

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

NEVADA RANCHER BUILDS HIS AMERICAN DREAM
WITH HARD WORK, FAMILY AND ANGUS CATTLE.

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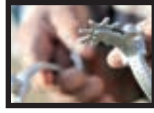


I AM ANGUS

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Sweet 16 — the age of Friday night lights, homecoming dances and young love. Most 16-year-olds are concerned with little more than winning the game Friday night and passing algebra. Not Salvador Galindo. In 1978, the 16-year-old set his boots down in the Pershing County sagebrush, driven only by the hope that a job as a ranch hand in the high desert of Nevada could get him farther than anything in his home country.

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

The teenager was armed with little more than a few dollars for gas, a young bride-to-be waiting for him in Mexico and a dream.

Fast-forward 39 years. Life looks a little different in Imlay, Nev., than it did in Tepatitlan de Morelos, Jalisco, Mexico. The eldest of 14 children, Salvador has four of his own now with his wife, Maria. Rosa, Salvador, Celina and Ermelinda are all grown, but they'll never stop calling Star Creek Ranch home.

Ten days after her wedding, young Maria embarked on her husband's quest to find the American Dream. While Mexico held family, America held opportunity.

"They literally came from nothing," daughter Celina says. With two bowls and two spoons, the young couple still had friends over to eat dinner — two at a time. No one complained; they just understood, she says.

Throughout his ranching career, people have only been helpful, Celina says. Bosses, friends, neighbors — "they've helped him grow."

"I used to live in the bunkhouse," Salvador says, waving in the direction of a tiny two-room shed. "That's where I lived when I first came [to the United States]." He's in the process of fixing it up for future employees. To the right is a dignified white farmhouse.

"That was the boss's house!" he gives the house a nod and laughs. "I never thought I was going to live in that house."

Maybe not, but he does now, and he raised four children there — four children who all remember playing "ranch" with the younger Salvador's cars. The hallway was the farmground, the living room was town, and Legos were bales.

"It's the life we know," Celina continues. "When I think of Nevada, this is what I think of. Not Vegas — this is what Nevada is all about."

TOUGH CONDITIONS

Salvador began his ranching career as a hired hand, worked his way into management for 18 years, and began leasing the ranch to own himself.

Incredibly humble, the cattleman does take pride in his 450 head of commercial Angus cows. Operating on both private and government land in the Humboldt Range mountains between Winnemucca to the north and Imlay to the south, conditions can be rough. Overnight, the temperature drops from 70° F to freezing. At sunrise, snow falls; by mid-morning, sleet and rain; and by noon, it's nearly hot out.

"It's kind of crazy," Salvador says of the weather in the high desert. Nestled north of Star Peak, the highest point in the state, Star Creek's land is breathtakingly beautiful, but certainly remote. "You have to get used to it, because it's kind of a long way from town," he adds, "but I like it, because you don't bother anyone and no one bothers you. I don't like big cities."

Reno is more than two hours away, and Winnemucca is more than a half hour's drive.



“Sometimes it just breaks my heart to hear how humble he is,” youngest daughter Ermelinda MacDougal (Galindo) says of her father. “They should both just [have] a spotlight on them all the time, with how much they’ve done for us,” she says of her parents, Salvador and Maria Galindo.

Sagebrush is prevalent along I-80, and not much else, but a turn east off the highway quickly offers a change of scenery. Desert gives way to rolling foothills of abundant grass where cattle graze free of fences. Irrigation pivots dot the horizon. Clear streams slide in quietly from the mountains.

“The water is like gold,” Salvador says. “The surface water is better than the underlying water. Every time I have a good year like this, that water is like gold to me.”

The rancher relies on creek water to power his irrigation pivots, so crop production varies. He rotates between alfalfa, hay, oats and wheat.

On about 450 private acres and 430 animal unit months (AUMs), Salvador maintains both a spring- and a fall-calving herd. He weans his fall calves between the first and second hay crops. For his spring-calving cows, bulls are turned out April 15 until the first week of August. Heifers are bred May 5 to avoid calving during the bitter cold. Even calving mid-February, the weather can be tough on the calves, Salvador says. Star Creek has seen a few frozen hooves, ears and tails.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

“This is probably about as real-world as it gets out here,” John Toledo of Tri-T Farms and Toledo Ranches in Visalia, Calif., says of the sometimes harsh conditions in the high desert of Nevada.

