



## The Front Gate

by **ALLEN MOCZYGEMBA**, CEO, American Angus Association

### Forging her own trails

The second Saturday of February was cold and windy across much of the country. While there were areas of the country much colder farther north, it was a blustery and bone-chilling day at the Bradley 3 Ranch near Memphis, Texas.

It was sale day. While that's certainly not unusual in late winter, this year was different. Minnie Lou Bradley, the matriarch of the Bradley 3 Ranch, marked 2018 as the 60th year since the Angus purebred operation began on the ranch.

Minnie Lou's family has a long history in the Texas cattle industry, tracing back to the famous XIT Ranch in the Texas panhandle. While that history is large enough to fill a column by itself, this story isn't about family history, but rather a ranch woman who more than six decades later continues to leave her mark on the industry.

Like most historical ranches in Texas, the family originally managed Longhorns, then later commercial Herefords. In the mid-1950s, Ms. Minnie Lou arrived and was instrumental in integrating Angus

genetics by introducing Angus bulls to the ranch's cow herd.

While today the black baldie is as common in the commercial sector as drought is to West Texas, that wasn't the case back then. Likewise, it wasn't the norm when the purebred Angus operation began in 1958.

#### A true pioneer

Ms. Bradley has never been about following others.

Minnie Lou grew up in western Oklahoma. At 9 years old she was a 4-H member, unable to participate in FFA because she wasn't a boy. After high school, she attended Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University), where she became the first female to major in animal husbandry.

As the purebred operation grew, so did Minnie Lou's influence in the beef industry. In the mid-1980s, the Bradleys built a beef-processing facility. B3R Country Meats was a branded-beef program that sold product across the country, including beef that qualified for



the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand Natural product. More importantly, B3R rewarded ranchers with a value-based marketing system. B3R provided customers with carcass information on their cattle, which allowed producers to truly measure the genetic value of their cattle.

I first met Minnie Lou and her daughter, Mary Lou, at the 1988 Oklahoma Farm Show. I had just begun my career, and B3R was an exhibitor. Ms. Bradley reminded me of my grandmother in south Texas — hard-

working, strong and solid. By solid, I mean if they told you something, you could take it to the bank.

Through the years, our paths continued to cross, and, like most folks, I watched Minnie Lou continue to blaze trails. In 2002, B3R Country Meats was sold, which allowed the family, including future son-in-law James Henderson, to turn its full attention to the ranch.

Two years later Minnie Lou became the first — and, to date, only — female president of the American Angus Association. In 2014 she became only the second woman ever inducted into the Saddle & Sirloin Portrait Gallery.

Sale day this year was just like 27 others, albeit with its diamond celebration and the 60 roses that the Association delivered to honor the day. Ms. Bradley was holding court, giving out hugs along with ample advice on how to produce superior Angus cattle, just like she's done for more than 60 years. Just like you'd expect.



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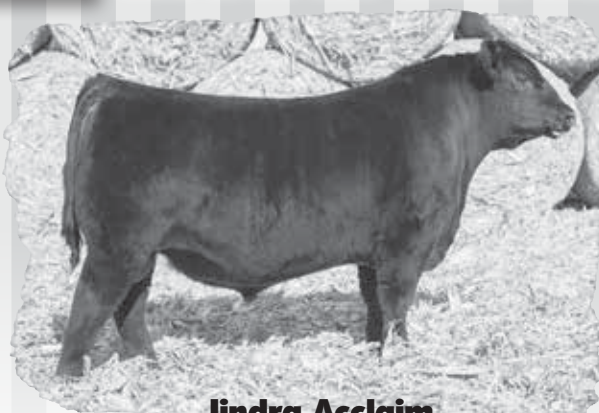
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