



The Front Gate

► by **Allen Moczygemba**, CEO, American Angus Association

Valor, resilience, faith

Valor. *It's a word used to describe folks who show great courage in the face of danger. In today's modern society, it's a word that fortunately isn't needed to be used often. Tragically, on the afternoon of March 6, valor became commonplace in areas of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Many of our friends, and in some cases family members, displayed great valor as they battled ravaging wildfires fueled by 60 mph winds that burned livestock and pets, destroyed homes and barns, and left an indelible imprint on families across the plains.*

Bravery

Near McClean, Texas, Sloan Everett — a member of the Association — along with Cody Crockett and Cody's girlfriend, Sydney Wallace, were working on the Franklin Ranch when wildfires exploded in fury from the south. All three ultimately perished as they raced frantically in a futile attempt to move cattle away from the rapidly approaching wildfire. They showed uncommon valor in their efforts to save the cattle, completely disregarding their own safety in an attempt to protect livestock that were under their stewardship.

Resilience. In southwestern Kansas, more than two-thirds of a million acres went up in flames on that windy, hot Monday afternoon. Homes were lost, livestock perished by the thousands and, in only a few hours, lives and dreams that had

taken decades to build were destroyed.

While there was unimaginable destruction and horror that afternoon, also on display was that great attribute of folks in the ranching business — resilience.

The ability to be resilient, to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions, is a trait that has been passed from one ranching generation to the next. Ranchers have always had a strong belief in themselves, their families and their communities. So once the dangers of the fire passed, folks went back to work — attending to injured livestock, helping neighbors that were less fortunate and beginning the process of cleaning up after the fires.

The Gardiner family of Ashland, Kan., as most have heard by now, suffered losses of both property and livestock. Yet Mark Gardiner responded to a text I sent him

that Tuesday morning by thanking me for reaching out to him and noting, "Our family is fine, and that is all that matters."

Faith. While most ranching families have learned to be resilient to anything Mother Nature and life may throw at them, their inner strength is ultimately built upon faith. It is faith in our Savior and faith to do the right thing during the most extreme and difficult situations. It's the way we were raised, and it's the way we've raised our children, as well.

It's having the faith that our family and neighbors will be there with help when needed. Not surprisingly, trucks and trailers with semi-loads of hay, tons of feed and building supplies began arriving mere days after the fire — often from distant states. Others sent financial contributions to help buy fencing supplies that are needed to rebuild the thousands of miles of fence that have been destroyed. It's not surprising; it's what neighbors do. Because just as those affected have faith, so do we; faith in their resiliency and at the same time, awe in their courage and valor.

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