



A tribute to Fern Acton-

Fern was my mom, and the founder of the des Ruhigestelle Saanen herd. We worked together for decades to create a herd known for its strength, style and production. She was a tenacious, hard working individual who valued simple things in life, and would work slowly and diligently to breed the right type of dairy goat. She kept me on track when things didn't go well, and could always pull a breeding program back together by focusing on the basic qualities necessary in a dairy goat. Fern had received the ADGA Pioneer Breeder award in 2008, and the Historic Herd name award in 2010 for her des Ruhigestelle Saanens. I hope to be able to keep her ideals alive, and keep moving forward to produce a Saanen herd that she would continue to be proud of.

Fern passed away 8/29/12, peacefully and surrounded by family. Her last comments were of her beloved Saanens, with pride at their recent National show placings and appraisal scores. She was 97 years old.

Laurie Acton

Below is the ADGA Pioneer presentation given at the 2008 ADGA Convention, her obituary, and the memorial service given at her celebration of life.

ADGA Pioneer-

Getting to know-

Mrs. Fern L
Acton

(As presented at the
2008 ADGA Convention
Pioneer Program by
Lauren Acton)



Fern and her children-

Front row- The 'boys', left to right- Gary, Jim, David, and Wayne
Back row- The 'girls'- Laurie and Fern

The herd was originally started as a 4-H project for Wayne, then all of the kids became involved to some extent. Wayne needed an outlet for excess energy, with a project that he could manage by himself at 10 years old. He started the *des Ruhigestelle* herd with Nubians around 1960. Fern organized the first goat 4-H club in Clark County, an extension of our neighbors sewing club. Thus, the club was named "Busy Bees" for many years, even when it eventually became primarily a goat only club. Renamed "Just Kidding", the club is still active today. When Wayne went to college in 1968, Fern took over the then mostly Nubian herd. Alpines were added as Laurie's 4-H project in 1970. The first Saanen came in 1971, as Fern took a doe in trade to help finance the co-purchase of an Alpine buck with another breeder.



Memorial to Fern's husband, Win Acton.

Granddaughter Mariah, Fern and David during a Memorial Day visit.

Win was an engineer, working for Bonneville Power Administration. He was innovative and far ahead of his time, using new fangled computer programs for power line maintenance, thus dramatically saving energy costs.. He earned commendations from President Lyndon B. Johnson, and was awarded the Meritorious Service Award. He was killed in a helicopter accident while working. This plaque was presented at a dedication by the Secretary of the Interior, and the first substation from the Bonneville Dam is named in his honor.

Although he was never supportive of the goats, our father did set a positive example by never saying we couldn't do things, only that we had to take full responsibility of any project. Thus, we were allowed, and encouraged, to take any project as far as we could by ourselves. This included a young teenager finding her own ride to the 1978 Nationals, where the des Ruhigestelle Saanen herd won its first National title.



Fern with granddaughter, Mariah, at Mariah's graduation



Fern enjoys outdoor activities. Here Fern, John and Laurie eat lunch after hiking Rowena Point in 1994.



Until recently, Fern and Laurie enjoyed an annual camping trip together. This is Takh Lakh Lake, a favorite campsite.



Fern and Laurie, (with Teddy) after a waterfall walk, Sept '08.

In addition to her outdoor recreation, Fern is an avid gardener, and enjoys raising chickens and geese. She is always reading something, and especially enjoys anthropology, natural history, and ancient Rome.

Having grown up during the Great Depression, Fern values simple things in life. One of her greatest joys is when she can take something of poor to mediocre value, and really make something out of it. As such, she loves most to take an average goat and breed it up to a champion. Our foundation Saanens were good solid does that needed something to bring out the best of them. Fern also values hard work and honesty, and is most proud of the fact that all of her children can respect the value of putting in a full days work.



Although she is very shy about large functions, Fern enjoys small groups of friends. Here a group of Clark Co. DGA members enjoy Dairy Wives milkshakes at the Clark Co. Fair (about 1984). Fern was a member of the club in the early '60s, and remained active until recently.



Fern and friend, Liz Rishel, both Best of Breed!



This photo, taken in 2007, shows Fern milking goats well into her '90s. Fern values good temperament, as well as ease of milking, allowing her to continue working with our big Saanens even today.

