

## Standing Outside the Ring

Walk into my dad's farm office, and you'll see it: my family's passion for the cattle industry.

The walls are lined with photos of champions through the years. Boxes are filled with old Couch Brothers Polled Herefords sale catalogs from the 1960s and photos of Herefords being sold in the barn that stands on the Couch family farm.

My earliest memories with my dad involved venturing to that southern Indiana barn to see the latest calf born, watching dad on the mic as a judge or witnessing him at the halter at cattle shows from coast to coast.

And eventually, working side-by-side with him and my brother at our family farm, rinsing and working hair on the year's show prospects.

Sometimes, I brought home the purple ribbon. Sometimes not. But getting that hug and "good job" from my dad as I exited the ring was the ultimate reward in my young mind.

I have always been known as "Bill Couch's daughter." And I'm good with that.

Dad's passion for the cattle industry took us to ranches in Texas and to Yukon, Okla., and eventually back to our southern Indiana home.

Due to health issues, Dad has slowed down a bit. It happens to us all.



I've always been known as Bill Couch's daughter. And I'm great with that. It's also pretty incredible to play the role of show parent with my husband now, too.

But Dad instilled a passion for the cattle industry within my brother and me. And I knew I wanted to stay involved.

I was blessed to marry a Midwestern farm boy more than a decade ago. Craig and I began our life together near his family farm in east central Illinois, where he works in the farm equipment business and we have raised a few head of cattle through the years.

It has always been a dream of ours to raise children in that way of life, too. And now, that dream is unfolding before our eyes.

Our home is now filled with the sounds (and often chaos) of three little ones — Waylon, 10; Nolan, 7;

and Caroline, 4. And nearly four years ago, we joined the ranks of "show parents," as Waylon

became a member of the National Junior Hereford Association.

Just recently, our resident cowboy, Nolan, purchased his first Hereford heifer, "Happy Go Lucky." To say he's excited to enter the showring at many shows, including the 2016 Junior National Hereford Expo in Madison, Wis., would be the understatement of the century.

Oh, the lessons Craig and I have learned as show parents. And, oh, how different it is to be on the outside of the ring, watching your child at the halter. I don't believe I've ever felt more stress or more pride all wrapped up into a little bundle.

It. Is. Incredible.

Through this column, I look forward to sharing our journey in this chapter of our lives.

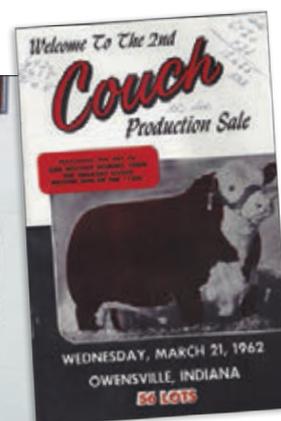
I'm sure there will be smiles. Maybe a few tears. And advice from more seasoned show parents on how to make this crazy lifestyle work.

Ultimately, Craig and I just hope our children can look back on these years with the same fondness we have of being a cattle kid, too. Perhaps carry the tradition into the next generation.

And really, isn't that all any show parent desires? **HW**



Our two boys, Waylon (above) and Nolan (right), are enjoying their starts in the Hereford show world. Waylon is entering his fourth year of the National Junior Hereford Association. And Nolan was quick to let everyone know at last year's Junior National Hereford Expo that was his last time to show as a pre-peewee. In 2016 he's a real peewee. And that's big stuff.



Herefords have played a role in my family for generations, and I'm sure my grandpa would have loved to see his great-grandkids in the ring with a Hereford on the halter, too.