

Inspiration For The



Texas breeders name Angus Foundation as primary beneficiary of their estate, establishing a permanent endowment.

Story & photos by **Carrie Horsley**, Angus Foundation



It was a quiet, calm and humid April evening in central Texas as we arrived at J&S Ranch of Gatesville, home to Joe and Susanne Bush. In an instant their love for this country was evident. The United States and Texas flags blew in the wind at the front gate as we were greeted by one large and five rather small guard dogs, all of which were rescues. The Bushes welcomed us into their home with open arms.

They expand their love through the land, cattle, horses and people within their lives. This love brought them to the Angus Foundation, though they began the journey to Angus very differently.

Getting to Texas

In 1971 Joe's family moved from the

Houston, Texas, area to Southeast Mississippi. In high school Joe was an FFA member and worked part-time on various farms in Jasper and Jones counties during the summer.

"I joined the Army in 1984 because I didn't want to go to work in the oil field, and there weren't a lot of opportunities otherwise for me to go to college," Joe says.

The initial plan was to join on a "two-year hitch," but he ended up staying much longer. Joe landed in Texas for the first time in 1993 and retired from the Army at Fort Hood in 2004 after 20 years of military service.

Susanne's journey was much longer, as she came all the way from Germany, where she grew up. Her father was American and her mother was German.

"I was given the opportunity to join the

Next Generation



Angus Foundation

EDUCATION • YOUTH • RESEARCH

German Army; however, I declined," Susanne says. "Since my father was stationed here in the States, I decided to come to the States and joined the Army here."

From there it was a story of serving the military. For the last 24 years, Susanne has served both as a soldier and a government contractor working for the Department of Defense.

In 2002, their paths crossed at the

barn where Susanne boarded her horses. To assuage a "stolen" parking spot, a bet was placed on whether Joe could keep the shoes on Susanne's horses. Joe won and they had dinner a few weeks later.

Getting into ranching

After they were married, Susanne was still boarding her horses, but it started to become too expensive.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



Inspiration For The Next Generation CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

“Since Joe was getting close to retirement and we were both working at Fort Hood, we wanted something close,” Susanne says. They began looking for land nearby.

“I had suggested, ‘Let’s buy 10 acres.’ Well those 10 turned into several more acres at the end of the search,” she says.

Originally, the Bushes only had horses, but soon enough the draw of the cattle business had them searching for breeding stock.

“I grew up primarily working around Hereford cattle in southeast Mississippi, and a lot of Brangus and Charolais,” Joe says. “Those were the first breeds I thought of, and then I started to do a lot of research.”

That research directed Joe to Angus cattle. He says the first things he noticed were the ability to market those cattle and their docility.

He had some awareness of Angus bulls since they had been used on the Hereford and Brangus cows while in Mississippi.

“When I really did my research and homework, we knew Angus was the breed of choice for us and our business as we go forward,” Joe says.

Susanne’s love for the Angus breed started when they went to the Fort Worth Stock Show. They wandered upon the Best of the West Sale, where she says incredible animals were selling.

From there on, she says, she knew that was what she wanted to raise and that was the business they needed to be in.

Buying Angus

When they began looking for registered-Angus cows, they found a local guy who had some cattle listed on Craigslist Inc.

“We called him up, went down to Milano, looked at the cattle and they culled us out 10

heifers,” Joe says. “Those heifers were from Lastovica Angus Farm.”

They were the beginning of the Bushes’ Angus herd.

Team effort

Because Joe and Susanne both have off-farm jobs yet do all of their ranch work themselves, time management is especially pertinent to their cow enterprise. Breeding became a challenge because timing was nearly impossible to coordinate. Originally they hired artificial insemination (AI) technicians to breed their females, but they soon decided to do it themselves. Susanne jokes that she drew the short straw and went to AI school in College Station, Texas.

Susanne has been Aling for four years, and estrus synchronization has allowed them to better manage their operation to fit their busy schedules.

“Synchronizing our cattle has helped us simply because we want fall and spring calves,” Susanne says. “Doing the backward planning for when we need to breed allows us to target the sales where we want to market our cattle.”

As they both travel, they can’t continually watch the cattle to detect heat. Using estrus synchronization allows them to schedule breedings for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Since the Bushes did not start at an early age in the Angus business, they had to learn a great deal themselves about the breed and business.

“I lean heavily on the advice of my regional manager, and sought out his advice and others who have been breeding Angus cows for a while,” Joe says.

More importantly, they get involved, whether it’s the Texas Angus Association, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers



Association, the American Angus Association or attending sales. They look to people within the business for advice.

