

## Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red

By Dr Robert Walton with Jean-Louis Schrago



*Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red (VG-89)*

*Sire: Roybrook Telstar*

*Dam: Hanover Hill Pride Lucky Barb (EX-94)*

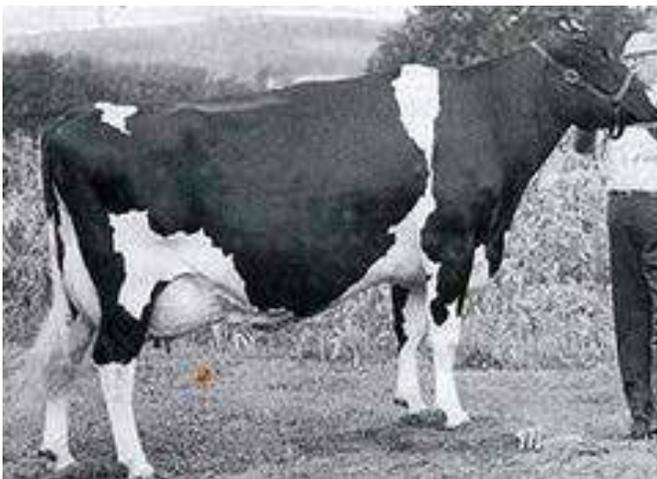
*Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red*, one of the greatest sires in Holstein breed history was born in 1972. He was the result the skill of Master Breeder R. Peter Heffering who bred *Roybrook Telstar\*BRC* to *Hanover Hill Pride Lucky Barb*, daughter of the legendary *John's Lucky Barb\*RC*. *Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red* sold to ABS for \$60,000 and burst on the scene with an outstanding pedigree and the ability to create tremendous brood cows. He created excitement and interest in Red & Whites and the red gene. He came close to being the ideal bull and was heavily used in North America and Europe.

More than forty years after his birth, *Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red* is still one of the most influential and respected sires of any breed. Although he was marginal for milk production, he was one of the Holstein breed's best bulls for type improvement and also increased butterfat. His daughters were tall, with good udders and sound feet and legs and developed into high lifetime production cows. Triple Threat saw extensive use all over the world. He was equally popular in North America especially among purebred breeders. He was a bull that seldom sired a mediocre daughter. His only fault was that he carried the black-red gene, which caused about half of his red and white offspring to turn mostly black before they reached six months of age.

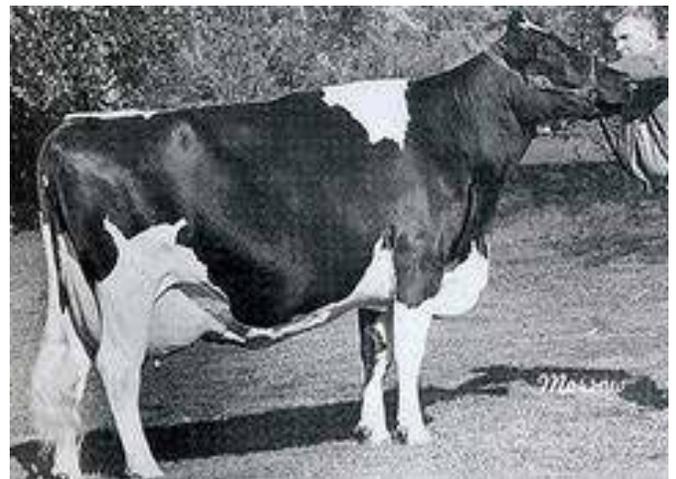
The history of *Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red* is so intertwined with the story of Jean-Louis Schrago of Switzerland that I must first tell part of the Schrago story. I first met Jean-Louis in August 1968 when he appeared at the receptionist desk at American Breeders Service (ABS) in DeForest, Wisconsin with two of his fellow graduates from the Agriculture University in Switzerland.

They had first come to Canada to learn more about Red & White Holsteins. There was some Red & White semen that had already been imported into Switzerland and Schrago was already an avid enthusiast of the R&W breed. The trio had just been at the Roundtree Holstein Farm near Toronto, Ontario. ABS had recently acquired an *ABC Reflection Sovereign* son from the Roundtrees. The Roundtrees had told Schrago that if he really wanted to find out what was going on in the cattle breeding world they should visit ABS.

On their way to Wisconsin, Schrago and his Swiss friend Arthur Darbellay, decided to first visit the famous Hanover-Hill Farm in New York State. R. Peter Heffering the owner of this dairy received them. He showed them his famous cow *John's Lucky Barb EX-97* (she was one of the first Holstein cows to score EX-97 and she had the Red Factor). One of her daughters was *Hanover-Hills Pride Lucky Barb* who also was a red carrier. When Schrago asked Peter Heffering to breed his best cow *John's Lucky Barb* to *Roybrook Telstar* to produce a red son, he asked him if he was joking because the US and Canada only had a few red cows in 1968. For Peter Heffering there was no Red & White market at this time!



