

Raising calves old hat to Georgetown student

By BENDUMMETT
the Herald

It is rare someone's work is in the running to be recognized as the best in the country, but this is exactly what's happening to Michael Large and his 4-H project.

The 15-year-old Georgetown District High School student made the daily trip to the Cunningham farm in the rural area of Brampton from February to mid-November this past year to create a prize-winning calf which is currently one of six being considered for the title of All Canadian Calf in the 4-H Heifer class.

The Holstein Journal, which sponsors the contest, will announce the winners Feb. 15. The magazine will also announce the 16 other All Canadian class winners on this date. The contest is in its 48th year.

Judging from Michael's comments there's absolutely no question which calf will be the champion in the 4-H class.

"Number one," was Michael's response when asked about the chances of his calf, Allan Dynasty Twinkle, winning.

Although Michael shows the calf its owner is Allan Cunningham. Michael's confidence seems well founded. "Anyone who has ever seen her (the calf) says she'll place first or second," he says.

Allan Dynasty Twinkle is up against calves from Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. Calves from across Canada were considered when making the final selection of six, said the magazine's editor, Bonnie Cooper.

The contest judges who come from across Canada and the United States will make their selection based primarily on the calf with the best show record.

Michael's calf qualified for championship after she was declared winner of the December calf class for all of Peel, at the Brampton Fall Fair this past fall. The calf's entry into this show resulted after she placed first in

the 4-H calf project class at the same fair.

This success was followed by a first place ribbon at the Erin Fall Fair in the 4-H category and then a fourth place finish in the same category at the Royal Winter Fair held in November in Toronto.

It would appear Allan Dynasty Twinkle's rise towards show-calf supremacy was initially unexpected. "Her pedigree wasn't that great," said Michael. Her mother wasn't much of a Heifer and the bull's name wasn't known in farming circles.

But after a few months "we noticed a change and we knew she had the potential to be a prize winner," he said.

A calf is judged mainly on her height, walk and back.

Michael with the help of Mr. Cunningham set a height goal for the calf of between 51 inches and 54 inches. Allan Dynasty Twinkle came in at 51 inches.

Attaining the height depends on the calf diet as well as the more obvious factor of pedigree.

The calf was brought up on a diet of water, hay and grain. "We settled on this diet after a little experimenting, but it didn't take much," he said.

"She eats like a pig. Anything you put into the feeder, she eats," said Michael.

Michael explained most calves are more picky about what they eat. "I was lucky."

To ensure that Allan Dynasty Twinkle walked properly - she didn't cross her feet - Michael would take the calf for a half hour walk each day. The walks were also a way of teaching the calf how to lead properly and keep her head up, he said.

After the walk Michael would brush her top line - the hair running along a calf's back. "This (brushing the top line) gives the impression of a straight back," he said.

Regardless of the outcome of the

All Canadian contest, Michael plans to continue to show calves. He says he's looking forward to his next 4-H project animal, which he'll take on soon.

He plans to repeat the success of this year. But Mr. Cunningham isn't as confident. "He says doing as

well this year would be like winning a lottery," Michael said.

Allan Dynasty Twinkle is only one of several animals, he cares for. He also has a seven-foot boa constrictor, a Macow, a ferret, fish, gerbils, hamsters, a budgee and two dogs.

It's no wonder he's thinking of becoming a veterinarian. But like young Canadian boys he harbors aspirations of playing in the National Hockey League some day. He is currently a winger and centre with the Georgetown major bantams.

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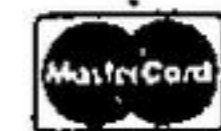
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