

**I**t was the best wrong turn Emmalee Casillas has ever taken.

Casillas and her father, Danny, of Auburn, Calif., found themselves lost Tuesday, July 13, in downtown Kansas City, Mo. The two were in town for the 2004 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and were in search of Plaza III, the renowned steakhouse where the annual Queen's Luncheon was taking place that morning. Casillas, the 2004 California Angus Queen, was running 2½ hours late for the event.

"When we finally got there, we were the last ones to get seated," she says. "They ended up seating us next to a bunch of Kentucky girls."

Ericka Waggener, the 2004 Kentucky Angus Princess and Harrodsburg, Ky., junior, welcomed Casillas as she settled into the chair next to her. The two immediately struck up a friendly conversation.

"I was telling her how I lived in central Kentucky near Lexington," Waggener recalls. "And she told me that her grandfather also lived there."

The remark stirred Waggener's memory. As Miss American Angus Wravenna Phipps conducted a goal-setting session, Waggener recalled her grandmother's words of advice, spoken just before last year's NJAS.

# Family Ties

**Two juniors discover their family ties over tie-outs and tea.**

*Story & photo by Crystal Albers*



► Cousins Emmalee Casillas (left) of California and Ericka Waggener of Kentucky met and struck up a friendship during the 2004 NJAS in Kansas City, Mo.

"My grandmother had told me the year before in Louisville to look for a girl about my age that lived in California, that she was my cousin," she says. "But she never told me her name."

When she recounted the story to Casillas, the two girls realized there was more to their blossoming friendship than a chance meeting — they were cousins. A family bond was uncovered and a friendship had begun.

"Since those two met, they've been inseparable," Jillian Warren, Kentucky Angus Queen from Lebanon says. "They were instant friends."

Throughout the rest of the week, the two 16-year-olds helped each other clean tie-outs, encouraged each other before competitions and made plans to continue their unique relationship after the show came to a close.

"We've got each other's e-mail addresses, and I'm going to get her phone number. I've got all kinds of phone cards back home," Waggener says.

Casillas says she's looking forward to getting to know her newfound family — a family brought together by Angus.



