

My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys

A glance into the everyday life of a passionate producer.

commentary by **Mayzie Purviance**, editorial Intern

With a smile lingering on his wind-chapped face, he wakes up every morning, brews his coffee and heads out to feed his herd just as the rising sun peeks over the barn. He checks his cattle; fixes fence; rakes hay; wipes his brow; checks the cows again; repairs his old, green tractor; checks up on his herd one last time; then heads in at noon for a home-cooked meal of homegrown *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) steak, fried potatoes and gravy.

He kicks back in his chair, thinking of the endless labor that must be finished before sundown.

He sees himself as just a regular man, doing what he has done all of his life. Yet, as I sit across from him, I see he is so much more.

His eyes, steel blue, are exuberant with life. I can tell by the way he holds his gaze that he has seen much during his time on Earth. I notice the kindness in the way he welcomes conversation, shifting his eyes from speaker to speaker, listening intently. He hides behind thick bifocals, observing his grandsons as they debate who killed the most ducks this past season. He gazes at his wife as she carefully places each dish on the table, adding to the patchwork quilt of food she calls dinner. He watches as his sons grow up to be the spitting image of a man they have always strived to be — him.

He takes it all in, feeding his soul.

He fidgets with his hands, tattered with callouses and carved with scars. They are the hands of a man who works hard for what he gets. His fingers are worn down, just as he is. He is in constant use of these hands; they are his greatest tools. Between the cuts from barbed wire to the way he uses them to dry his eyes on Sunday morning, his hands tell the story of back-breaking work.

He intertwines his fingers, bows his head and prays over the meal in front of him. He slowly, quietly, softly recites: "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let this food to us be blessed. Amen." Then he begins to fill his belly.

Perhaps the most significant attribute of this man, however, is his timeless smile. His face is embroidered with wrinkles from his



signature grin. He is joyful and content listening to old stories of his buddies, reminiscing about the days when he drove cattle all day and stayed up all night to assist a mama cow in labor. He chuckles at his youngest grandchild, sharing tall tales of football and coyote killings. He secretly beams at his beautiful wife, thinking how lucky he is to have an angel like her placed in his life. His smile has come and gone through the joys and hardships of life, but in the end, this toothy grin prevails.

As I help clear the dishes from the table, I can't help but notice, through the hustle and bustle of more than 20 family members, his expression. Motionless, happy and peaceful as he gazes out a window, looking over the paradise of what Heaven will look like to him when he is called home. He is smiling slightly, with humbleness, seeing himself as just a regular man doing what he has done all of his life. As I watch him walk out the door, start up his truck and drive off into the pasture, I can see that he is a million times more.

A Day in the Life

My grandpa, Dennis Purviance, has impacted my life, as well as the lives of many other members of my family and friends throughout the years. He has taught me to appreciate and give back to the industry that has put food on my family's table for decades. Grandpa is my inspiration for applying to intern with the *Angus Journal*, and he is the one who sparked my desire to share the stories of hardworking agriculturists. I will never be able to thank him enough for the encouragement and the support he has shown me.

Over the next couple of months, we will run a series titled, "A Day in the Life," telling the stories of cattlemen and women across the country.

Enjoy,

Mayzie Purviance