



# YOUR LINK TO

by **RON BOLZE**, *director of progeny tests for carcass merit, Certified Angus Beef Program*



## Riding for the brand

Each year the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program's supply development team recognizes three producers for their dedication to and cooperation with the CAB Program and the American Angus Association's Sire Evaluation Program. At the Program's annual conference in September, I had the distinct privilege of meeting and getting to know the 1998 award recipients. They are Dennis and Erica Voss, Horse Butte Ranch, Two Dot, Mont., seedstock producers; Gene and Gynell Harris, Harris Ranch, Killdeer, N.D., commercial producers; and T.J. and Kristy Martin, Lamar, Neb., cooperating feeders.

When cattle producers get together the conversation eventually gravitates to an in-depth discussion of the current cattle market and projections for the future. Concern was understandably expressed for the future of the ranching industry as we know it today. However, I was reminded that pride, courage, loyalty, strong moral fiber and a passion for doing the right thing characterize those historically and currently involved with the ranching industry. Such character can be summarized by the phrase "Ride for the Brand."

Recipients of the 1998 Commitment to Excellence Award for seedstock producers, Dennis and Erica Voss provide the following thoughts.

Ridin' for the brand is part of the Code of the West. In the early establishment of cattle ranching throughout the American West, cowboys on horseback did most of the work. Large ranches covering huge tracts of land employed big crews of cowboys. The history of the cattle brand began with large roundups where ranches hot-branded the year's calf crop. Bull calves were castrated, hot-branded and run until 3 or 4 years of age before being rounded up and shipped East on trains for beef consumption.

Pride in the brand's ability to separate ownership of each ranch's livestock has grown into a ranching tradition, with an entire ranch's history symbolized by its brand. Over the years, the saying "ride for the brand" evolved as a philosophy of loyalty to the employer and pride in the ranch and its philosophy on raising cattle. Loyalty and the value of a handshake are a cow-calf ranching tradition.

While ridin' for the brand is long on tradition, its value to the contemporary

ranching industry is still an important and valuable philosophy, primarily as a reference to its Western heritage. When a cowboy rode for the brand, he put the ranch's interests first and looked after it — with pride — as his own.

Ridin' for the brand means experiencing the pride of being part of something bigger than yourself. It's about teamwork, loyalty, commitment, the ability to transcend your personal preferences and work for a greater whole, and the desire to defend and improve the quality of what the brand represents.

While listening to the presentations at the recent Certified Angus Beef™ Annual Conference, "ride for the brand" was ringing in my ears. The entire history, progress, development and success of the CAB Program are rolled up in this saying. As we speak of contemporary times, the "brand" has become the sole component of all marketing concepts.

Even in our own industry, while the hot brand is still applied, its existence is in trouble. Nevertheless, Western cattle raising depends heavily upon it and values it practically, symbolically and spiritually. These same thoughts and principles should also gel into greater wholes for the betterment of the bigger picture.

Recipients of the 1998 Commitment to Excellence Award for a cooperating feeder, T.J. and Kristy Martin provide the following thoughts as to how ridin' for the brand relates to the CAB Program:

- Commitment to excellence;
- Integrity — no good thing will God withhold from those who walk with integrity;
- Exceptional quality;
- Dedicated and dependable people standing behind their product;
- Trusting — those involved will strive for greatness;

- Consistency;
- Goal-oriented with obtainable goals;
- Here to stay — perseverance will prevail;
- Beyond expectations; and
- An outfit you are proud to ride with.

Similarly, Gene and Gynell Harris, recipients of the Commitment to Excellence Award for a commercial producer, express the following thoughts on the subject.

- Loyalty;
- Freedom;
- Honesty;
- Tradition;
- Respect;
- Trust;
- Pride;
- Harmony; and
- Responsibility.

As I ponder these thought-provoking words and phrases, I can envision practical applications that go beyond the ranching scenario to the things that constitute everyday life itself. Perhaps it is best summarized by these two poems that hang on the wall by Gene and Gynell Harris' back door.

### "Ride for the Brand"

When you work for a man,  
Ride for his brand.  
Treat his cattle as if  
They were your own.

— author unknown

### "The Code of the West"

Write it in your heart,  
Stand by the Code and  
it will stand by you.  
Ask no more and give  
no less than honesty,  
courage, loyalty, generosity  
and fairness.

— author unknown

Ride for the brand. Ride for the Certified Angus Beef brand.



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