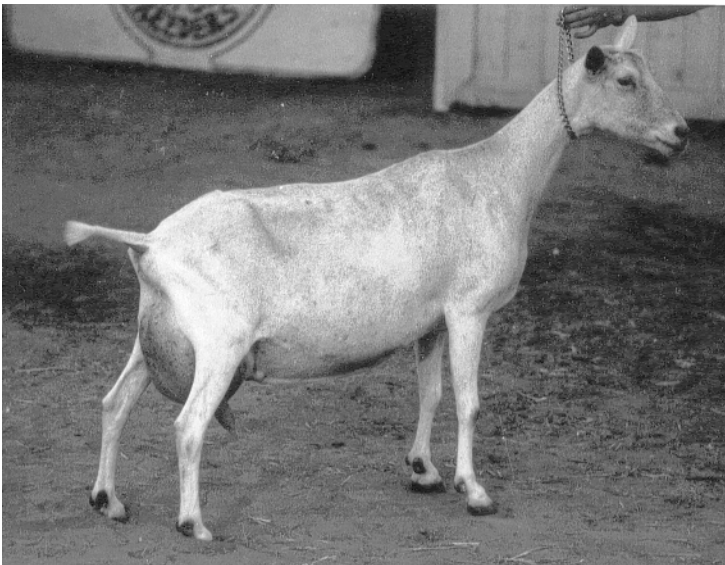
The des Ruhigestelle Saanen herd-

While we don't have a count of every GCH, Top Ten or Excellent animal, we have probably averaged at least one doe in the Top Ten for almost 20 years, and usually finished one to four does per year. Pictured below are some of the more notable members of the des Ruhigestelle Saanen herd-



GCH des Ruhigestelle Desiderata 2*M

Born in 1972, Desi and her twin, GCH++*B dR Jury Duty were our first Saanen kids. Desi was our first champion. She was a strong contender in the Northwest, frequently trading wins with her maternal sister, Puppis. Desi was GCH at the 1976 Northwest Saanen Specialty under Ray Vieira, our first major win. She is pictured here at 9 years old.



GCH DES RUHIGESTELLE PUPPIS 2*M

7-6 FS91 VEEE '78 Nat'l Champion & Best Udder

5-11 332 3608 118 19xGCH or BOB

Maternal sister to GCH dR Desiderata 2*M and GCH++*B dR Jury Duty

These two sisters and their brother Jury Duty, were the foundation of our herd. They were all daughters of one of our original Saanens, a doe Fern rescued named Bonzi's Hazel *M



Jury Duty daughter-
GCH DES RUHIGESTELLE CONJUREO 3*M
2-1 FS93 EEEE
'80 Nat'l Champion & Best Udder
4 GCH daughters
 Every Saanen in the current des Ruhigestelle herd traces directly to this doe.



ConJurEo's most famous daughter-
GCH DES RUHIGESTELLE ETA 4*M (aka "Horsie")
10-2 FS91 EEEE, '89 Top Ten 4-11 305 4640 158
'91 Nat'l Reserve Champion
 Dam of all-time high selling Saanen Spotlight Sale buck (\$5300) *B dR Emeritus in '95

Horsie's size and disposition, coupled with incredible dairy character and production, set a new standard for us.



Eta's son-

"Buddy"- GCH++*B des Ruhigestelle Equus FS91 EEE

USDA #1 sire for several years, at least 9 Top Ten daughters, 7 GCH daughters, and 7 EX daughters, '92 National Show Premier Sire

Buddy inherited his sire and dam's enormous size and tremendous production. With these, he has left our greatest mark on the Saanen breed. Fortunately for us, he also inherited his dam's gentle disposition!



Fern and **des Ruhigestelle Eden 5*M**, the '92 All Breed Leader with 2-10 305 5259 165 146. Eden was twin to SGCH ++*B des Ruhigestelle Equus.



des Ruhigestelle Elowah 7*M
5-6 FS 90 VEVE
3-00 305 5450 216 4.0% 159 2.9% '01 Top Ten, #1 milk, #1 protein, #2 fat
 Our all-time highest producing doe (thus far!). She was Eden's granddaughter.



