

The Mother of All Cows

A newborn calf named Jenny turned a little boy into a cattleman.

BY CHERIE SANDERSON, SYCAMORE, ILLINOIS

Before sunrise, by the light of the moon, a newborn calf named Jenny stole our hearts. Jenny was the chosen one. She would begin our 8-year-old son Kurt's 4-H career and set us all on a path that would yield a lifetime of memories.

Kurt loved animals from very early on, and he didn't hesitate when it was time to sign up for the 4-H bucket calf program. Kurt chose Jenny as his calf, and did a wonderful job bottle-feeding her and keeping records of her progress. Jenny was smaller than the other calves, and finished last at the fair. But she was still a winner in Kurt's eyes.

Jenny had the distinction of being the very first cow in a herd that Kurt would build and manage as he grew into adulthood. With that distinction came a promise from his dad that Jenny would never have to leave the farm. The next year, when Kurt showed her as a breed heifer, she finished first in her class. After Jenny became a mom, Kurt took her and the baby to the fair. Once again they finished first.

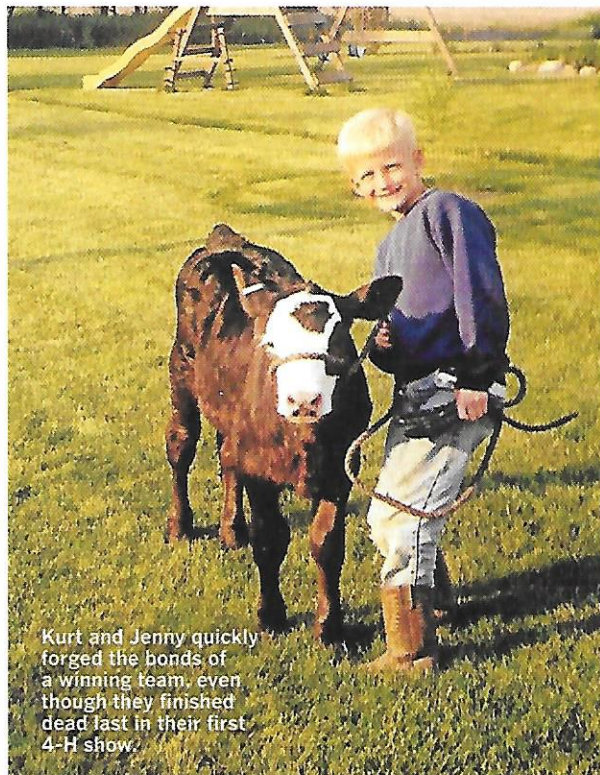
Each spring, Jenny gave birth to a new calf. She was a great mother and well respected by her peers; the rest of the herd always stepped back and let her eat and drink first. She took the lead to go in for the night and was the first one out to graze in the morning.

Jenny's relationship with humans was also unique. She monitored our every move as we worked around the farm. She knew that hayracks coming down the road meant fresh round bales and that the livestock trailer meant a visit from the bull.

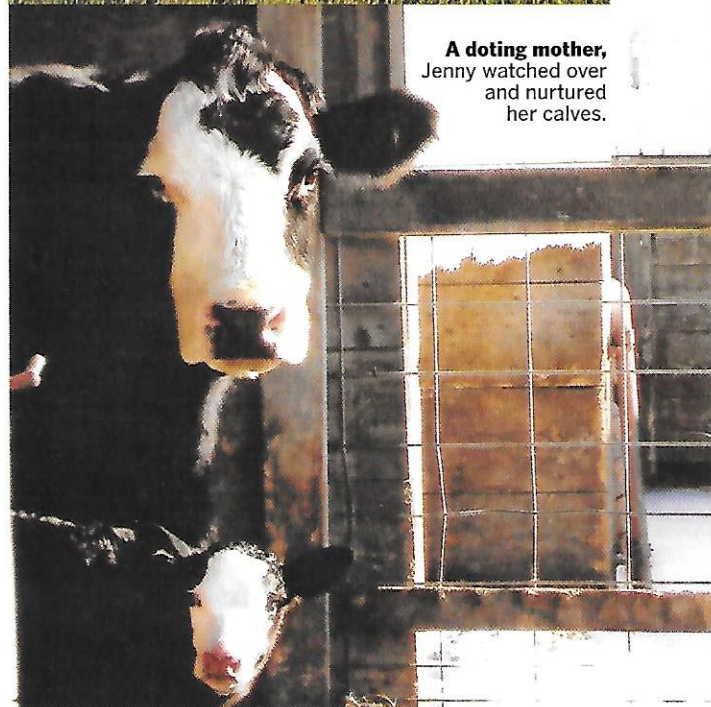
What I remember most about Jenny was her devotion to Kurt. When she spotted the school bus coming up the lane she went out to meet it, knowing it was going to deliver the little boy who fed her.

The years passed quickly. Jenny and our son built a herd of cattle that was not only financially successful but recognized many times over with awards. In this great lady's 12th year, the day came when we had to say goodbye. We kept the promise we had made to our little boy and laid Jenny to rest in the pasture.

Kurt is 25 now and still has a cow herd. Spring is abundant with newborn calves frolicking around the pasture. As the cows spend lazy summer days lying under shade trees, we often gather at the field gate and reminisce about the little calf that stole our hearts and led us on a journey we'll never forget. 🐄



Kurt and Jenny quickly forged the bonds of a winning team, even though they finished dead last in their first 4-H show.



A dotting mother, Jenny watched over and nurtured her calves.