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 AmericanCW

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1. Tell us about what you do

I am a 5th generation cattle producer in the state of Florida. Yes, I said Florida! Florida celebrated 500 years of cattle in the state last year. We've had a very successful campaign promoting the beef industry here in Florida. We (my family) run a cow/calf operation near central Florida and are a diverse operation that includes a wedding venue and a lime rock mine. I am also honored to be President of the American National CattleWomen this year. We're celebrating 70 years of organization this year and we are the voice of women in the cattle business. American National CattleWomen share their passion for the industry as well as the values and heritage we all so appreciate. We're here to empower women and give them the tools to be a viable part of their operation as well as their community. ANCW strives to educate and promote the beef industry as well as participate in legislation that truly affects our lives. We

need to take an active role in all of these platforms for the sustainability of our industry. ANCW has many programs to enhance our leaders of tomorrow with programs that offer scholarships and internships with mentors in our industry. We feel it is imperative that we lead by example. My hashtag for this year has been #gitupinancw, I know there is a place in our organization for everyone and I want us to all find it. We need to continue to advocate for the cattle business as well as the entire agriculture community.

2. Where did you grow up?

I grew up on a ranch in Central Florida in the town of Geneva, and I am the youngest of 4 children. I was raised in a loving hard-working Christian family that took the time to sit around the dinner table together. We also lived near family members and would gather at the end of the day to hear about how the work on the ranch went or maybe about the work in the orange groves. Community was a big part of our lives, and it instilled morals and values that so many ranch-raised kids experience. As an adult, you appreciate those lessons learned at that age.

3. Introduce us to your family at the ranch.

My late husband Paul and I have two daughters, Rebecca and Audra. When we were raising the girls, we were

also building our property holdings and making a living working away from the ranch. So, this meant that we would work our cattle on the weekend, when it was family time. We taught the girls from a very young age to work and work hard, and they will have something one day. We spent many hours in the pens, building fence and mowing as a family. Paul and one girl on a tractor, and myself and the other daughter bringing lunch when possible. Sadly, we lost Paul suddenly in 2009 and the girls were young adults. We have been blessed with faith, family, and friends to help us move forward and continue living. Today our cow crew is a few good friends that help on gathering day, but for the most part it's all daughters, sons in-laws, and grandsons. Teaching the next generation to love the land and the way of life is very important to us. We are a 5th, 6th, and 7th generation ranching family and I want to spend as much time teaching by example to the future.

4. How long have you been a member of the American National Cattlewomen?

I've been an American National CowBelle/CattleWomen since I was a teenager. My mom saw the value in being a member of the Local State and National CowBelle/CattleWomen. As a family, we would attend meetings and

then promote Beef throughout the community in schools, parades, and grocery stores to name a few. The history of American National CattleWomen is incredible and we are proud to celebrate 70 years of organization this year. As president, I am given the honor to represent American National CattleWomen in the different states and be given time at the podium. It is such a blessing to speak not only about our organization, but also about the industry and what it means to myself and my family. I have a great presidential sponsorship that has helped me these last two years travel and enhance our programs for the members. Multimin USA is a firm believer in our organization and has been encouraging to not only myself, but to our membership and the beef industry.

5. Describe your Association. What are the advantages of belonging?

I belong to the American National CattleWomen as well as many other associations I believe in. American National CattleWomen serves as a voice of the women in the industry, and has a platform of education, promotion, and legislation. We work hard to educate the consumers and the





producers about the great importance of beef in their everyday life. Whether it is giving them nutritious information, or telling them our personal stories from the ranch. As women in the industry, we work in all aspects of the ranch, from bookkeeper to lunch maker, from calf pusher to shot giver. Believe it or not, ANCW has a program that is just for women that teaches all of these things and more. It's called WIRED (Women In Ranching Education Development). Look on our website (ancw.org) for more information on this program and when it is coming to a town near you. Promotion comes easy to our membership as well through classroom visits, cooking at events, and serving as spokespersons. We participate in legislation by visiting Washington D.C. as well as correspondence with our elected officials. ANCW stays informed and engaged with legislation, as we know how powerful they are and the effect they have on our day-to-day lives. We are a grassroots organization, and each member has a voice, we appreciate the membership and all they bring to us. Many organizations have opportunities to work with corporations and sponsors that believe in your mission. ANCW is blessed to have many of these and we appreciate their support. Multimin USA has been my sponsor for the last two years and I appreciate their enthusiasm to promote not only women in agriculture, but the beef industry.