GCH DES RUHIGESTELLE WINNER *M

6-6 FS 91 EEEE

5-01 305 3673 139 96 - '95 Top Ten

lifetime 1947 20303 663 3.3% 566 2.8%

'93 CANADIAN NATIONAL WEST GRAND CHAMPION and Best Udder in Show

**'94 ADGA NATIONAL 2nd place 4yr old and Reserve Best Saanen Udder
also Highest Individual Lactation, Milk and Butterfat**

'94 Northwest Saanen Specialty Best Udder Of Breed

'95 ADGA NATIONAL 2nd place aged doe, 2nd udder

'95 & '96 Oregon State Fair GCH

'95 Washington State Fair BOB, BUOB, Best in Show -492 entries

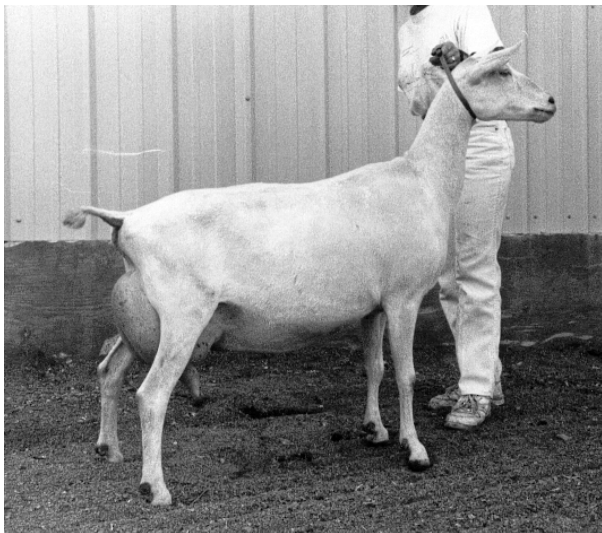
'96 Washington State Fair BOB, BUOB, Best in Show -489 entries

Winner was the dam of *B dR Winchester, who in '99 tied the all-time high selling Saanen Spotlight buck record set by *B dR Emeritus at \$5300.

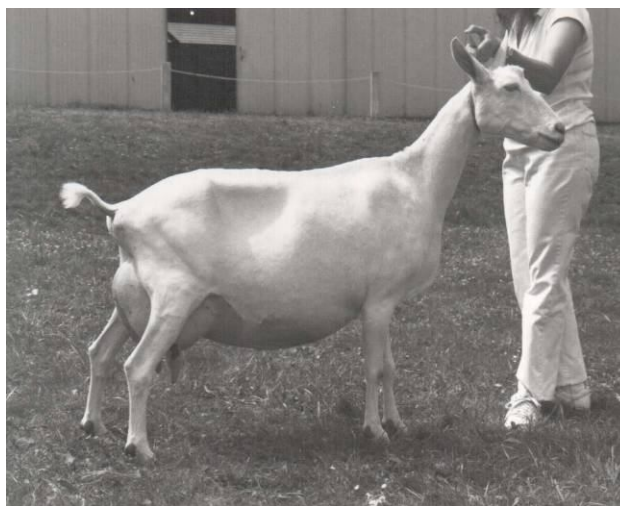
ConJurEo kidded shortly after my father, Win Acton's death in 1982. Fern named the kids EoWin and Bonneville in his honor. Unfortunately, both animals were short-lived. Winner was Eowin's granddaughter, thus starting our "Win" line, including GCH dR Winseeker *M, the 2008 National Champion, recently scored FS93 EEEE.



GCH dR Winseeker *M
 2007 National Junior Champion
 2008 National Champion & Best Udder
4-5 FS93 EEEE
 5-00 296 3501 140 4.0% 107 3.1%** '09 Top Ten



GCH Nu-Tog-A-Saan Leah Anne *M



GCH Nu-Tog-A-Saan Leah *M

Personal favorites of Fern's

Fern liked to give bucks from promising young does to her friend, Leah Mann. Leah would then use the bucks, and return the occasional daughter to us. These does were always special to Fern. Leah Anne, and her sister Leah, were the foundation does for our "L" line.



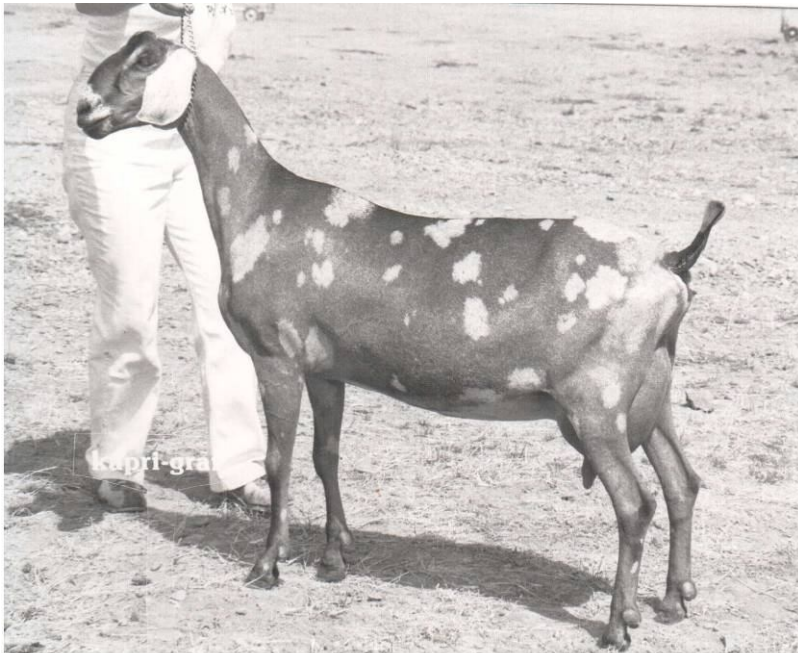
Princess, sired by Equus, pictured in 2007 at her last show at 10 years old, with Fern, Laurie and Mariah

