

TELLING THE STORY



"It's an opportunity to interact with people that need to hear our message, and it's good for business," Bodey Langford says.

Langford earns CAB Ambassador Award.

Story & photo by Abbie Burnett, Certified Angus Beef LLC

Two fishing cabins stood on the edge of the San Marcos river in 1919. Sixty years later Bodey Langford connected the two, as brick by brick, he built a home where he and Kathy would raise daughters Anna and Callie. There on his late father's ranch near Lockhart, Texas, he built his herd with just as much purpose.

Strong foundations of care and deeds imparted to future ranchers and education to non-ranch visitors earned Langford the 2020 *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Ambassador Award.

The foundation

He's a fourth-generation rancher following the path his great-grandfather, grandfather and parents set before him.

"When I fed and sold feedlot cattle, it became very obvious that the industry was looking for Angus carcasses," Langford says. "Not just black-hided carcasses, but Angus-sired. They were performing the best on the rail and the grids, and were the most profitable animal that I could raise and feed."

A drought in 2008 led to dispersing his commercial herd and

raising seedstock full-time. He diversifies the Angus bulls to match a range of clients with one goal in mind: Raise the quality of their herds to hopefully qualify for the CAB brand.

A pleasure

One of the first groups to visit Langford Cattle Co. was one of CAB's largest restaurant chain partners: Saltgrass Steakhouse. After several of those ranch days over the years, the Texas Beef Council got wind of what Langford was doing. Now it regularly brings 300-500 visitors to the ranch once or twice a year for events.

"I can't even begin to count how many people we've had out here from foreign countries and other states, and people that aren't in the

cattle business, but are recipients and marketers of our products — meat purveyors, restaurateurs and chefs," Langford says, "the sort of people that make our business work, that move product for us."

He'll split them all into groups to cover everything from animal health and data collection to urban sprawl and land management. The questions asked sometimes come from misunderstandings or media portrayals.

"It's a pleasure to me to be able to tell them the truth," Langford says.

Turning toward his home at the end of Isidora Trail, a large CAB logo-painted barn greets visitors. It reminds Langford of all the events he's hosted and what the goal is.

"*Certified Angus Beef* is the most successful beef marketing program that's ever existed in the world, and it's the finest, most consistent beef product that's available," he says. "Why would I not want to promote that product?"

When CAB's Kara Lee called in 2018 with a request, it was a new challenge. The brand's Foodservice

Leaders Summit was set for Austin in 2019, and they needed a ranch to visit.

"I really wanted to go to Bodey's," Lee says. "But the day we wanted to come was two days before his bull sale."

She decided to call anyway and left the decision up to him. After proposing what they wanted to do, all she heard was silence on the other end of the line. Lee thought for sure a "no" was brewing.

"Oh, I think we can make it work. Can't afford not to," Langford finally replied.

It was this consistent sacrificial response that led to the honor of the CAB Ambassador Award.

"I wanted to do it," he says. "It's an opportunity to interact with people that need to hear our message, and it's good for business. So, yeah, I couldn't afford not to."

What's in a legacy

One station on those ranch tours is the San Marcos riverbank, where Bodey explains what ranchers do for the environment, along with challenges that come from urban growth many miles away. In 1988 that first home flooded for the first time. After three more ever-higher floods it sits condemned, home only to memories as the Langfords moved to a new home a little upriver on raised ground.

When the floodwater comes, they're surrounded, unable to leave their little island, and it's getting closer.

Someday, when the family's gone from here and the ranch succumbs to urban sprawl, Bodey Langford's legacy will reside in the hearts of those he touched.

Like the fellow ranchers who shared a laugh and heard some well-earned wisdom, or the worldwide travelers who saw what it was to raise cattle and a family in south-central Texas, the foundation Langford builds will outlast his handiwork. An ambassador to all. |

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Editor's note: Abbie Burnett is a producer communications specialist for CAB.