



Moore than Money

Arkansas Angus family commits to it all — cattle and consumers.

Story & photos by **Laura Conaway**, Certified Angus Beef LLC

It was the first call of many. Kill sheets in his hand and data on his mind, Jim Moore picked up his Arkansas landline and dialed the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand's Paul Dykstra. Never shy, the determined rancher was interested in what the beef cattle specialist had to say.

Marbling scores, yield grade, feed conversion — having never met in person, they covered all the bases.

As Dykstra tells the story, it was the latter that left Moore unsatisfied.

"I probably told him something like, 'Jim, industry average is this, and you're up here, so maybe stop fretting so much.'"

Moore recalls the conversation, too.

"I said, 'Paul, one thing you need to

understand about me pretty quick is there isn't anything about me that wants to be average.'"

For that attention to detail and an endless pursuit of quality, the CAB brand presented Moore Cattle Co. with its 2017 Commercial Commitment to Excellence Award.

"We're just humbled beyond humbled," Moore says. Characteristically strong and certain, to watch him recount the news is to see a stoic man fight back, then give way to emotion. To know Jim Moore and to stand among his cattle, it all makes perfect sense.

For the unwavering cowman, this has been a long time coming.

Beginnings

"Our own little Mayberry." That's how Jim and wife Melissa (Missy) describe life in Charleston, Ark. The sleepy town in the

Arkansas River Valley holds the lion's share of the couple's most treasured memories. Horse shoes and humble beginnings, it's there they grew up, met, fell in love and reared children Morgan (27), Chelsea (25) and Clint (22).

"Jim and I started dating when I was in high school and, from the start, we committed to do this together," Missy says. "The whole family's worked hard and sacrificed even harder, but God's been really good to us."

"Miss and I, we know what it means to struggle," his southern accent softens. Thirty years of marriage behind them, he'll still open her door and tell her she's pretty.

Holding tight to their promise, they worked, and ever so silently, regardless of recognition, the Moores raised good cattle.

"It's all I ever wanted to be from the time I was a little bitty kid," Moore says of graduating college in 1985 and returning to the ranch full time. There's a mystique that



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ran Brangus bulls on those Herefords, even owned a sale barn in Saint Joseph, Mo., where they purchased milk cows to ship north.

“My grandfather, he was a guy who didn’t get the chance to go to school past the eighth grade, but he was a tremendously hard worker,” Moore says of his own son’s namesake. “At 80, he was still cutting calves.”

Then there’s JC. The 91-year-old patriarch, Jim’s father, James Moore, stepped away from the ranch just three years ago, but not before contributing to his son’s recognizable character and herd of Angus cows.

“Years ago, my grandpa used to tell me, ‘you can keep a good one and feed it just as easy as you can keep a sorry one,’ so both he and my dad saw the value of high-quality genetics. Since then, it’s something we’ve tried to build on year after year.”

Angus is the foundation.

“Dad and I got to talking about the market changing and what the [American] Angus Association was doing from a progressive standpoint with their database,” Moore says.

Not long after they purchased their first Angus bull in 1990 and “from then on, I became a student of the Angus breed.”

Through phone calls to bull studs and feeders, folks at the Association and CAB,

Moore asked and learned, applying it to his herd of blacks out back.

“Sure, I’m a little old-fashioned,” he says. “I don’t want to read about it. I want to talk to someone who experienced it.”

For Dykstra, that was new.

“I welcome it, but it’s rare for a producer to request I scrutinize their carcass data,” Dykstra says. On paper he knows Moore’s cattle like his own.

“Jim is a poster child for utilizing CAB staff as a resource,” he says. “He knows his goals are attainable. That’s what keeps him jumping out of bed in the morning and staying up in the evening to study his lessons.”

“As commercial cattlemen, we feel like it’s our obligation to raise as high-quality beef as we possibly can,” Moore says.

He’s done it through stacking genetics, utilizing the Zoetis GeneMax® Advantage™ test to measure commercial heifer potential and through retained ownership at the feedyard.

“There’s a saying, ‘if you think you’ve got good cattle, put your money where your mouth is and feed ’em.’ You’ll find out pretty quick how good they are.”

Tired of getting average prices for calves they felt were above, the Moores sent a load that sold live.

“That commodity lot, we were still getting average,” Moore says, “but once we started selling on a grid, we learned more about our cow herd in one year than we had in the previous 10.”

Moore used the data for good.

“You learn fast whether you’re going forward or backward,” he says, “and I’m not one of those people who thinks status quo is ok. I’m looking ahead.”

2007 carcass data showed 20% CAB, 0% Prime. Unsatisfied, relentless in his pursuit, Moore started buying bulls with marbling scores (Marb) no less than 1.

“If you’re trying to hit 80% to 90% CAB and Prime, you’ve got to up the ante a little bit,” he says. With the consumer in mind, “If you don’t have the carcass side, what does the maternal side matter, and vice versa? It’s about balance. You’ve got to be willing to give and take.”

Also trust what the data says. Out of 15 calves sired so far, one of those bulls produced 12 Primes, the rest CAB.

“Jimmy brings to the forefront an example of a rancher who’s not willing to single-trait select,” Dykstra says. “He doesn’t want to make a premium over here just so he can give it up somewhere else.”

With focus on yield grade and feed conversion, Moore calves outperform others in the yard: 2017 calves gained on average 3.8 pounds (lb.) per day with 181 days on feed, converting at 5.9 lb.

“It’s pretty fun to encounter someone who’s not just aiming to create one or the other, whether terminal or maternal,” Dykstra says. “He doesn’t sacrifice much of any particular trait — cow herd, feedlot or carcass.”

The most recent closeout of 136 head went 85% CAB, including 28% Prime.

“Their story tells itself,” Jerry Jackson says. As manager of Stampede Feeders, Scott City, Kan., where the family sends two pens of cattle every fall, he’s been following along, reading their narrative for nearly a decade.

He remembers visiting the herd for the first time, suggesting changes when it came to health and culling calls.

“The cattle are standouts,” Jackson says in his matter-of-fact manner. “They’ve finally got the complete package, not to mention they’ve done it all in house.”

History shows the Moores do in fact build from within.

With focus, they thought they stood a better chance of raising the heifers they wanted than those they could afford to go buy at the time. A female hasn’t been bought or brought onto the place in 45 years.



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“The thing about the Moores is it’s them, it’s their deal,” Jackson says. “They don’t sit inside the office and tell everybody else to go to work.”

To the contrary, Jim asks for critique before getting up and fixing the problem himself.

“We have to be critical of ourselves if we want to improve,” he says. Closeouts and spreadsheets cover his dash.

With numbers closer to where he wants them, “the real challenge is to not mess it up by doing something stupid,” he says with a laugh.

Perhaps it’s there, though, in the trenches, where Moore has learned the most.

“Something like this makes you step back and analyze where you’ve been and where you’re going,” he says, “and where we’re going is farther than where we’re at. We’ll keep pushing.”

For the consumer, for the cattle, for his family.

He’ll have it no other way.

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Editor’s Note: *Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC.*



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