The California cattleman first met Salvador in 1993 when the younger ranch manager made his first trip to the San Joaquin Valley to purchase bulls. Since that first meeting, Star Creek has purchased its herd sires exclusively from Tri-T.

Toledo suggested to former ranch lessee Frank Olagaray and Salvador that they utilize the then-new AngusSource® program. According to Toledo, Salvador owned the first set of AngusSource calves sold in that part of the country on Western Video in Nevada.

Toledo likes to make the nearly eight-hour trip from California farm country to the Nevada desert at least once a year to deliver bulls and spend the day looking at cows and calves and reviewing past bull purchases.

“They certainly keep getting better and better,” Toledo says of Star Creek cattle. “He’s been able to

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John Toledo tries to select traits for bulls that will work in that real-world scenario, so working with a ranch like Star Creek offers him a front-row seat.



add a lot more rib, volume and dimension to those cows, moderated frame just a little bit. They've got tremendous performance in them, and in this kind of country they've got to be out working all the time. They seem to be doing a good job of that."

He places emphasis on calving ease, fertility, moderate frame size and milking ability, sound structure, good feet and legs, and overall efficiency. Traits are tools, he says, so it's important to find balance among all of them rather than focusing on one or two.

"These cows aren't pampered by any means," he says. "They're well-managed, but they're not pampered."

Often on open range and in a harsh environment, it's most important for a Star Creek cow to conceive each year and give birth unassisted to a live calf.

Salvador calls Toledo a business partner and a good friend.

"I think if I told him what I want, he'd work to have whatever I need," says Salvador of his seedstock supplier. "I trust him."

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

"I love where I come from, and I'm proud of what I come from," Salvador says, proud of his Mexican heritage. "That part isn't ever going to change."

He's just as proud of America, he says. "In this

country I found the opportunity to work, to build something."

Salvador's first boss, Olagaray, taught the kids how to use computer software to track cattle records and help their dad.

"Life has taught him a lot," youngest daughter Ermelinda says. Paperwork and computer work could be challenging with Salvador's modest education and self-taught English, but it hasn't stopped him. It's not in his nature to quit.

"He knows his cattle," Ermelinda says. "He knows every single one of those cows."

"You have the headaches," Salvador says of operating the ranch, "but I think I'd rather be where I'm at than have somebody tell me what to do."

In the past few years, the aging rancher has invested in upgrades to make work safer, easier and more efficient. He speaks in detail of how he likes to handle his cattle and equipment — carefully and thoughtfully. He doesn't have time to clean up the mistakes that working with haste can leave. He likes to hire an employee or two he can trust, but when working on his own, at his own pace, Salvador is in his element.

Owning Star Creek Ranch for himself one day was always expected, Ermelinda says. "We knew it was going to happen," she says. "We just didn't know when."

“That was always something I hoped would happen, ultimately because of his work ethic,” Toledo says of Salvador’s transition to ownership. “I don’t know too many people who work as hard as Salvador does.”

The burden of work aside, it’s just his American Dream come true.

“It’s been great to see that transition, to know that he used to live in that bunkhouse just working and now he’s not just running it,” Ermelinda says. “He’s owning what he worked his whole life for.”

Ranching isn’t just something Salvador does for a living, Toledo says. He lives for it.

“It’s in his heart and soul,” he says.

From employee to employer, Salvador feels like he’s giving back to the country that’s given him so much opportunity.

“I’m doing a little bit of business, it’s good for me, and it’s good for somebody else because I can employ some people,” he says.

FAMILY FIRST

“We’re a very close family, but I don’t think we tell him enough how proud we are of him, how thankful we are for him and how thankful we are that he has done so much for us,” Ermelinda says.

Raising four children on a farmhand’s salary was a challenge Ermelinda recognizes now, but she didn’t feel it growing up.

“We absolutely had everything that we needed and, really, everything that we wanted,” she says. “We were such happy kids. We didn’t need anything fancy. We loved playing out here in the dirt.”

Celina remembers begging her father to wake her up in the middle of the night to go bale hay. “It’s 2 a.m.; you’re not going to last long,” he’d tell her. “I don’t care. Wake me up,” she’d argue, begging him not to forget.

