

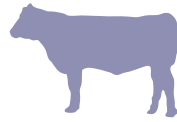
The Stewart Family:

Dana, Joshua, Henry and Jewel



Martin Cattle

COMPANY



By Martha Duncan Overby

IN 1936, **BOYCE MARTIN SR.** found his passion in raising livestock when he started a registered Hereford business. That passion has continued through six generations and is today alive and well in the Martin Cattle Company in Judsonia, AR. Dana Martin Stewart and her sisters are that sixth generation.

The Martin Cattle Company provides pure bred beef cattle, (Gelbvieh and Balancer breeds), as seedstock to cattle ranchers and farmers. Ranchers that raise beef cattle purchase bulls and heifers from the Martins for breeding their herd. Their website, martincattleco.com, features pictures of two national champion breeding cows owned and bred by the Martins. Also on their website, three specific “cow families” are referenced by their numbers, 143, 037, and 083. These are the most popular and prolific genetic lines they sell. With cattle, genetics are tracked through the females, not males. When you see those tags in a cow’s ear, the number on that tag refers to the cow family. A portion of their cattle can be traced back to those first cows purchased by Boyce Martin in 1936.

“It takes love and passion to endure all that the lifestyle demands of you.”

I spoke with Dana Martin Stewart about her life as a farmer. She, like generations before her, was raised on the family farm and developed the same love and passion for the business her father and grandfather felt. As she tells it, “It takes love and passion to endure all that the lifestyle demands of you.” It is a different lifestyle; I can see where it is a calling by reason of birth. Unless you are born into a farming family and have seen others survive and prosper in it, to choose such a labor intensive vocation is unlikely.

Dana Martin attended Arkansas State University – Beebe and then the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, earning a degree in Agriculture communications. She met her husband Joshua Stewart at church. While Joshua was raised in a rural area, he was not raised in farming. They spent their “dating” doing farm chores. This gave Joshua a first-hand experience of the farming Dana knew was her calling. When they decided to start a family, they

knew it was time to get back to the family farm. While Dana’s vocational calling is the family farm, Joshua is an architect. His firm is Stewarch Architecture, here in Searcy, (see Stewarch.com).

The Stewarts and Dana’s parents all live on the family farm, Martin Cattle Company in Judsonia. On a day in the life of farmer Dana, she is up early, getting some chores out of the way before her children get up. Then back in the house to get her nine-year old daughter Jewel and six-year old son Henry fed and ready for school. With kids off to school, Dana is back to chores whether it be getting an animal in, fixing fences, special projects or feeding. They have approximately 150 head of cattle, and it can take up to two hours to just distribute feed from a tractor. While she is feeding cattle, her father David Martin is checking pastures, which means making sure all cows are present and that they all look well, checking on those getting ready to calve and on the health of current calves. This family farm has several generations involved which includes Dana’s two sisters. Sisters Rebecca Johnson and Rasha Pate each live on nearby farms, and each manage a portion of the Martin herd from their farms. Rebecca, Rasha, and their mother Rita Martin also work at Searcy Medical Center.

When the children come home from school, they have a snack and then tend to their own farm chores and animal projects, (the Stewarts are a 4-H family), while Dana continues distributing hay. Next is cooking supper, homework and to bed. The next morning it starts again.

During March of this year, 2020, there was an adjustment for children out





▲ The original family farmers
Boyce and Mini Martin.



▲ Original Martin family farm in Steprock, AR



of school due to the COVID-19 virus. On Facebook, parents posted ideas to keep their children occupied during this time. That was not necessary on the Martin Cattle farm, as daughter Jewel helped Dana with her chores, and son Henry helped grandpa check the pastures each day. A great aspect of working a multi-generational farm is the children spending time with grandparents almost daily. To have a child accompanying and assisting a grandparent provides learning from a different generation than their parents, giving them another perspective on work and life. Some things in life are not taught, but caught.

Family farm life can sound a lot like that of the majority of working parents. Except when additional responsibilities pop up. For instance, a fence must be mended NOW, before an animal gets out; or a sick animal must be doctored NOW, before it gets worse. Most of us can just go to bed when we are tired; the farmer does

not always get to do that, and it can make for long weary days. And then there is the fact that cows need to be fed, doctored, etc. seven days a week. There are no weekends on a cattle farm. Even if the family is able to go away on vacation, someone must stay to keep things going.

Another aspect of farm life different from the nine to five lifestyle is the way in which they are paid. Most of us can expect a weekly paycheck, or monthly if you work in education. Farm pay comes once a year, at harvest time, or in the case of Martin Cattle Company, during bull selling season. That means you have to budget your income for a full year. Dana tells me she works on updating farm records, but her mother Rita Martin is the budget expert in their family. Income and costs must be forecast out for the coming year. And that forecast is NOT set in stone. There are unplanned factors to be dealt with. Drastic weather changes can be catastrophic for a farm. For instance, draught will mean selling off some of the herd to lessen the cost of augmenting the cattle feed with additional grain. And draught will mean the cost of feed increases as the demand goes up. Last year many local farmers dealt with flooding, although it did not have a great impact on the Martin farm. It takes a certain amount of faith to farm as there are so many variables that can affect the success of this business. All the farmer can do, is do the best they can, and believe for better. Faith.