GCH DES RUHIGESTELLE SUN PRINCESS 7*M

LA 6-4 FS 90 VEEE

7xGCH 9xBOB 2xBIS

Princess has always been Fern's favorite, and now lives in retirement at Fern's house after having produced several daughters, including GCH dR Sun Duchess 8*M.



No history would be complete without one of Fern's beloved Nubians. This is des Ruhigestelle Minima, photo taken about 1985. Unfortunately, the breed was lost during our 'health purges' in the late '80s.



Headed home- Fern, Ardis and Mariah

In Memory-

Fern Louise (Byington) Acton

11/29/1914 - 8/29/2012

Fern was born in Marmarth, ND, and spent her youth in Sherack, MN and Mobridge, SD. She graduated with honors from Mobridge High School, earning a tuition scholarship in the midst of the Depression. She earned her Medical Technician degree from Minneapolis. After graduation, she worked first in Waukesha, WI, then moved to Lewistown, MT where she worked with Dr Attix. She met Win Acton in Lewistown, and shared a postcard romance while he was stationed overseas in WWII. They were married shortly after the war. They moved to Bozeman, MT while he earned a degree in Electrical Engineering. They then moved to Vancouver, WA, where he worked at the Bonneville Power Administration until his death in 1982.

Fern's interests were focused on raising their five children. Through this, she became involved in 4-H and dairy goats. The goats became a lifelong passion for her. She influenced many young peoples' lives as a 4-H leader, and was a charter member of the Clark County Dairy Goat Association. Her beloved Saanens earned many championships and Premier Breeder awards both on regional and national levels, and are internationally renowned for their quality. She was adamant that a dairy goat should be able to milk, and had many does in the Top Ten lists. Fern

was awarded the honor of “ADGA Pioneer” in 2008 and the herdname has been given historic status in 2009 by the American Dairy Goat Association. Fern was the quintessential “goat show mom”, she was always there working behind the scenes, making sure everybody ate and had what they needed.

Fern started with Nubians, grades and a few Toggs in 1962. She added Saanens in 1971, and the first des Ruhigestelle Saanen was born in 1972. She strongly believed in genetic improvement and testing. When DHIR Group test was introduced to Clark Co in 1970, she was in the first group. When AGS failed to develop strong testing programs, she switched the entire herd to ADGA, even though that meant losing all the championship status and starting over. The herd was first ‘classified’ in 1979. While the testing programs were put on hold during Laurie’s ‘college years,’ DHIR standard testing was resumed in 1989, and appraisal in 1991, and have been continuous since then. 2012 was our 21st annual appraisal and we are the longest continuously appraised herd. When the main herd was moved to Oregon in 1994, Fern kept back a few personal does and maintained them at the original barn in Vancouver. She managed them, breeding, kidding and milking daily, until her 94th year. Her last personal doe resides with the main herd, but Fern kept an active interest in her. ‘Marquessa’ has done well in the showing, and Fern would proudly attach her rosettes to her walker and show them off to her friends in the assisted living center. Fern’s last words were of Marquessa, with pride in her FS91 and 4,000 lb milk record.

Fern lived to be outdoors, whether in her barn, gardening, camping, or just going for a walk. She was an avid reader, with a special interest in anthropology. She enjoyed golfing, tumbling and skating as a young woman, and followed the PGA tournaments on TV. Never one to waste anything, including time, she knitted while watching, making her coveted wool socks for friends and family. She was a fierce player of Scrabble and Pinochle, and finished every crossword puzzle she could find. She often said that her greatest accomplishment was that all of her children “knew how to put in a full day’s work.” Even after they were grown, Fern could always bring her extended family home for the holidays with her homemade rolls and a Christmas tree decorated with her collection of Christmas birds.

