

# CATTLE CULTURE

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

## Home Away From Home

*A common attitude binds all Angus breeders together.*

Since I bought my first heifer, Elizabeth, back in 2007, I've always known what it feels like to be a part of the Angus family. There was no prerequisite, no initiation — breeders, other young enthusiasts and cattlemen from across the country welcomed me with open arms to the industry I'm now proud to serve in my career.

I'll admit, however, that I am guilty sometimes of forgetting what it's like to feel so closely connected with the members of the Association when I'm sitting at my desk in Saint Joseph, Mo.

There are always emails and texts and long phone calls with breeders, but I have to say the moments when I'm most reminded of why I love this business are when I've got my boots planted firmly on the ground. It's the sight of cattle in the pasture, the firm handshake of my latest interviewee, the chance to help put feed out as the sun sets over the pasture when my heart hums happily in my chest.

In last month's issue, I wrote a story about Gage Long, a National Junior Angus Association member from Vinita, Okla. Plans to swing by and take a few quick pictures turned into a two-day trip to spend time with the family on their ranch.

My time with Gage, Rance Long and Laramie Smith included a tour of the Oklahoma countryside that I've missed since graduating

from Oklahoma State University, an afternoon in front of the barn spent with the cutest litter of Heeler puppies and hours at the kitchen island swapping stories.

From the sidelines of the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) the past two summers, I had watched Gage humbly accept the title of grand champion at the Phenotype and Genotype Show (PGS). It was the excitement in Gage's eyes and the moments after the win when he hugged his family that first made me realize this was a story worth sharing.

In the midst of my time with Rance, Laramie and Gage, I came to the conclusion that every single Angus breeder has "a story worth sharing." I was reminded of just how special the readers of the *Angus Journal* are. You all are so unique in your opinions on cattle and your breeding strategies; but at the core, every Angus enthusiast is the same.


We all love to talk cattle at any time of the day. We all laugh when we admit those conversations chuteside turn out to be more like family debates. We all proudly display our livelihoods, from the logos on the sweatshirts we wear to the backdrop photos we hang on living room walls.

As the assistant editor of this magazine, I love that I have the opportunity to travel to a variety of operations and meet a range of

Angus breeders. With each family I meet, accents may change, adding or subtracting a twang to the words you say — but the passion never wavers.

In Gage Long, I saw a past version of myself. A young breeder discovering who they are: in the pasture, in the show ring, in life. Though he may lack the years of others I've interviewed, Gage reminded me it's not the words or the experiences that make a cattleman, but the heart.

It's an inborn love that binds us as an Angus family together. It doesn't matter how many registration papers bear your membership code, how new your equipment is or how many banners hang in your show barn. The truth of our work lies in the strength of the smile we naturally wear as we walk with our herd.

That's what makes the Angus family so great to me. No matter what part of the country I'm in, I can always find a home away from home on an Angus operation and surround myself with people who I know share the same values and love for livestock that I proudly have. 

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