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# Completed Circle

Stucky Ranch honored as CAB Ambassador for ideal outreach.

by **Steve Suther**, *Certified Angus Beef LLC*

**G**ordon Stucky says he has “always been a huge supporter” of the *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand. Two terms as an American Angus Association board member, culminating as president in 2014, galvanized that into a passion for the Kingman, Kan., rancher.

“I’ve always thought, we need each other,” he says. “I need their marketing, and they need me out here in production. Serving on the board with all the travel, people and the special meetings in Wooster, Ohio, helped me see what a perfect fit this brand is for what we’re doing on the ranch.”

That service began in 2006, just as CAB developed its “Targeting the Brand” logo,



which would come to feature prominently in Stucky’s bull sale book by the time his second board term began in 2011. More than a statement of support, it was a selection aid for customers, because the logo was placed next to each bull that met CAB recommendations.

In fact, 2011 was a watershed year for the growing relationship between Stucky Ranch and CAB.

“We decided we were going to ride for the brand in every way possible,” Stucky says. He signed on to host an on-ranch tour for a new educational program called “Masters of Brand Advantages” (MBA) early in the year, and the family loved every minute of it. Comments from CAB foodservice sales partners showed the feeling was mutual.

Next came a tour with staff from Mexico’s ComNor and Cargill, recurring three times since then, and the International Chef Tour

in 2012. They haven’t missed a year hosting CAB groups since they began (see sidebar on page 121).

Enthusiasm and ability to connect with the entire range of partners along the supply chain at their unique location helped Stucky Ranch earn the brand’s 2017 Ambassador Award to be presented at the CAB Annual Conference Sept. 27-29 in Nashville, Tenn.

## Built to sustain

The ranch business is built on sustainability and relationships, starting with God and family, looking back and well past tomorrow. Interaction with tour groups keeps the family focused, says Stucky. With Caroline and his son, Jesse, they prepare for each tour day as if it were a bull sale.

“These folks are extremely important for the role they play in our supply chain,” he says, noting some deep discussions. “We

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had the question a couple years ago, what sustainability means to me. The first thing that came to mind was my dad.”

Martin Stucky had come to Kingman County in 1937, where his father soon helped him and a brother start on the roots of today’s ranch. Youngest son Gordon bought the family’s first registered stock as a 16-year-old in 1976. His mentor and partner conveyed a guiding wisdom and rationale in their 17 years in business.

“He’s been gone a long time now,” the

son notes, “but he helped provide the start we could build on. . . . So I told them when your forefathers start something that lasts more than 70 years, and you wake up every morning ready to carry forward, and not only survive but leave something better than you found it, that’s sustainability.”

In discussions on animal welfare, Stucky details other thoughts on waking each morning: “We have that frame of mind that we want every animal under our care to have the best day they’ve ever had.”

## Seven Years of Hosting

- ▶ Masters of Brand Advantages host (2011)
- ▶ International Chef Tour host (2012)
- ▶ U.S. Chef Tour host (2014)
- ▶ ComNor/Cargill tour host (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017)
- ▶ Giant Eagle tour (2016)

## Relationships lay the foundation

Relationships are no less a part of that, and “Targeting the Brand,” as well. It’s an everyday commitment from everyone who is part of the supply chain, from seedstock to those who sell to consumers, Stucky says. It entails much more than simply raising cattle that can grade.

“It’s a people business, so we grow it by long-term attention to what our customers need, helping them meet their goals for profitability and a better life,” he says. “You build those relationships over the years to where they feel like you’re a part of their team.”

Being part of those many teams in several states brings satisfaction, but never complacency.

“We track every trait and expected progeny difference (EPD) to make sure we offer bulls that are the most economically relevant to those customers, and also give everything the ranching eye for conformation and soundness,” Stucky says.

Some customers sell calves at weaning,

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**The Right Choice** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 121

but an increasing share participate in backgrounding and finishing phases to get more return on their investment in genetics. The 200 Circle-S-Bar bulls sold annually and their average productive life means they generate up to 20,000 commercial Angus calves each year.

Posting CAB logos next to qualifying bulls in the sale books, and photo sections recapping tour visits by international guests all tend to raise the Stucky Ranch profile as a genetics provider, the cattleman says. “They come here with heightened expectations, just knowing we have these balanced cattle and the relationships with end users from all over the world.”

**Sharing boots**

Two-way education takes place when those tour buses arrive.

“They have flown over our ranch at 30,000 feet,” Stucky says, “but we give them a feel for what it’s like to spend a day in our boots.”

There’s an information exchange, “but it’s mostly connecting people. They want to know what’s behind the CAB product, but they also want to know Jesse Stucky and the name of the horse he rides,” the father says. “Some of them seem to fall in love with Jesse and his horse, but it’s all just part of understanding our life.”

As “the real stockman in the family,” Jesse leads cattle-handling sections, and tours sometimes include ultrasound carcass demonstrations by Texas-based Casey Worrell. Stucky says that makes an effective bridge from cattle to product, using technology people are familiar with from human pregnancy diagnosis.

“Having these tours, everything we do is under the microscope,” Stucky says. “Whether it’s a tour day or not, we’ve always got that in the back of our minds — how we care for things, and do things on a daily basis — even if no one sees, it’s part of the program we continue to build, and part of our story.”

The tours made the family realize how their location is uniquely suitable for the sharing.

“We’re close to the Wichita airport, just a mile off the four-lane, where cow-calf country meets the major commercial feedyards and processing plants,” Stucky says.

Moreover, the stronger link to CAB suits the family’s Angus program.

Jesse reflects on his father’s drive to “break the mold and try new things” after careful research, like intensive rotational grazing or hosting tours.

Caroline agrees.

“I know of no one that spends more time studying and researching and trying to see

what the next best thing is for the ranch and the people he serves,” she says. “He’s always said he gets to work with salt-of-the-earth people.”

The “researcher” smiles at a memory of one customer who texted photos of new calves on a recent Sunday morning. “He was just saying, ‘Hey, what you are doing there is working for me.’”

Seedstock operations with multiple breeds or Angus breeders not attuned to the quality side may not feel such an affinity with the brand, Stucky suggests.

“For us, it’s just a perfect fit. We enjoy hosting tours for any groups, but the CAB tours are special because that interaction completes our business model,” he says.

CAB is headed for another record year, and Stucky figures there will be more of the best beef next year.

“We’re going to make more and better, so we have to keep working at this together,” he says, with advice for the brand: “Keep letting the consumer know it’s there. They’ll spend a few more pennies for it and be happy, and we’ll make that circle complete.”



**Editor’s Note:** Steve Suther is senior editor of producer communications for Certified Angus Beef LLC.



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