Her requests for late-night hayfield adventures never went unfulfilled, even though the youngster would fall asleep on the armrest of the tractor within a few minutes.

“He knew, but he’d make an extra trip just to drop me off,” she says. “We just always wanted to be part of it.”

Hard work helped Salvador get to where he is, he admits, but what pulled him through was family.

“My family, my wife, supported me all these years,” he says. “My kids did good. That was all part of it.”

LEAVING A LEGACY

It’s heartbreaking for Celina to think that neither she nor any of her siblings will return to the ranch to continue her dad’s legacy. It’s a dilemma faced by many children of farmers and ranchers who won’t return to their families’ operations.

“It’s like our 1979 Bronco that we never let him sell,” she laughs. “It has more sentimental value for us than anything else. This is our home.”

All four siblings have finished college, moved away and started their own families, but their father couldn’t be more proud of them. His children did well, and that’s all he needs.

“I’d like to have them all, all the time,” Salvador says of his four grown children, “but you know, everyone has their own things to do.”

When college rolled around, Salvador and Maria insisted their young students come to them before applying for student loans. “We were good about getting scholarships but they were always there. They were always supportive.”

From armrest rides on the tractor to bachelor’s and master’s degrees, he’s always been there.

The support is mutual, Salvador is quick to point out. The language and paperwork has been complicated over the years, he admits, but his kids are always there to point him in the right direction. “I’m really proud of my family.”

Her father isn’t one to brag, Celina says, but he’s proud. He’s proud of his children, his grandchildren and his cows.

“It’s never bragging about what he’s done, because he doesn’t think he’s done much,” she continues. “He’s just done his best, and his best is amazing, and it’s probably more than I’ll ever do.”

“I think they came here for that American Dream and to provide for their family,” she says. “They’ve given us an amazing life.” **AJ**



Ranching isn’t just something Salvador does for a living. He lives for it.

— John Toledo

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Salvador Galindo has been purchasing his herd sires exclusively through John Toledo and Tri-T Farms in Visalia, Calif., since 1993.



STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE



“When they started the AngusSource® program and when I read up about what it entailed, I just figured we had to do this with Star Creek,” says John Toledo of Tri-T Farms and Toledo Ranches in Visalia, Calif. “It was just a natural thing.”

It was a mutual decision, says Salvador Galindo, Star Creek Ranch, Imlay, Nev., to enroll in the American Angus Association’s USDA Process Verified Program (PVP). AngusSource documents and verifies Angus-sired calves’ source, group age and a minimum of 50% Angus genetics.

The program provides the two cattlemen with a close seedstock-commercial relationship.

“We could sit down and help him with his program really easily, and that’s what we did,” Toledo says. “All the calves are sired by our bulls, so we helped him maintain his database and helped him with tag purchases and getting cattle [enrolled in] that program.”

That process continued for a number of years, but Galindo’s got it on his own now.

“He doesn’t even call me anymore,” Toledo laughs. “Just tells me he’s got calves on the video [auction].”

The obvious draw for Galindo is the ever-present premium for proven Angus-sired calves that can range from \$1.50-\$3.

“We felt the premiums were going to be there

in a good market, but we really felt when we got into more of a historical market with some lows, that’s when the program would really shine, and it did,” Toledo says. The market fluctuates, but the AngusSource premium has always been there.

“It got to a point where [buyers] were looking for those calves,” he says. Buyers called to ask, “Hey, when’s your next set coming?” Inquiries came in for replacement heifers, cattle feeders called for information on heifers to feed, and Toledo says they’ve even heard folks remark that Star Creek’s calves were in such high demand, buyers couldn’t get ahold of them.

AngusSource offers benefits to both the seedstock provider and commercial cattleman. In a highly competitive market, the carcass data and traceability the program offers help Toledo when it comes to seeing what his bulls are doing out in the field.

For Galindo, of course, the premiums and carcass data are invaluable.

“We’ve seen a number of cutout sheets on those cattle, and it’s been real beneficial just to see what they’re doing once they’re harvested,” Toledo says.

The two agree the program has been a worthy investment.

“I like seeing the calves that qualify,” Galindo says. “I’m glad I did it.” **AJ**