

Cherish Family

I've always liked the saying: "Home — Where your story begins." It is such a true statement, and it makes me smile thinking about being raised on my family's farm with my two sisters.

In the agriculture industry, home and family are two very important and valued treasures. There's something about working together on a farm or ranch that brings a family together. Now don't get me wrong; my sisters and I had our disagreements growing up, but today we are like best friends and cherish each moment we get to spend together.

I'm so thankful that I have the opportunity to raise my two sons back "home" just a couple miles from their grandparents and on a farm where my son, Wes, can get up and go rinse his calves and Dustin can go for a walk down to the creek to hunt for frogs and bugs. It's a great way to raise a family.

As we brainstormed a theme for this year's herd book, we chose to focus on the "Hereford family." We set out to find stories that would capture the essence of family — articles featuring Hereford families with a unique story along with articles demonstrating how the "Hereford family"

comes together to support someone in need.

The Downings

As I write this column, I just returned home from an incredible trip to Oregon. One of the things I enjoy most about my job is spending time with Hereford breeders and learning more about their operations.

This particular trip wasn't typical and is one I'll never forget. I can honestly say that in my 16 years as an agricultural journalist, this interview has by far touched my heart the most. Scott, Tracy, Brandt and Lane Downing are nothing short of amazing. They have so much courage, love and faith, and together have successfully overcome the obstacles thrown their way.

While with the Downings, I was able to play blackjack and farm-opoly with Lane. I watched Scott and Brandt flip through the May/June *Hereford World* and discuss bulls and upcoming sales. We also spent several hours walking through the cow herd as Brandt and Lane proudly told me pedigrees and the history of each cow.

Throughout the weekend they also shared with me the story of Scott's journey since his accident in March 2010. As we talked about

the accident and Scott's rehabilitation, I realized how fast your life can change. It made me want to hug my boys tighter and thank my mom and dad more. I also felt pride hearing how our "Hereford family" joined together to raise funds to help with the family's expenses. See "The Journey" on Page 60.

Like the Downings, the Harfsts, Lowdermans, Valeks and Bowens have been faced with adversity and through strength as a family and with the help of the "Hereford family" have persevered.

Also in this issue are features on Hereford families who have helped fight hunger ("Generations," Page 192) and who have helped encourage consumer confidence in beef ("Telling His Story," Page 184). The importance of family is also evident at Star Lake Cattle Ranch, which is featured on Page 34, and at McDougald Ranch, starting on Page 204.

As a staff we hope you enjoy this issue. We are proud to be members of the Hereford family.




Angie Stump Denton