

Live Oak Legend recipient remains dedicated to progress and quality.



# FOCUSED ON **Improvement**

*“Change is easy, but improvement is substantially more difficult.”*

*– Fred Long, L<sup>2</sup> Ranch*

*by Chel Terrell*

Fred and his wife Judy, owners of L<sup>2</sup> Ranch in Beeville, Texas, have dedicated the last 40-plus years to the challenge of improving the Beefmaster breed and the genetics within their own herd. That commitment to superior quality and uniformity is the cornerstone of their breeding program, which they designate as “L<sup>2</sup> Essential 7 Total Balanced Performance Breeding.” They strive to consistently produce a Beefmaster product that excels in all the measured traits as well as visual appraisal and exceptional genetics.

“Visual appraisal is an extremely important trait in our cattle,” Fred

said. “They must be structurally sound and ideal in visual quality. We then focus on a balance in EPDs and performance, improvement in carcass traits and a uniformity in solid red color of our cattle.”

Long identifies these lookalike balanced qualities as “Signature L<sup>2</sup>” and it’s proven over the years to appeal to both purebred and commercial buyers domestically and internationally seeking to improve their breeding programs with consistent and predictable genetics.

The Longs currently run 300 brood cows and 150 recipients in their program and are able to trace much

of their top genetic lines back over 45 years in the breed.

Breeders will recognize the names of respected animals synonymous with the Signature L<sup>2</sup> program that appear in herds throughout the breed – bulls like Red Sugar, Infinity, Captain Sugar, Captain Jack, Captain Lucy, SugarJack, Bushwacker and Prodigy and females such as Sugar Ann, 293, Farah Lady, Infinite Lady, Farrah Anna, Simply Sugar, Peggy Sue and many others.

To achieve the superior genetics seen in animals such as these, the Longs have remained committed to line breeding and the strength of their

maternal herd.

"We like for people to recognize our cattle, and I've always believed the only way you can achieve a superior animal with similar qualities is through line breeding. It has helped us achieve our goals in our program," Fred said. "We've always told buyers that no matter how tough times are, quality sells. Everybody wants to try and breed a better animal. A quality animal is easier to sell, always."

They also attribute much of the success in improving their genetics through extensive embryo transfer work over the years.

"We encourage new breeders to use embryo transfer as a faster way to improve the genetics of their herd," Fred said. "It's something that wasn't available to us when we got started, and it's a fairly economical way for them to produce a good herd of cattle."

And those efforts are paying off for the breed.

"I've always thought that Beefmaster was a good breed. That's why I got into the Beefmaster business so many years ago," Fred said. "Right now it's a better breed because there have been tremendous amounts of improvement that have been made, especially after dam identification became required. We're glad to have the opportunity to participate in that."

In recognition of their commitment to improving and supporting the breed, the Longs are being honored this month with the Live Oak Beefmaster Breeders Association (LOBBA) 2015 Legend Award during the satellite's annual bull sale in Three Rivers, Texas.

"The members of the board of LOBBA and I are proud to recognize Fred and Judy Long as true legends in the Beefmaster breed," said Bob Siddons, LOBBA president. "Together they have produced the herd that has produced the bloodlines that are sought after not only in Texas but throughout the United States and many foreign countries. The L<sup>2</sup> brand is known and respected throughout the Beefmaster breed.

"It will be my pleasure to present the 2015 Legend Award to Fred and Judy at this year's sale."

The Longs have supported LOBBA efforts for several decades. They have consigned bulls and females to the satellite's sales, including earning top 10 and top 20 honors in the graded sale over the years and have even earned the coveted grand champion bull honor as well. They have also enjoyed hosting field days at their ranch in the past and supporting LOBBA fundraisers.

"The Live Oak group has always been very aggressive in marketing and giving breeders an opportunity

to market their good cattle, and the breeders are rewarded for bringing their top animals with good prices," Fred said. "The bull sale gets stronger and stronger every year. It's a place where buyers come and can select out of a couple hundred bulls and know they are purchasing quality animals."

The Longs appreciate that the satellite's sales provide an excellent avenue for the smaller breeder to promote their individual program as well.

"That sale is an excellent marketing opportunity for a small breeder to gain exposure for their program," Judy said. "This breed has a lot of small breeders. When they can be a part of an association, it gives them a stronger marketing arm."

Regional associations are crucial to new breeders, she emphasizes. "Back in the 1970s, Live Oak was especially critical in our breed. That's where cattlemen from the Southeast came to buy their bulls and females as well as breeders from Mexico and other places. So much of this business is the people that are in it. It gives them an introduction to a lot of breeders."

"The breeders in Live Oak have a swell group. All the people work with you and want to help each other. It's a very good organization," Fred said.

In addition to participating in LOBBA sales and events, the Longs have been avid supporters of other satellites and have been active volunteers within Beefmaster Breeders United (BBU) as lifetime members. Both have served on the BBU Board of Directors, with Fred serving four terms as treasurer and Judy serving two terms as secretary. They have been active on all BBU committees, working behind the scenes to improve the entire breed, and have been instrumental in helping members achieve success within their individual programs. The Longs have been honored with the prestigious BBU Breeder

*In addition to consigning cattle to sales such as those sponsored by Live Oak BBA, the Longs have hosted L<sup>2</sup> Ranch production sales for many years.*

of the Year Award as well as the Environmental Stewardship Award. Despite these incredible honors, the Longs aren't ready to slow down yet.

"We're never going to stop being aggressive about making our herd and this breed better," Judy said. "We're very honored that our peer group would recognize us. This award is a big shock. We don't really consider ourselves legends, but we do consider our cattle legends."

"We're still working toward a better end product in our herd. We're always striving for improvement," Fred said. "We like when people buy some of our cattle and take them home and we get good vibrations back from those breeders. It gives you a sense of satisfaction – that you've achieved something better than what you used to have.

"It's an honor to be selected for the Legend Award," Fred said. "We really appreciate it." ☆



*Fred Long visits with Joe Guerra, L<sup>2</sup> Ranch foreman, who has been with the family over 25 years. "On our ranch, it's a team effort and a respect for one another," Judy Long said.*