Helping youth

The advice they have been given is advice they hope to pass down to the next generation.

“We like to watch the kids as they take care of their animals,” Joe says. “The experiences they gain and the foundation it builds for them to go and be more productive adults is easily seen.”

Joe and Susanne find pride in helping youth when they can. They also believe in the lessons learned from being in the agricultural community.

“You can differentiate the people who grew up in 4-H and agriculture,” he observes. “We like to be supportive of the junior functions.”

Though they hope to inspire and help youth in the future, there is one young individual who inspired them.

“We learned about Cory Watt when we were at the [National Angus] Convention, and we had the opportunity and privilege to

German agriculture

“Having been raised in Germany, obviously the agriculture is totally different than it is here in Texas and in most states I’ve been to,” Susanne Bush says, adding that it was a huge culture shock for her when she first arrived in the United States.

In Germany she lived in a house that had four levels. On the second floor you found the kitchen. On the third floor was the bathroom. The bedrooms were on the fourth level.

On the bottom floor, or the “basement,” is where you would find the livestock. Swine, cattle, horses, sheep and rabbits were housed just underneath the living quarters.

“We didn’t have the opportunity to go out to pastures and check our animals; it was a daily chore of taking those animals to and from pasture depending on the weather conditions and what time of the year it was,” Susanne says. “You have interaction with your animals every day in Germany.”

There are a lot of differences as far as agriculture production and how cattle are raised in Germany vs. the United States. Susanne says this is why they try to be good stewards of the land.

“Having access to land like we have here in Texas, those animals are on pastures all of the time,” she says.

Susanne says what she learned in Germany has been transferred here, even though the method of production is different. It is important to remember the significance of the land and the availability of land we have in the United States.





meet Cory,” Joe says. “He was such an impressive young man taking on such a battle, and you’d never know it to talk to him. He was very respectful and very interested.”

Joe later called Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president, and asked how Cory was doing. Milford explained that Cory’s health situation had worsened.

“Cory was very courageous,” Joe says. “In the face of death, he was very courageous and never gave up.”

Joe shares, “It just kind of hit me. I had kept a unit patch from the uniform I wore on my last border tour, while patrolling the border between East and West Germany, and that was just before the wall came down. It was something special to me. It signified a unit that I was in and their motto was ‘Courageous and faithful.’”

“I sat down and I wanted to send Cory a token from Susanne and I to let him know we were thinking about him and to not give up the fight. I wanted him to have that patch because Cory was courageous and faithful in my eyes. He made an impact on me.”

Angus Foundation

Months before meeting Cory, the Bushes realized a huge void they needed to fill — estate planning.

“No one wants to do estate planning,” Joe says, “especially at our age.”

Joe and Susanne’s passions in life revolve

around cattle, their livelihood — and, of course, they add, their dogs.

“You ride around the place, you spend a lot of money, you spend a lot of time and you look at everything. You sit back and go, ‘What are you doing all of this for?’”

Asking themselves what would happen to everything they’ve worked for, they began seeking plans for their belongings. With no heirs, they wanted to make sure everything they worked for went to the greater good.

Joe says he started looking through the *Angus Journal* and read about the Angus Foundation. Finally he picked up the phone and called the office.

“What can you [the Angus Foundation] do for us, and what can we do for you?” Joe asked while on the phone with Jenkins.

After talking through their situation, Joe says, “We were very comfortable that all of the things we are doing today are going to be beneficial to the next generation, who [will] carry on the Angus breed and agriculture in general.”

Joe didn’t have the opportunity to go to college right away, but both he and Susanne did earn their education through opportunities in the Army, so they understand the importance of education.

Joe emphasizes how important education is today and how much more important it will be in the future. The only setback to education is the cost.

The Bushes have made a huge investment to the Angus Foundation naming the organization as the primary charitable beneficiary for the bulk of their estate. Their bequest will establish a permanent endowment focused on Angus youth and education.

Cory Watt helped announce the Bushes’ bequest at the Angus Foundation’s Supporter Recognition event hosted last November in conjunction with the Angus Means Business



National Convention & Trade Show in Kansas City, Mo.

“We knew we had made the right decision when we left Kansas City,” Joe says. “We were overwhelmed by the people who contacted us and thanked us. It made us realize how big it is, and how important the Angus breed is to people.”

Joe and Susanne are individuals who put their heart and soul into the things they love.

“You have to leave things a little better than you found them,” Joe says.



Editor’s Note: Carrie Horsley is the director of marketing and public relations for the Angus Foundation.

