

## FBA Hall of Fame Inductee: Grant Blackburn

Grant Blackburn has selflessly served the FBA and Finn breed for many years. To celebrate his induction into the Hall of Fame, Grant shared some of his memories from his time with the FBA.

Grant writes:

My time with the FBA has been a wonderful experience. It started in Dec 94 when I bought three bred ewe lambs From Naomi Smith. I went to my first annual meeting in 1995 held at Cleveland in conjunction with a festival, I can't remember which one. As I remember there was quite a roll up with around twenty or so in attendance. At the end of the meeting I found myself President!

Of course this was when the internet was in it's 'embryonic' stage, so most everything was transacted by 'snail mail' and phone calls. At the same time the long time secretary , Claire Carter, began having health issues and was slowly losing her grip on the Secretarial duties which, back then, entailed the registration function (all manually recorded, no computers) and treasurer duties as well. In the end we split the Secretary and Treasurer duties and Sandy De Master (treasurer) kindly volunteered to take on the registration function.

The FBA account books were in a similar situation and the bank had very little money in it. Sandy managed to work through the manual books and computerized them as well.

A year or two later on we were able to get the Hampshire Breeders Assosiation contracted to do our registrations. This was initiated by Dr. Paul Hunter, who had 'Hamps' as well as Finns. They had computerized their registrations and thus saved the FBA having the outlays for our small flock. This was pretty much the start of Associated Registries as you know it today.

Our next big problem was how to get enough money to market the breed? The Board met at the Springfield, IL sheep sale and decided to introduce an 'activity fee', (known as 'annual dues' today) as a way to get revenue to promote the breed. Combined with additional membership and registrations the bank account slowly accumulated allowing more marketing of the breed.

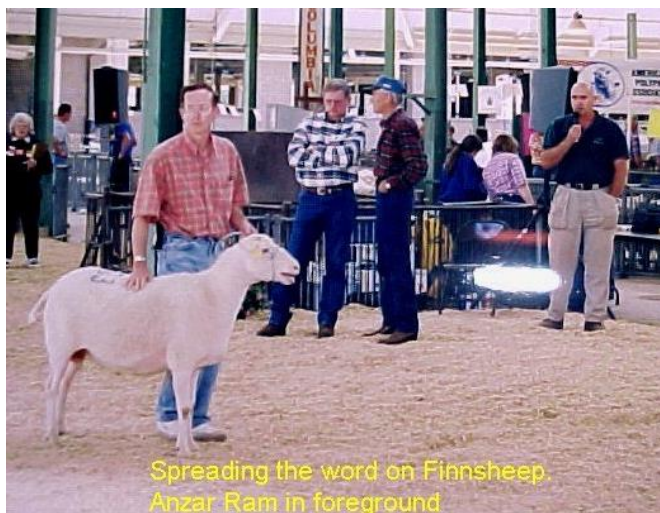
In the late 90s the internet was starting to become popular and recognized as an excellent marketing tool. The board agreed to register a domain name and I put together a pretty rudimentary web page which had facts about the breed and who to contact. We had remarkable success with it and I remember being surprised at the number of 'hits' we were getting daily, from around the world! Some of those were probably search engine bots. The webpage was launched Jan 1999, and we were very close to being the first sheep breed on the web; we were leading the way you

might say! Of course much work has been done on that since and contracted to a webmaster.

Having got the webpage up and running the board realized we needed to develop a business structure, so people knew what we were all about. That eventually happened and is still in use today.

Over the years I've served in the various positions on the Board and was treasurer for a while until that was contracted to Associated Registries.

But now it's time for the next generation of breeders to take over and I'm delighted to see some 'young blood' and fresh faces on the Board.



You can also find an article titled, "Reflections on My Beginnings with Sheep or, How I Came to Judge a Wool Show" written by Grant in Short Tales Volume 96: November 2017 (archived on the FBA website). Above is an image included with that article. It shows Grant, holding the mic, with "Rambo" the ram held by former breeder Lonnie Cook at the 1999 Illinois Finnsheep sale