

# Living Generously

*How one couple turned four cows into a lifelong Angus passion.*

*by Briley Richard, American Angus Association*

A cattleman's work is a noble man's work. He diligently studies cow families, knows the land like the back of his hand and understands the Angus business is a family business. With eight children, 28 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren, this proves abundantly true for Jim and the late Sue Coleman.

A focus on family and hard work serves as the foundation of their operation, Vintage Angus Ranch. From his days as a young boy visiting his uncle's dairy to his role now as patriarch of a generational business, Jim has remained rooted in those values. The couple's intentionality and constant strive for success earned them recognition recognition as a 2022 Angus Heritage Foundation inductee.

The operation consists of 450 Angus cows which graze more than 5,000 acres in the Sierra Foothills of California. Cattle are the only enterprise on the operation, which relies on performance data to control mature cow size, improve weaning and yearling weights, and maintain the calving ease and maternal traits commercial producers desire. The ranch focuses on carcass traits, with ultrasound data collected on



**Jim and the late Sue Coleman**

every bull and female to monitor genetic progress for customers and consumers. The ranch hosts two sales each fall, the "Carcass Maker Bull Sale" and a production sale featuring 75 females.

## When Vintage was brand new

Jim's initial interest in cattle came from visiting his uncle Herb's dairy during his childhood. Fascinated by the unique intricacies of this way of life, Jim knew he had to be involved in agriculture one day.

Once he established himself as a businessman in the vineyard

industry, Jim acquired his own herd.

In 1976, two of Jim and Sue's sons spent the summer working on a commercial Angus operation. When they returned home, they begged their parents to incorporate more Angus into the operation.

"If you build the fence, I will buy the Angus cows," Jim told them.

The family ventured to Ankony Angus and purchased four foundation females, whose lineage is still represented in the herd today. The herd size continued to increase, and the operation's reach grew.

Jim knew they needed more help and someone to focus on direction. In 1989, Vintage hired Doug Worthington as general manager. Worthington came from an Angus family himself, bringing a plethora of beef cattle experience. With Worthington leading the charge guided by Jim's vision for the future, they set out to accomplish lofty goals.

"Jim's sincere goal in this business has been to take a product and try to make it better, not only for Vintage Angus, but for the Angus breed," Worthington says. "That's what we work towards every day."

## Building for the future

“You build something and then you have to figure out a way to merchandise it and let other people know,” Worthington says. “That’s a real challenge, but it’s a challenge I’ve enjoyed very much over the last 30 years here at Vintage Angus.”

Looking ahead, they will continue to explore new technologies while keeping their long-standing tradition, he says. The Colemans were one of the first Angus breeders to publish DNA test results in their sale book.

“We didn’t do that to be first. We did it because we had the information and we thought we should share that with our customers,” Worthington explains.

He believes the future of Vintage and the industry as a whole depends on pushing the needle further.

“We always have to move forward, and we always have to look for new ways of doing things,” he adds. “It always comes back to people going to a restaurant and enjoying an Angus steak or burger — that’s the key to our business.”

From Vintage’s start to its current state, their goal has only marginally shifted.

“Jim started with a slogan of ‘selecting only the best,’ then changed to ‘ultimate Angus genetics,’ and today our slogan that we’ve been using is ‘multi-trait excellence,’” Worthington says. “I think all three of those really spell out [Jim’s] goals and his desire to improve the Angus breed.”

## The next generation

Jim and Sue ensured the values of hard work and character passed down to the branches of their family tree. Kathryn Coleman is just one

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of their grandchildren with fond childhood memories of sale day. She paints a picture of sorting flags wafting through the air as hooves shuffle from pen to pen and the auctioneer hums up on the block.

“My brother and I, we lived and breathed my grandpa’s sale every October,” Kathryn says. “I remember my first sale — I was 9 years old penning heifers and soon enough, I was doing that every year. I looked forward to that just because I got to help my grandpa achieve something.”

Kathryn currently serves on the National Junior Angus Association board of directors, something Jim takes great pride in. As she paves her own path, Kathryn credits her tenacity to her grandfather.

“Regardless of what we do, you put all your hard work into it, and you are going to get out what you put into it,” she says.



With the influence of her grandparents, Jim and Sue, Kathryn Coleman found her place in the cattle industry at a young age.



Kathryn isn’t the only young Angus breeder who has felt the influence of Jim and Sue.

The couple always sought to improve themselves, improve their operation, improve the breed and — most importantly — improve those who will lead the future. After establishing their operation, the Angus Foundation easily became Jim and Sue’s chosen avenue for giving back.

“I think because really they want to help the Angus breed into the future, and the Angus Foundation is all about that,” Worthington says.

The Angus Foundation pillars of education, youth and research for the breed strongly resonated with the Colemans.

“It’s not just a one-legged stool where it’s just the youth, because youth without new tools and new ideas [are] not going to get us any farther forward,” Worthington says. “We


have to have the combination of all these three things.”

### Faith and family

Throughout the decades, their motivation was simple.

“At the end of the day, there is one thing my grandparents fall back on — faith and family,” Kathryn says. “But also falling back on your drive to keep going [in order] to succeed.”

The nobility, the passion and the generosity — merely a drop in the bucket when recounting the Colemans’ story of excellence. It’s their selfless dedication to the future that earns them Angus Heritage Foundation recognition.

“I couldn’t think of anyone else who deserves this more, from the impact they’ve had on myself, the people in California, and within the National Junior Angus Association and the American Angus Association,” Kathryn says. “It really is a coast-to-coast generosity that they possess.” 

### SCAN FOR MORE

to view the entire playlist of Heritage Award winners on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