*Hanover Hill Pride Lucky Barb \*RC (EX-94)*



*John's Lucky Barb\*RC (EX-97)*

## Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red

After the Hanover Hill visit, they took the Greyhound bus toward Madison, Wisconsin and arrived in De Forest with plans to visit ABS. They thought ABS was right on the edge of town but soon learned it was a three mile walk from DeForest. The receptionist wasn't sure what to do with them so she called me and I invited them to my office and learned about their mission - or rather Schrago's mission, as the other two were agronomy majors. After hearing his story and being impressed with his dedication to the cause of the Red & Whites, I told them they should really return to Wisconsin in a couple of months to attend the World Dairy Expo. I then took them to dinner and to the YMCA in Madison where I paid for their rooms for a couple of days as they looked pretty tired and bedraggled from their travels.

Schrigo did return to attend the 1968 World Dairy Expo which had Red & White classes for the first time and which coincidentally a guy named Ron Eustice was showing a cow by *SRD Advancer Three* (another ABS bull) who became Reserve Grand Champion.

About a year later I was in Switzerland selecting Simmental bulls to import for our burgeoning beef AI program when I was able to visit the university where Schrago had studied. His major professor was named Weber and he attested that Schrago was indeed one of the university's prize graduates and that he was then getting an MBA from a major business school in Paris.

The next time I heard from Schrago was when he appeared in Madison about 1971 to study for a M.S. Degree in Animal Breeding and Genetics at the University of Wisconsin. We kept in touch and when he graduated I hired him to take the lead in my initial efforts to open up the A.I. market in Europe.

In 1971, Schrago came back to visit Hanover-Hills Farm with a group of European dairy farmers. At that time, R. Peter Heffering, co-owner of this dairy farm was willing to breed some of his best red factors cows with a red carrier bull.

During the three years after Schrago's first visit, Heffering heard from different people that the Red & White market was growing worldwide. After viewing the Hanover Hill herd, Heffering invited Schrago to have lunch. During the meal R. Peter asked Schrago which Red Factor bull he should use. Schrago told him to use Roybrook Telstar. He answered that the bull was in Japan. Schrago said he had the telephone number of the AI center where Telstar was housed and proposed to Heffering to call and ask for two units of semen. R. Peter called Japan and a secretary there was able to speak some English. She said that she would ask her boss for price and availability. They waited for several minutes until suddenly they heard a voice on phone asking 2,500 \$US for two units of Telstar! R. Peter dropped the phone on the table and told Schrago the requested price! Schrago answered "Peter it's a done deal!"

After more discussion Schrago advised Peter not to breed *John's Lucky Barb* (who was old) to *Telstar* but to breed her best daughter *Hanover Hill Pride Lucky Barb EX-94* with *Telstar* instead.

Ten months later on April 24, 1972, *Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red* was born. Schrago was at the University of Wisconsin at Madison when Professor Tyler received a phone call from Peter Heffering asking to speak with him. Peter told him "John-Louis, not only has a bull calf been born from *Pride Lucky Barb*...but the calf is red." They had a 25% chance and they won!

Schrigo was so happy at this point about this new red bull being born that he asked his student friend Bill Backman from Seymour, Wisconsin if they could drive to Hanover-Hills Farm in New York immediately. Bill Backman agreed with no hesitation and they drove across Illinois and Michigan nonstop. They arrived one day later. Peter was surprised to see them. He showed them the young bull that looked like a small deer as he was entirely red. They took many pictures and drove back to Madison convinced that an exceptional red bull was born!

At this time, it was not widely-known that *Roybrook Telstar* was a carrier of the Black-Red (BR) gene, sometimes called "Telstar Red." *Triple Threat-Red* received this "BR" gene from his father. His mother *Hanover Hill Pride Lucky Barb* however carried the "true" red gene for color.



