

# Living a Legacy

*Herdsmen at Lazy JB Angus recognized for their dedication to the breed.*

*by Megan Silveira, assistant editor*

Typically, whooping and hollering isn't the best sign on a cattle ranch.

When Jeff Creamer came back to the barn after haying cows for the evening, he wasn't sure why his wife, Kathi, was yelling. The feed was out, the fences were still up and the gates were all shut. As she got closer, the words finally started making sense.

"We won! We won!"

Jan. 6, 2023, started like any other winter day for the couple as they were preparing to pack up for the National Western Stock Show (NWSS). Kathi was in the barn loading the show box when her phone rang with a call from Mark McCully, CEO of the American Angus Association.

Honored, blessed and thankful are just a few of the adjectives Kathi names as she's still processing the news that she and her husband are the 2023 Angus Herdsmen of the Year.

"To be honest, it really hasn't sunk in that we are now a member of a highly respected group that has received this prestigious award," she says. "We sincerely appreciate the support we have received from our fellow Angus breeders and the American Angus Association staff."

## More than a brand

The month of January has always been special for the Creamers. It marks the start of a new year; but it also brings the NWSS. The Denver



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venue is where Kathi and Jeff first met in 1984, and it's become a tradition for Lazy JB Angus to attend.

Kathi is proud to come from a family with strong ties to the Angus breed. The operation was started in 1926 by Kathi's great-grandfather, John Biella. The heifer Kathi's father was gifted on Christmas when he was 16 solidified his roots in *The Business Breed* — roots he proudly passed to his daughter.

When Jeff and Kathi became teammates for life, Jeff embraced black-hided cattle and Lazy JB Angus. The duo relocated the ranch to Montrose, Colo., in 1999. The herd has since grown to 300 registered head, managed by Kathi, Jeff and their children, Brandon and Britney.

There aren't many producers who come from a multigenerational ranch that's survived historical events like the Great Depression, and it's a distinction every member of the Creamer family values.

"There's a certain amount of pride that you take in wearing the Lazy JB brand," Kathi explains. "It's not something you earn; it's something you live up to."

The ranch was built as a family, and the ranch is run by the family.

"No outside investors, no financial assistance from others," Jeff says. "We built it from hard work, determination, and a heck of a lot of grit and trust in the Lord. The greatest gift is to successfully work side by side with your spouse and

have your children want to come back and be a part of your business.”

There’s pressure in operating a business this way, and raising cattle is a tough enough task on its own. The location of the operation poses a challenge in its own. The home ranch is at 6,250 feet (ft.), and cattle spend summers in mountains up to 9,500 ft., elevations well above where high-altitude disease first becomes a concern. Wildlife such as bears, mountain lions, wolves and elk pose threats to both the herd and facilities vital to ranching.

“Although it may appear that we are crazy for raising Angus under these circumstances, we feel blessed to live and work in western Colorado,” Kathi says. “We wake up every morning to a breathtaking view of the San Juan Mountains, and there is something magical about watching our Angus cows graze in the mountains.”

Jeff adds that the environment actually offers their family a chance to educate people about pulmonary arterial pressure (PAP) and altitude disease. The operation has even worked alongside universities to help conduct studies on PAP and

its effects on cattle at lower elevations. Data collected helps them just as much as it helps peers.

“Every animal on our ranch is PAP-tested, and we use that test to help navigate breeding decisions and marketing opportunities for our operation,” he says. “While we get to enjoy the landscape of where we live, we also get to use it as an educational tool to help not only breeders at high elevations, but cattlemen in every sector of the industry.”

It might seem like an extra step in an already busy schedule, but finding ways to support other breeders is a large part of life at Lazy JB.

“The people within our breed make getting up each morning to tend to cattle just that much more enjoyable,” Kathi says.

The pair hopes to continue to grow their operation and provide versatile genetics on a global scale, so both commercial and registered operations can find their own successes within the industry.

With the conclusion of NWSS, cattle are turned out and the show box is empty. There’s no more yelling



Kathi and Jeff Creamer had an impressive outing at the National Western Stock Show, with Lazy JB Angus bringing home new titles and banners.

from the barn, but the excitement created with a simple phone call Jan. 6 still floats in the Colorado air.

Because for Jeff and Kathi Creamer, every morning is a chance to get up, care for their cattle the best way they know how and give back to the breed that built their family. Every morning is a chance to showcase in their own quiet and humble way exactly why they were named Herdsmen of the Year. **AJ**

## 2023 Nominees for Angus Herdsman of the Year

This year, candidates were selected by a committee consisting of past winners of the award and the Events and Education Committee Chair for the American Angus

Association. Additionally, a new online voting system was used to tabulate the winner.

2023 candidates are as follows:



Tyler Cates and Cortney Hill-Dukehart Cates



Miles Shout



Dillon Stertzbach