6. We strongly support women in this industry, what advice do you have for them?

Congratulations! If this is your passion, go for it. Women make up over 36% of the managerial positions on farms and ranches today. It takes confidence and work ethic to be in these positions and be a leader. Look for mentors, ask questions, take notes, and participate from the front row. All levels of business have challenges, especially ranching which deals with challenges

that are out of our control. (i.e. mother nature, pricing). You have to face these challenges and accept them as part of your job. Spend time with someone you admire in the industry, those times will be priceless.

7. What's been your biggest challenge, and how did you overcome it?

There have been two, capital and my husband's passing. The first would be the fact that Paul and I married young and didn't have any credit built up or much savings as we were only eighteen and twenty years old. We had already been working hard for our future but hadn't had much time to save money. A wonderful couple that lived in Clermont, Florida saw the determination and work ethic that Paul and I both demonstrated, and they took a chance on us. The owner financed land for us and our first group of cattle. Without the Thompsons, we wouldn't have had such a great start in our marriage or our cattle business. My husband Paul passed suddenly in 2009 and the trajectory of my family's life changed. Paul was the head of our household as well as our lives and now we had to press on without him. I (we) truly had been taught independence through our years together and now it was time for me to lead our family. I had many doubts about my ability to carry on the path that we had set for our family, but with faith, family and friends we were able to do so. Our ranch has grown in acreage, as well as cattle and our family has gone from two daughters to add two son-in-laws and four grandsons. Our lives have been so blessed and we continue to bless others. The Golden Rule, Do unto Others as you would have them do unto You.

8. What was your first real job?

I worked for the county tax collector. I was born and raised in Seminole County Florida and if you were not in a farming or ranching business, you were a schoolteacher or you worked for the county. The county seat was 13 miles from our home and one of the closest towns. My dad served as a County Commissioner and my grandmother worked in

the Property Appraisers office, so it wasn't hard to get a job there. It was very interesting to come from a ranch and be used to looking at maps, and then to see how the cities were broken up and roads everywhere. It truly was like the country mouse coming to the city.

9. What breed(s) do you raise/manage and why?

We run commercial cattle here on our ranch in Sumter County, with a heavy influence of Brahman. We are in a very humid, usually wet part of Florida and Brahman-influenced cattle do well. We also have a registered herd of Brahman cattle. We use this herd for replacement heifers in our commercial herd. That way we have records of their fertility as well as body conditions and temperament. Being raised on a ranch that the ancestors remember open range well, we appreciate a cow that just won't load up in anybody's trailer. We still work cattle on horseback and with dogs. We have a lot of acreage that is wooded, and it still is the best way to work cattle for us. I grew up riding, we raised our girls to ride and help at a young age and I'm keeping a watchful eye over my grandsons that are learning as well. It's a very important part of our heritage and our family history and I want to preserve it the best I can and share it at every turn. Especially with my own family so those times don't get forgotten. I have participated in many programs and herd health seminars to make sure that we are doing the best job on our ranch for not only the cattle but the land too. I am BQA (Beef Quality Assurance) certified, MBA (Masters of Beef Advocacy), and completed the ANCW leadership program. We implement a herd health program that is recommended by our veterinarian that includes vaccinations, wormers, and Multimin. Being true stewards of the land and cattle is a blessing we take seriously.

10. What do you think about today's cattle industry?

It has sure changed just in the thirty-five years I've been paying attention. There are so many new ways to help the industry, even though the challenges have increased as well. We have many concerns with cattle pricing and government overreach, we need to be diligent in our thought and intentions as well as the people we vote into office! All of these have an impact on our ranches no matter the size. We must stay involved if we want our lands to be truly in control of the stewards. I believe now more than ever it is important for EVERYONE to be an advocate.

11. So many ranches have closed in the last 20 years, what can we do to keep today's cattlemen in business?

Participate and advocate for things that directly affect your operation. We can no longer think that someone will take care of that for us, or that we don't need to be active.



Your voice as a member or a hand on person has the greatest impact. Not only the information that organizations can pass along to you but the value in numbers speaks volumes when you are addressing an issue.

12. What would you tell the politicians in Washington if you they could hear you?

Come take a walk with me. Come see how we (cattle producers) spend our days and nights working to supply the nation with the most nutritious protein, Beef. As landowners and agriculturists, we have experience in the day-to-day workings of our own operations. What you see from 30,000 feet is just not the same. The decisions you are making or letting other people make for you are detrimental to not only our generation but the generations to come. Please meet the people affected by your decisions, it is the trickle-down effect and we need you as our elected officials to know what is happening in rural America.