*Schrigo Triple Ortensia Red*

*The first milking Triple Threat-Red daughter in Switzerland (1977). Alain Du Colombier Director Bovec, France (ABS Distributor) , Dr. Otto Dramm from Rinderproduktion AI Hannover, Germany, Dr. Robert Walton (director of ABS, second from right) on his first trip to Switzerland, André Schrago, owner and breeder on the halter.*

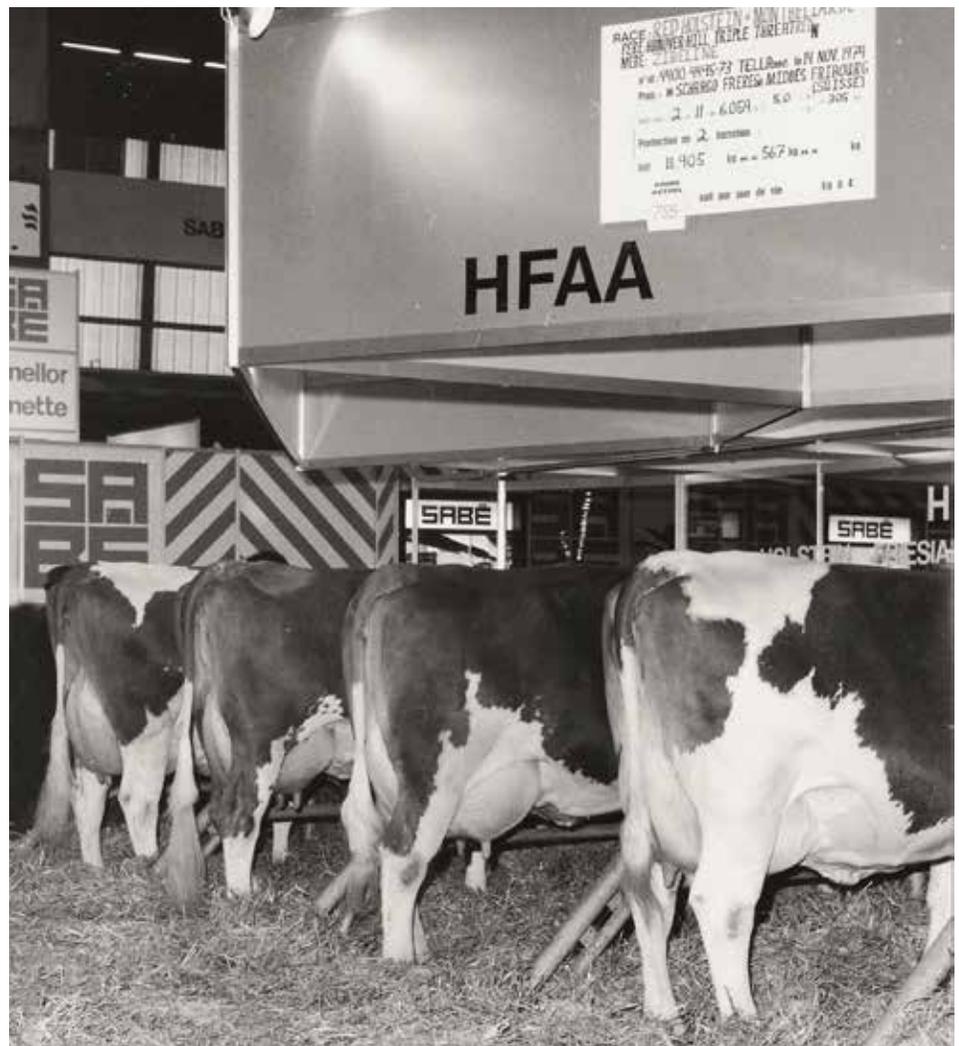
## Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red

About this time Schrago learned that the red calf had been named *Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red* and that he was soon to be sold at public auction. He strongly pressed that ABS should buy him. Schrago then returned to Switzerland and Ken Young from my Dairy Cattle Breeding staff went to the Hanover Hill Sale. I had authorized him to go up to a certain price if necessary but he actually had to bid \$60,000 to get him. This was more than the agreed upon amount and I was not too pleased at the time. As he later told me, "It was easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission".