Farming requires a skill set that spans a large area. Can you repair your own equipment? Do you have a certain amount of veterinarian skills to care for the cattle? Can you grow your own feed? Dana is a firm believer in critical vocational training.

So while Dana is a farmer, mom, 4-H leader, involved with church activities and assists her husband with his business, in her spare time she is Vice President of White County Farm Bureau this year, and is looking forward to the opportunity to serve next year when she will be President.

If you are like me, I think of Farm Bureau as an insurance company. They are an insurance provider, but their purpose is actually agricultural advocacy. The mission statement for Arkansas Farm Bureau is:

- **ADVOCATE THE INTEREST** of agriculture in the public area.
- **DISSEMINATE INFORMATION** concerning the value and importance of agriculture.
- **PROVIDE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES** which improve the quality of life for our members.

Farm Bureau.

A Valuable Organization.





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“This family farm has several generations involved...”

The insurance products were developed to fill a need. Not every insurance company can insure your herd of cattle, your large tractor or farming equipment.

Dana passionately speaks about the responsibility of working to provide food for our country. She shared, “Today’s farmer relies on sound science to maintain and grow their business. They have to, as it is estimated that within fifty years they will need to feed twice as many people globally as today. We have, by far, the safest food source in the world.”

An issue Dana wanted to address was the use of antibiotics in food source animals. How many times have you seen “antibiotic-free” beef advertisements? This advertising is deceptive, as it gives the impression that some meat products DO have antibiotics. The truth is, the USDA randomly tests and monitors beef before it reaches the consumers.

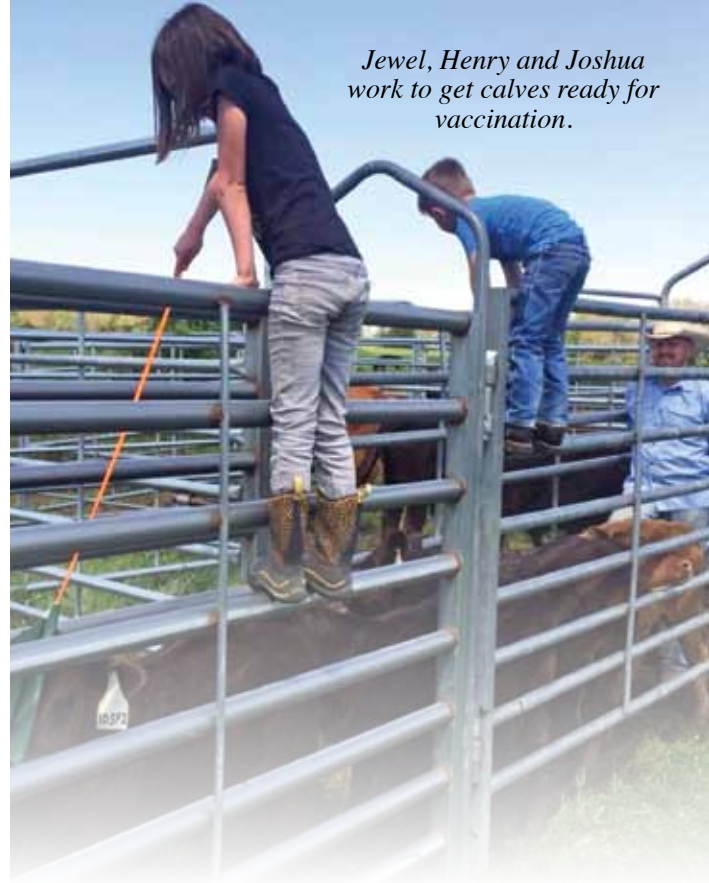
Here’s a reference from the American Meat institute:

“Whenever an antibiotic is given to a food animal, a strict waiting or ‘withdrawal’ period is required before that animal can be processed into meat or poultry. USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) conducts a monitoring program to ensure that antibiotics are effectively eliminated from animals’ systems and that no unsafe residues are detected in meat and poultry.”

Are antibiotics used on animals? Yes, it would be unethical to not treat an animal with up to date antibiotics if needed. But as the reference above states, there is a time frame where these medicines will dissipate and no longer be in the animal’s body.

Dana tells me the agricultural business today is not the same as in her grandfather’s day. It is more common than you think for the wife to be the primary farmer in the family. Each year the Agricultural Media Industry holds a National Summit. The majority of attendees tend to be women, not men. The face of the Agri industry is changing.

Next time you pick up that pound of hamburger in the market, or order a fast food burger, be aware and thankful for the food safety measures in our country and the farmers, ranchers, and breeders who take a chance and work hard to make your burger possible. Some of them live right here in White County. *



Jewel, Henry and Joshua work to get calves ready for vaccination.

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~ DANA MARTIN STEWART



▲ *Henry showing his heifer Tinkerbelle at a 4-H event.*



▲ *This is Jewel and the lamb which was her 4-H project last year.*