13. How can local governments do better regarding the cattle industry?

Make site visits, meet the local rancher and farmers and see the true impact of what is happening in your area. As

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cattle producers, it is our responsibility to seek out these government people and let them know how what they are doing impacts us. Here in Florida, we are facing such a challenge with development. Our green spaces are quickly vanishing with over 1,000 people a day moving to Florida. As a family, we have actively been involved in local, state, and federal visits for over 30 years. We understand the value of a relationship with our elected officials and want to make sure they know the economic impact we have as well as environmental. Agricultural people are not the best at telling our stories to others. We are happy in our comfort zone and don't usually vary from it, but it is necessary to let our peers know the value of our industry. Through industry associations, we can lobby for our interests, and it is important that even if you can't take the time to leave your farm or ranch, many associations have lobbyists that are speaking up for you. (ancw.org)

14. Favorite cut of beef and how do you like it cooked?

That would be the Rib Eye and I enjoy it cooked medium, over an open flame with great friends and family.

15. What industry organizations do you support?

I am a proud member of my local, state, and national organization for cattle and farming in Florida and Texas. American National CattleWomen, National Cattlemens Beef Association, and American Farm Bureau.

16. Tell us about any mentor(s) you've had along the way.

I have been so blessed with a family that has been involved in every aspect of the cattle industry for generations. My mother (Imogene Yarborough) would have to be the most influential person to me. I grew up watching my parents and grandmother give back to the community and be involved in every aspect. My mom served in many leadership roles and set a great example for me and many others. Her involvement in different organizations has led many wonderful ladies to mentor me along the way. Being raised with a positive attitude and given self-confidence along the way is priceless. I am very appreciative of so many ladies who have worked so hard in our industry to make sure there is a next generation of leaders, as well as the organizations to promote them.

17. What do you do to get away from it all?

Checking in on the cattle and riding through them is something that really calms me. It reminds me of my family and all that they have done to get us to where we are today and makes me just want to smile. I enjoy hunting and fishing. We are true lovers of everything

outdoors. When we vacation, it is doing one of those three things: cattle, hunting, or fishing.

18. Ford, Chevy, Dodge?

Ford, we have had a wonderful relationship with the dealership for about 20 years. The first truck we bought from them was truly on a handshake. I have found one of the best things to surround yourself with is good people, and I think we as a family continue to do just that.

19. What are your thoughts on global warming?

As cattle producers we continue to work diligently to soften the impact agriculture has on our nation. With the help of so much new technology we are able to improve on genetics, nutrition and quality grazing ensuring that we as an industry will continue to be a part of the nation's viable food chain.

20. What's left on your bucket list?

To watch my family, grow and succeed. We faced many challenges together when we lost my husband at such a young age, and I want to see the girls and their boys do great things and not miss out on any of it.

21. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Still working on the ranch (at will) but watching the next generation making decisions that are best for our family and the livelihood that we love. Over the last ten years, there have been so many changes in the world, I can only imagine what the next ten will bring also. I look forward to the generations to come to be able to really make the most of all of our green space, and by that, I mean using the right tools that are getting more readily available to us through technology and science. As bad as it is to say, I'm from the old school and don't always embrace new ways.

22. What advice do you have for young, up-and-coming ranchers?

Thank you. Thank you for wanting to be in the ranching business. You will need to keep your mind on what you're doing and seek out every opportunity to gain knowledge from others. Especially those that have experience, we are a small percentage of the world, but such an essential part. Seek out mentors, they can help you in more ways than you will realize. The days will be long and so will the nights, but it will all be worth it. Agriculture has a way of paying you back for the care you give to the land. Look to the organizations that are doing things you can get behind. Members are important, and they need you as much as you need them.

ANCW

American National CattleWomen, Inc.

A Shared Passion A Shared Voice

The American National CattleWomen is celebrating 70 years of being the premiere voice for women who share a passion for the beef community with a focus on **Beef Promotion, Education, and Legislation.**

Membership includes:

- Educational Development
- Hands-On Trainings
- Leadership Development
- Promotion Opportunities
- Policy Updates
- Fellowship
- More+



Sign-up today to become a part of a 70 year legacy of outstanding CattleWomen! Go to ancw.org or follow us on social media for more information.



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