

Rezac Livestock Commission Company Is Family Business Serving For 70 Years

On December 19, 2017, Rezac Livestock Commission Company, Inc., celebrated its 70th year of doing business just outside of the St. Marys, Kansas, city limits with a customer appreciation day and lunch, according to a special story compiled by Nancy Rezac.

"Rezac Livestock's customers have been an essential part of its success," Nancy Rezac said. "The Rezac family has been fortunate to have a business in a progressive agricultural community where the supply of cattle to buy and sell has been endless."

Owners and operators Dennis Rezac, Kenneth Rezac and Lynn Rezac are the second generation keeping Rezac Livestock going.

Rezac Livestock Commission Company is the longest continuing advertiser on 580 WIBW, beginning shortly after the family business was started. Consignments for every Tuesday's auction are aired that day on the morning Ag Roundup program.



Sheila Marney, Lynn Rezac, Rex Arb, Dennis Rezac and ring man Dale Myers keep the auction moving every Tuesday at Rezac Livestock Commission Company, Inc., St. Marys.

Delaine Rezac (1919-2006) built the original cinder block building the winter of 1947 with the help of neighbors in what was an apple orchard that had been riddled by a tornado.

Apple sheds were converted into pens for pigs, and more pens were added for cattle.

Delaine and his wife Phyllis had the first sale May 7, 1947.

Through the end of that year, 3,000 head of cattle were sold. Commission rate then was 3-percent, on the first \$500 sold for the consignor at each sale, and 2-percent commission rate for the amount more than \$500.

A record of one sale on August 19, 1947, showed the auction started with the selling of used items (junk), followed by 14 hogs and 34 cattle.

Payroll that day consisted of three people earning \$3.75 each, two auctioneers earning \$30 total, with clerking and office help receiving wages totaling \$20. In 2017, Rezac Livestock sold 76,624 head of cattle.

It takes a lot of people to run a successful business. Gene Toby, Seneca, was hired as the first auctioneer. Joe Gresser at Peoples State Bank in Rossville became the head bookkeeper, serving that position for 20 years.

In the early '60s, Phyllis Davis was added to the office staff. At that time, Delaine believed in visiting each consignor's farm to talk to them about selling their cattle. It was a big job and he enlisted Paul Kramer as a field man. Paul was a very good family friend, who farmed northwest of St. Marys.

In the '60s, Elmer Imthurn, a cattleman west of Maple Hill, and Eldon Arb, Melvern, also became field men. Leland Bailey, Mayetta, joined the team in the '70s. Rex Arb replaced his father Eldon in the '80s.

As the older field men passed away, Dennis Rezac took over much of the customer contact work and now spends considerable time on the cell phone communicating with sellers and buyers.

The first office crew also included Gertie Kramer and Kay Fulmer. "Doc" Fulmer served as the first sale day veterinarian.

Neighbors worked on sale day penning cattle. Through the years, many high school boys had their first work experience at Rezac Livestock Commission Company.

When Delaine and Phyllis' three sons, Kenneth, Lynn, and Dennis became old enough they learned to work at the family's sale barn. As the boys grew up, they took on more jobs around the barn and in the family business.

Denny attended Missouri Auction School and fulfilled a dream to cry the weekly auctions. After military service, Kenneth and Lynn returned home to continue to operate the livestock auction. A lot of changes have transpired since the family business began.

The sale barn café has been known for years for its delicious homemade pies. At first, pies were purchased at the Landis Bakery. However, Phyllis Rezac insisted her pies were better and decided to make them herself. At one time, the café sold 15 to 20 pies each week.



Phyllis Davis and Nancy Rezac run the office for every Tuesday's auction at Rezac Livestock Commission Company, Inc., St. Marys.

Three people worked in the cramped quarters of the little café which had seating of ten bar stools. Phyllis did the baking until she handed the job down to her three daughters-in-law, Chris, Pat and Nancy, in the '90's. Chris and Nancy continue to run the café.

In addition to running the café, Kenneth's wife Chris books cattle in at the stock trailer dock on Tuesdays, and Denny's wife, Nancy, handles the buyer side of the office.

When the barn originated, each farm in the Kaw Valley had a barn, pens, and a corn crib to fatten their own small herds of calves.

Then, commercial feedlots began appearing in western Kansas and Nebraska, and eastern Colorado in great numbers. More and more farm feedlots were later turned into fields to grow more corn and beans in eastern Kansas.

By the 1980s, there weren't very many fat cattle on the farms to buy. The sale barn's focus turned mostly to cattle that grazed the pastures. Some of the customers began backgrounding young cattle.

These farmers, from Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, take weaning age calves and grow them until they're old enough to send west to the feedlots. Rezac Livestock Commission Company became a place for buyers from those feedlots to come to buy feeder cattle.

The 1970s became a time when sale barns were keeping up with other industries, and things had to be bigger and faster. With cattle coming to town in pot-load semi-tractor-trailers instead of in two-ton farm trucks, as before, larger lots of cattle were being sold.

It was no longer acceptable to weigh cattle eight at a time until 2-o'clock in the morning during the long fall auction runs.

The sale barn was remodeled in 1973, and a floating ring scale was installed in 1978 over an excavated hole where the old ring had been. Cattle came through doors that were hydraulic powered.

The Rezac sons decided to computerize the business beginning in 1979, which cut the time the sales lasted by several hours. They hired a company to set up a program for the barn.

Kenny Rezac later designed the computer program currently in operation, and keeps the system running.

Rezac Livestock Commission Company, Inc., obtained a website, www.rezACLIVESTOCK.COM, and began videoing auctions for internet bidding in July 2006.

The website features a market report from the previous week's auction, upcoming sale consignments, directions to the barn, and instructions for internet bidding.

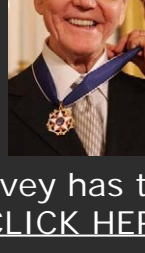
Rezac's every Tuesday sales can now be viewed at www.dvauctions.com, where bidders can buy cattle without traveling to St. Marys.

"Long time employees Phyllis Davis, bookkeeper; Marty Schindler and Alvin Stutzman, yardmen; Rex Arb, auctioneer, and the many other employees it takes to run the auction have played a valued part in the sale barn's success.

"It has taken a good team to keep the barn going for the last 70 years," Nancy Rezac acknowledged.

Padre Says:

"Families and friends form the closest of bonds you will ever experience. It is impossible to lead a happy life without support from these important people."



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