Fern is survived by her sister Beth, her children, Wayne and Judy Acton, Jim and Monica Acton, David Acton and Ardis Lyons, Gary Acton and Linda Reid, Lauren Acton and John Wright, her 3 grandchildren, James, Simon and Mariah Acton, and 2 great grandchildren.

There was a Celebration of Life for Fern on Sunday Sept 23rd at 1:00 at the Hazel Dell Park in Vancouver, WA. The park is a short distance from her home, and was where we spent many afternoons growing up. It was a nice sunny Sunday afternoon, with lots of friends and relatives, and lots of food, just as she would have liked. We would like to thank everyone for coming and sharing their memories of Fern.

For those wishing to make memorial contributions, we ask that you simply give to your local 4-H club in her memory, and remember that giving the gift of time and knowledge to kids is often as great a gift as money.

The goat community has been an incredible source of strength during this time, and I would like to personally thank you all for your support.
Lauren

Memorial Service-

Fern Louise (Byington) Acton

11/29/1914 - 8/29/2012

Fern lived nearly 100 years, and experienced a century of change in our country. She lived through events which are now taught in high school history classes and presented with scratchy black and white photos. When we think of change today, it usually involves newer technology for something we already have. The changes Fern lived through didn't just involve going from a desk computer to a smart phone, but from telegrams to cell phones, from horse and buggy to space travel, from wood stoves to microwave ovens.

It wasn't just that she experienced the inventions themselves, but rather the way those inventions changed peoples lives. She went from a time when a car going down the road was an event for all the neighbor kids to run out to see, kicking their bare feet in the dust and wondering what it would be like to actually *ride* in one, to a time when cars became a family necessity, and finally a time when losing her ability to drive meant losing her independence. She grew up in small town South Dakota before electricity was commonplace, and as a young woman watched it change the way people lived when rural electrification began in 1935. She worked in the medical profession, and saw the development of penicillin change the world of health care. She was a teenager when silent movies became talkies and in her mid-thirties at the time of the first commercial television broadcast.

Born in 1914, the start of WWI, she lived through 5 wars- WWI, WWII, the Korean and Vietnam wars, and Desert Storm. Like most people who lived during it, for her there was only 'the' war, WWII. She lived through the drought with the dust storms that shut out the daylight, and the poverty of the Great Depression. She remembered Black Thursday, the day the stock market crashed in 1929, and lost money when the banks failed and closed in 1932. She was a young woman during the Roosevelt years, knowing firsthand the CCC, WPA and PWA. These may just be letters to us today, but for her they were government programs which provided jobs, education and hope for America. She lived at the time of the building of Hoover Dam and the development of the Boulder Canyon Project which provides irrigation to southern California's Imperial Valley, changing the American food supply. Quite likely, some of the food we are eating today was irrigated from that water. She and her husband Win saw the expansion and development of the Bonneville Power Administration as he worked to develop power line maintenance programs, using first a slide rule, and then the new computers and calculators as they became available. Fern watched the country bury FDR, JFK, and Bobbie and mourned the loss of Martin Luther King Jr, a man she thought "could have made a big difference." She had no bias or prejudice, judging each person by their merits and actions, just as she expected us to judge ourselves.

Fern was born in Marmarth, ND, then spent a few childhood years on a dairy in Minnesota where she developed her love of animals. The family moved to Mobridge, SD where her father worked as an engineer on the railroad. Like many people of that era, their family was poor, and Fern would tell of the unheated sleeping porch that her father built for her and her sister Clara. She had a lot to say about the wood cookstove that they would run to in the mornings to warm up, and which always had a pot of soup simmering in the back, no matter how bad things got.

Living through the drought and Great Depression shaped Fern's values and lifestyle for the rest of her life. She learned early that if you were frugal and hardworking, you got by, if you weren't, you didn't. She could make a meal for a family from whatever was at hand. Her sense of fashion in clothing was primarily clean and well mended. She would never enjoy shopping just for fun, a trait that I'm sure my husband is happy that I inherited. She always taught us that if you are willing to work, there is always a job available, you just have to be willing to do whatever needs doing.

Fern and her sister Clara 'graduated' from Mobridge High School when she was about 16. In reality, the teacher simply had nothing left to teach them, so they went to the Mobridge Hospital to live in the dormitories and worked as aides for their room and board. Working there during the dust bowl era, she would tell of trying to block the cracks around the windows with wet sheets to keep the dust out of the surgery rooms, and the hopelessness of watching people she knew die of dust pneumonia. Fern quickly took to the challenge of the laboratory work, and after a few years she earned a tuition grant to study medical and x-ray technology in Minneapolis/St Paul.

