teams, filled with future leaders of the livestock industry, won the second Bronze Bull trophy (a bronze sculpture of a bull with a man at one

side that was stylized for the ASAS logo) in 1925 and 1926. That trophy was retired to OAMC in 1928 after it had won the contest three times. The bronze bull still graces the entrance hall of the Animal Science Department at Oklahoma State University. Not only were the contests important, but site visits to prominent breeder farms for team workouts introduced the students to the livestock leaders of the age.

From 1920 to 1928, Al published six bulletins (the most for any professor of animal husbandry) on sheep feeding and breeding. This initiated research within the department at OAMC and laid the groundwork for the prominent animal nutrition group of later years.

In 1935, he moved to the faculty of Animal Husbandry at the University of Wisconsin. Al made one of the nation's first livestock pavilions ring with well-designed reasons by judging students. In 1938, he followed G. C. Humphrey as chair of Animal Husbandry when Dairy Husbandry became a separate department. To participate at the institution where cooperative research in the animal sciences began early on gave him another dimension into research. He received his Ph.D. from Wisconsin in 1939.

In 1943, Al and his family moved back to Stillwater, where he became head of the Animal Husbandry Department. In 1939, W. L. Blizzard was made Dean of agriculture. Al persuaded his beef herdsman, Dwight Stephens, to move back with him. At Oklahoma in the early 1950s, crossbreeding research with swine led Jim Whatley also into beef experiments; he, along with Al and Dwight Stephens, established four lines of beef cattle: large-framed Herefords, compact Herefords, line-bred Herefords, and Angus. At that time, beef breeders producing the small, compact cattle that were revered in the stock shows—thanks in part to their mentor, Dean Blizzard—began to observe dwarfism in their herds. This revolution in the beef industry led to larger, performance-oriented beef cattle breeding; but for 10 yr, dwarfism studies dominated research projects.

In 1945, at the close of WWII, Al worked for 6 mo with the U.S. Army at Shrivenham, England, to teach animal husbandry at the temporary university established there for returning servicemen. He made extensive visits to breeding herds in the U.K. In 1946, he was invited to judge Shorthorn cattle at the internationally famous Perth show in Scotland, becoming the first person from the United States to judge this prestigious show. He judged many other

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Received February 26, 1999.  
Accepted March 2, 1999.



Figure 1. Albert E. Darlow (second from left) as coach of the 1925 Oklahoma A&M College livestock judging team after winning the International Livestock Exposition contest, in Chicago.

important livestock shows while he was department head, continuing the tradition at OAMC.

On July 1, 1948, the federal government shifted the Quartermaster Remount Station at Fort Reno, near El Reno, Oklahoma, from the military to the USDA. The USDA signed a joint research agreement with the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station in March, 1948. Al moved Dwight Stephens to Fort Reno as superintendent. Swine and beef breeding, along with both pasture and feedlot beef research, moved to the Fort under Dwight's able leadership. The polo field was filled with hogs, and the short- and tallgrass paddocks became research areas for beef production. The concrete horse chutes made excellent beef facilities. During all this time, Al encouraged the animal nutrition group to new heights of productivity, even using makeshift stalls around the arena. Al allowed a circus to be held in the arena, and his rhetorical comment was that all he got was some elephant dung. Only he did not say it quite that way!

On February 1, 1953, he was selected by O. S. Wilham, then president, to become the first vice-president for agriculture at OAMC. As such, Darlow was in charge of the School of Veterinary Medicine and was director of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service at OAMC. He delegated responsibility by making Louis B. Hawkins director of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and Randal Jones vice-dean in charge of resident instruction. The College of Agriculture rose to new heights, and its scientists conducted innovative research that was of great benefit to the state and the nation. Al continued to judge at beef shows throughout the nation, and he and Glen Bratcher, head of Animal Science, spent many hours after work at the beef teaching herd, on the hill, selecting breeding stock. Al was quite vocal when Dwight Stephens at Fort Reno called to report another of the sires had "dwarfed out" in the tester herd at the Fort. Among his many accomplishments, he took the leadership in establish-

ing the Oklahoma State University Foundation, using his many contacts with alumni.

In 1954, Al served as president of the American Society of Animal Science. In 1958, one of the greatest honors that can come to a livestock industry person was given to Al. His portrait was hung in the Saddle and Sirloin Club, located in the historic Stock Yard Inn, adjacent to Chicago's Union Stock Yards. His many judging team members, now in leadership positions of the livestock industry, celebrated at the Saddle and Sirloin banquet with him, as did many others who had known Al.

The dean's position was first occupied by W. L. Blizzard and then by Al Darlow. Both had been department heads of Animal Husbandry and were widely recognized as state and national leaders, especially among livestock producers. Particularly, Al presided over the move away from row crop agriculture, which had caused severe erosion of Oklahoma's red soils, to stock farming and grass production. The change from raw red to lush green dramatically

altered the landscape of the state of Oklahoma. Fewer students returned to the farm; many selected careers in research, academics, and especially agribusiness.

Mandatory retirement removed Al from the university scene in 1964, but not from livestock judging at home and abroad as well as special agricultural projects throughout the world. He characteristically noted that his expertise in research was outdated but that he saw the opportunity to lead developing countries through the process, using his skills to build a livestock agriculture that would benefit their peoples.

On June 29, 1921, Al married Clara E. Priest, a fantastic helpmate, and they had four children, Stella J., Albert E., William, and Kathleen C. Clara died February 1, 1961. On April 16, 1966, he married Elizabeth O'Neal. On October 22, 1966, Al died of an apparent heart attack (heart problems had plagued Al throughout his life) at Hissau in the Punjab province of India, where he was working under an Ohio State University contract. The legacy of Al Darlow lives on.