

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Betty Thompson, 405-522-6105, betty.thompson@ag.ok.gov

Significant Women in Agriculture: Lynda Lucas

Being thrown into the fire isn't always a bad thing.

Lynda Lucas has been running the Lucas' cattle operation in Cheyenne consisting of about 100 head, primarily adult females, since her husband, Congressman Frank Lucas, first took office in the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 1988.

Lynda recalls the challenges she faced as she transitioned into running the operation on her own. Even before Congressman Lucas was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, he was gone during calving season.

Luckily, her dad raised cattle, so she asked him a lot of questions.

"I really didn't have any experience with cattle calving, and I called my dad frequently," she said. "After about the fifth call he said, 'Lynda, if you were going to do this for a living you should've paid more attention when you were at home.'"

She said she looked at him and said, "You're the man who told me when I was a junior in high school that girls couldn't be farmers."

His response was, "Well, you're doing it now, so you should've paid attention."

Lynda said her dad still never says much, but he did refer a buyer to her because she was "raising some pretty good cattle."

That was a pat on the back, she said.

From teaching to ranching

Upon high school graduation, and after some push from her parents, Larry and Marie Bradshaw, to pursue a degree and career in education, Lynda spent seven years teaching in Texas and Colorado. While

she was away from ranching for a while, she was no stranger to the agricultural industry. Lynda's father and grandfather, J.E. Bradshaw, both farmed and raised cattle while she was growing up, and she showed cattle through 4-H when she was in high school.

"I can remember being probably not much more than 3 or 4 when I got my first calf," Lynda said.

She cherishes those memories with her dad and granddad and says she really learned a lot about life during that time.

"Heifers were mine," she said. "Bulls were theirs, and so the money from the sale of the heifers went to my savings account."

After getting married in 1988, she moved to Cheyenne and spent some time as a substitute teacher for her dad, who was the elementary school principal. Her husband was elected to the state house this same year. After losing a calf, nearly losing a cow, and realizing it was not economically feasible to continue substituting with her husband frequently gone, she decided to take care of her children and the cattle full time. Little did she know he would soon be spending his time 1,500 miles from home.

"We don't have hired hands," she said. "It's me."

She laughed as she pointed out that while she handles things throughout the week, she saves the jobs she really doesn't like for the weekends when her husband is home.

Congressman Lucas has a small wheat operation used for grazing and some plains bluestem that he bales for hay. Lynda made it clear that she's the rancher, and her husband is the farmer. When Congressman Lucas is in our nation's capital, Lynda's primary duties vary with the season but consist of feeding and counting cattle, checking the cows that are about to calve, hauling cows to get artificially inseminated, and keeping up with her various roles within the community.

"There's been a learning curve. He's been really good to understand that I'm here five days a week and that I actually do kind of know what the cattle are going to do and that they know me," she said.

"He is the different item" when he comes home. She laughed as she remembered the time they were trying to gather some cattle. "Frank got out of the truck and flipped his Carhartt hood up on his coat, and the cattle just scattered everywhere."

He blamed the dogs and the kids for making too much noise, but Lynda was quick to say, "There's only one thing different from how we usually do things here, and it's not the kids and the dogs."

"He has learned to just kind of do things my way," she said.

Community involvement

Lynda has served as president of the Roger Mills County Cattlemen's Association for nearly 12 years. She organizes an annual educational event for local cattle producers, organizes the annual meeting and the

past few years has cooked the meal for the meeting, and puts on a bull sale of typically 45-50 bulls each February.

“Our board of directors builds the pens at the fair barn, and we night watch the bulls. My daughter is the secretary treasurer of the association and she really puts the catalogs together to send to the printer, and she and I make arrangements for the advertising. It takes up about two and a half months of our lives by the time we get it done,” Lynda said.

She’s also on the Roger Mills County Free Fair Board of Directors and serves as a trustee on the Southwestern Oklahoma State University Foundation where she’s a member of the scholarship and grants committee and the property committee. Additionally, she is on the Oklahoma State Shorthorn Association Board of Directors. This year she helped with the Shorthorn Junior Nationals, during which time she had to “leave Frank in charge.”

In her spare time, she somehow manages to spend plenty of time with her three children and three grandkids, tends to her flower bed and works with the Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief feeding team. Last August, she went to Baton Rouge to feed those displaced by the floods six weeks earlier.

When asked what agriculture means to her, Lynda said, “It is the lifestyle of being able to be in a rural area, to be in a community that shares the same values.”

It’s lasting friendships, banding together and getting things done, she said.

“It’s also amazing to consider that this little corner that I’m in provides food that goes certainly all over the United States and maybe even the world, so what I do here does affect other people. And to think that little number 57 is going to go out and feed a whole bunch of people one day,” she said.

Lynda is thankful to have built a life in Cheyenne and says “one of the real pluses of marrying Frank Lucas was that I got to come home.”

She recalls her mother telling her husband to move away and get a real job. She said her mother didn’t understand that “this old red dirt not only stains everything; it’s pretty permanent.”

###

Editor’s note: This is part of a continuing series of stories on Significant Women in Oklahoma Agriculture. The project is a collaborative program between the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry and Oklahoma State University to recognize and honor the impact of countless women across all 77 counties of the state, from all aspects and areas of the agricultural industry. The honorees were nominated by their peers and selected by a committee of 14 industry professionals. If you would like to make a nomination, visit <http://okwomeninagandsmallbusiness.com/>.

Photo Caption: Lynda Lucas is being recognized as a Significant Woman in Oklahoma Agriculture. She has been running the Lucas' cattle operation in Cheyenne consisting of about 100 head, primarily adult females, since her husband, Congressman Frank Lucas, first took office in the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 1988.



Lynda Lucas is shown with a bull she sold, Lucas CCF Route 66. The bull was sold to Crow Creek Farms, Lawton, Okla. and was shown in Fort Worth.



Lynda Lucas feeding cattle with her 2-year-old grandson, Tristan Yager.