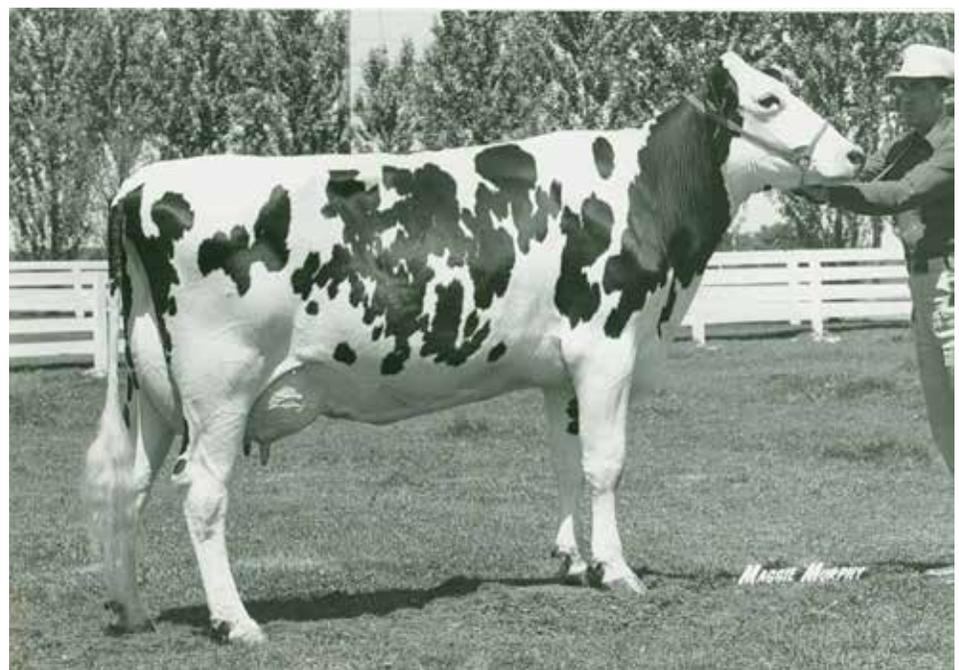
A few months later *Triple Threat* began changing color from red to black and the so called Black-Red gene was first identified and expressed. By the time *Triple Threat* reached nine months of age he was almost completely black. I was really upset with Schrago and Young at that point! The bottom line is that was probably one of the best investments we ever made and Schrago and Young were forgiven many times over the years!

Schrago really succeeded in opening the European market and *Triple Threat* became a major factor in that success – whatever breed and whatever kind of cow he was bred to, *Triple Threat* caused a dramatic improvement.

When *Triple Threat* was about five years old years old he developed lameness on one front leg and was really a three-legged bull the rest of his life. That never prevented him from doing his job, though, as he would hobble into the collection room and then immediately come to life and produce semen with the best of them. It was a remarkable story and he was a most remarkable character. *Triple Threat* probably did more for the Red & White movement than any bull in history. Thank goodness for Schrago's confidence in him!



*Group of four Triple Threat daughters in the US pavilion during the Paris Show Agricultural Fair (1979)*



*Tora Triple Threat Lulu (EX-9X)*



*Guex Triple Tulippe-Red* (EX-98 Switzerland)

*Tulippe* lived until she was 15 years-old in Holland and strongly contributed to the promotion of the new red Holstein breed in Europe and throughout the world.

In Switzerland, only one cow has reached the highest classified score of EX-98; *Guex Triple Tulippe-Red*. She was a daughter of *Hanover Triple Threat Red*. Schrago selected her to be presented with three other *Triple Threat* daughters at Paris Agriculture Show in 1979 inside the Holstein-Friesian Association exhibit in the US Department of Agriculture pavilion. This show was the real starting point of the Red Holstein breed in Europe. During this show, these four red cows became infected with IBR. When Schrago came back to Switzerland, which was free from IBR disease, he was asked to immediately slaughter the four animals. Three were sent to slaughter. By luck, Anton Van Nieuwenhuize from Holland who had seen *Tulippe* at the Paris show and was impressed, came to Switzerland, bought her and took her home to the Netherlands where she lived to be 15 years-old.



*E-D Thor-Red*

*Triple Threat* sired another very popular red breed leader named *E-D Thor-Red* was born in Michigan in 1976. *Thor* combined some of the great sires of the time in his pedigree. His dam was sired by *Thorland Majority-Red*, a son of *Pineyhill Majority*. *Thor* was a high component sire with strong type characteristics and saw extensive use in red breeds around the world. *Thor* was the first RWDCA-only bull to enter AI service and did much to advance the cause of Red and Whites worldwide.



*Hanover Hill Triple Threat-Red*

(At age 6 months)

*Triple Threat-Red* had turned almost totally black by the time he reached six-months of age. Approximately half of his red offspring also turned black. Despite the color changes, *Triple Threat* remained popular worldwide throughout his career and a half century later is still highly regarded by Red & White cattle enthusiasts. He was equally popular with black and white breeders.



*Meadow Lake Jubilant\*RC*

*Meadow Lake Jubilant\*RC*, was a Canadian-born *Triple Threat* son that was a red carrier. He sired solid increases for type, butterfat and protein percent and acceptable milk production. *Jubilant* became one of the most popular sires in Canada, the USA and international markets during the early 1990s.

*Jubilant* was regarded as the most successful *Hanover Hill Triple Threat* son. His dam was an Excellent *Citation R Maple* granddaughter. He sired strength and frame as well as high components. *Jubilant* was popular in Europe as well as in Canada and the US. His semen was available through Semex and CIAQ. Two of his well-known sons were *Ranger* and *Tyler*.