After school, she first went to work in Waukesha, WI, then moved to Lewistown, MT. She worked for Dr Attix in Lewistown for several years, starting before and continuing through the war. She would tell of the time before penicillin, and then the difference it made in saving lives. During this time she was a dynamic, independent young woman in her late 20's to mid 30's with a career that she loved, when most women were expected to marry and start families before they were 20. She married Win Acton in Lewistown after the war, and moved to Vancouver in 1950, after he graduated from Montana State University and went to work for BPA. They settled in our home in 1958 where she would live until this year. It was a large house to accommodate their growing family, on some land which she turned into a small farm with a huge garden where she grew most of our food. It was a great place to grow up, where neighbors were family, and we all got together for things like harvesting the corn, picking cherries and picnics with homemade ice cream made by taking turns with a hand crank freezer.

Her oldest son Wayne started the goats as a 4-H project in 1962. There were no goat 4-H clubs then, so Fern got together with a neighbor and added goats to the Busy Bees sewing club. Busy Bees transformed into a dairy goat club, and was eventually renamed Just Kidding. Passed down through many different leaders, including John and LouEd Gorman, Scott Horner, Virginia Triplett, myself, and others, the club has influenced the lives of many young people for over 50 years, and is still the largest and most active goat 4-H club in Clark Co. Fern was a charter member of the Clark Co Dairy Goat Association, meticulously keeping the treasurer's books for many years. She loved the annual potluck every November, and took home many prizes for her cooking.

The goats started with mostly Nubians, and Fern purchased her first Saanen in 1971. Unlike the other breeds, the Saanens were always hers, and not part of the children's 4-H projects. Fern's greatest joys in breeding goats were the same as the rest of her life, to create something good from nothing. She loved to judge goats, and had an amazing eye for quality. I distinctly remember the day we went to help a friend that was dying from cancer and was no longer able to care for her goats. The goats were in poor condition, so we took feed and trimmed feet and dewormed them so that she would be able to sell them. Ma picked out a decrepit old Saanen doe, and we brought her home in the back seat of the Plymouth. Fern's only comment was 'there's just something about her.' That doe was Bonzi's Hazel. Her daughter "Puppis" was our first national champion, and her son sired "ConJurEo," our second national champion and the foundation doe of our entire Saanen herd. Every Saanen we own relates directly to ConJurEo, and through her to that tired old doe that Fern picked out of a rundown herd.

Fern believed in testing programs, and with John and LouEd Gorman joined the first DHIR group in Clark Co. She loved going to the shows, and always took enough food for everyone. Her homemade rolls went everywhere, and were always waiting with a bit of homemade jam, cheese or pot roast tucked in for any exhibitor who looked like they might need a bite to eat. While she was too shy to become an ADGA judge, she was a compulsive sideline judge. She maintained that eye throughout her life. Lately, we spent many hours judging pictures of goats on the computer while she was in the assisted living center. She still possessed a critical eye that would make most appraisers cringe. She was all about improving goats through using good bucks, and would provide the best bucks she could so others could breed up too. Her goal was that every kid sired by a des Ruhigestelle buck would be an improvement over its dam, whether it was local, across the country or sold for export.

ADGA honored Fern both as a Pioneer Breeder in 2008 and des Ruhigestelle as a Historic Herdname in 2009. Still, there is simply no way to count the individual awards that have been won by her Saanens, both in shows and for production. (I know, I tried!) Nor is there a way to measure the influence she has had on dairy goats, youth and the Saanen breed. However, I think her involvement in dairy goats is well described by an email I recently received from Javier Chaurand of Mexico. Although he never met Fern, nor purchased Saanens directly from her, he works with many producers in Mexico, promoting the breeding of more productive animals, both through importing improved genetics, and by developing programs which indentify the higher quality animals already in Mexico. I had the pleasure to meet him when he was recently at our ADGA National Show in Loveland, CO. ***“I heard about your mom, it’s a great loss. She leaves a great legacy. I wrote a bit about the work that farmers do and how the work of you and your mom is reflected in places that do not get to imagine. The bloodline Des Ruhigestelle somehow transforms the lives of farmers and producers to make more productive their goats, improving their standard of living. A great loss, but a great fortune to live many years, working what you like and doing as well as she did.”***