

A Life Full of

Adventure

BY: JIM CURRY

Carla Payne hasn't done it all, but that's only because she hasn't run out of time yet. Raised on the Plains of Texas near Lubbock, she began flying airplanes at 15 and never looked back. Always involved in some form of agriculture, she and her late husband, Carl, owned and operated a crop dusting business in the rice-growing area near Katy, Texas. In time, they became involved in aerial firefighting and fought fires all across Texas and in Kentucky. Flying has been a lifetime love, and her airplane sits only feet away from her front door at all times.

Carla and her husband purchased their first two Longhorns right before their wedding day in 1988 from pioneer breeder Angie Caldwell's Unicorn Ranch as a way to keep an agricultural exemption on a property they had leased. On their wedding day, the two newly acquired cattle escaped, and the newlyweds left the reception to track down the missing herd. Carla remembers that she took a Jeep, and Carl went airborne for the roundup. After a successful capture, they returned to the reception only to find that the wedding cake had all been eaten.

Carla wanted to raise good cattle, and began studying breed publications in an effort to gain as much knowledge of genetics as possible. After



Jet Jockey won the first TLBAA world show, she selected him as the sire for her first efforts at AI in 1991. In those days, she hired the breeding done, but eventually went to AI school at Bovine Elite in College Station, Texas. For many years now, she has done her own AI breeding.

Her proudest achievement in the Longhorn business is breeding Boomerang CP, who after a successful show career, was purchased by Ben Gravett and then Mike Bowman. Boomerang CP went on to leave a lasting mark on the breed, and sired many sale-topping cattle over his lifetime. Her

favorite cow is the dam of Boomerang CP, Indian Girl 636, who was World Reserve Grand Champion Mature Halter Female at age 15. Other notable animals she has raised include the great Jet Around With Mary CP.

Carla moved to Slidell in north Texas in 2001, where she continues to raise registered Texas Longhorns, and operates a commercial herd of black baldies serviced by registered Angus bulls. Her involvement in the Longhorn industry has evolved over the past few years, and her astute knowledge of cattle has led to a growing demand for her talents as a judge. She has evaluated Longhorns at the prestigious Houston Livestock Show, Albuquerque, the West Texas State Fair in Abilene, the California Redlands show, the East Texas State Fair, and many affiliate shows. She was president of the South Texas Longhorn Association in the 1990s, and was instrumental in founding the Fiesta Texas Longhorn Sale at the San Antonio Stock Show. Red McCombs Ranches has continued the Fiesta Sale tradition every year since 2000. She served on the TLBAA board for two terms, and acted in the capacity of Treasurer to the benefit of the association.

Always willing to lend a hand when needed, Carla joined the volunteer fire department in her rural community. When she saw there was a void in the department for first responders, she attended Emergency Medical Technician school, and now acts in that capacity for her community and rural neighbors. Fellow adventurer and flying enthusiast, Keighley Jacobson, is one of her neighbors, and together they founded www.flyingcowgirls.com, a grass fed beef outlet for savvy health-conscious consumers. Flying Cowgirl beef is produced from cattle that are free roaming, and raised entirely on grass. No hormones, antibiotics or animal by-products are ever fed to the cattle, and no outside cattle are allowed in the program. Their motto is: "We believe treating the land and the animals with respect makes a difference to the future, and to the taste and healthiness of your beef." This mutual endeavor has emerged into a successful growing business with a strong demand from returning clientele.

Another one of Carla Payne's passions is hunting. She entered the sport in 2002 with a whitetail deer hunt, and quickly progressed to elk hunting in 2003. She travelled to Alaska in 2005, and has followed up with a trip every year since. On her first try in 2005, she managed only a spruce hen, but has definitely raised the bar since. She says she fell in love with the beauty of our 49th state, and eagerly looks forward to experiencing it again each trip. In 2007, she bagged a grizzly bear and has also recorded moose. Carla shot a black bear on Justin and Julie Hansen's ranch near Paskenta, California in 2009. One of the highlights of her hunting life was when she scored a 181 pound mountain lion near Kanloops, British Columbia in February 2011. An unusual fact about her hunting success is that it has all been done with only one rifle, a .300 Winchester Magnum. She laughingly says she has even bagged a turkey with the piece.

Carla admires the independent personality of Texas Longhorns, and that seems only fitting for a woman as independent as she. She says she likes their individuality, color, intelligence, and ability to "think things out." They browse in places where her commercial cattle never venture, and thrive when the others will not. Like almost all Texas Longhorn breeders, Carla enjoys the industry mostly because of the people. She enjoys that it is a family oriented group with a sturdy social aspect that has kept her interest for well over 20 years, and that interest has not waned, but only gotten stronger. Carla is clearly living a life full of adventure, and her exuberant approach to every day should be admired by us all.

