

People & Places

Nursery owner gets hooked on agriculture

Angela Bailey fills her mother's shoes, and finds they fit

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

GRESHAM, ORE. — It was the phone call no one wants to get. Angela Bailey's mother, Verna Jean Hale, had suffered a heart attack, paramedics were on scene and things didn't look good. By the time Bailey and her husband could drive the 45 miles east across the Portland metro area to the nursery her mother owned outside of Gresham, Bailey's mom had died.

Bailey and her husband, Larry, were stunned. Her mother was only 70 and there was no succession plan. Bailey's father, a music teacher, had died when she was 14, and she was an only child. She'd grown up on the nursery, knew how to graft trees and had a basic understanding of how things worked, but knew nothing of her mom's day-to-day operations. It wasn't until customers began calling that the Baileys realized there were orders of ornamental trees that needed to be shipped.

The Baileys asked themselves whether they should continue the business — continue growing and selling Verna Jean's Japanese maples, beeches, dogwoods and monkey puzzle trees — or move on. Larry was a chemical engineer with a Ph.D. from Stanford University and good job at Intel, the giant computer chip company in Hillsboro. Angela had a communications degree from Seattle Pacific University, a toddler to care for and another baby on the way. If her mom had expected her to continue in the nursery business, she'd done a good job of hiding it.

But legacy can be a comforting cloak, one that feels



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Angela Bailey, the Oregon Farm Bureau's second vice president and winner of its Outstanding Woman award, encourages producers to speak up on agricultural issues.

Western Innovator Angela Bailey

Notable: Second-generation co-owner of Verna Jean Nursery outside Gresham, Ore. The nursery specializes in ornamental trees, primarily Japanese maples, beeches, dogwoods and monkey puzzle trees. Elected second vice president of the Oregon Farm Bureau and presented the Outstanding Farm Bureau Woman award during state convention in December 2014.



Personal: Age 41, two daughters, Katie and Abbigayle; holds a communications degree from Seattle Pacific University. Married to nursery co-owner Larry Bailey, a chemical engineer who works as a patent agent in Portland.

Background: Grew up in the Gresham area, spending a great deal of time on the tree nursery started by her late mother, Verna Jean Hale, but originally had no intention of following her mom into the business. Her late father, George Hale, was a music and band teacher.

Make-do methods: Farmers are known for their ingenuity and the Baileys are no exception. Seeds for the nursery's monkey puzzle trees come from a pair of towering specimens Angela Bailey's parents planted on the property perhaps 50 years ago. Their seed gathering method? A few well-placed kicks with their daughters' soccer balls brings a shower of seeds for collection.

right when draped over your shoulders.

"We didn't want to move on," Bailey says.

That was 10 years ago this spring. Today, Verna Jean Nursery retains its modest

niche in Oregon's nursery industry, which by production value is the leading sector of the state's agricultural economy.

And Bailey — "Angi" to her many friends — has be-

come one of the Oregon Farm Bureau's rising leaders and clearest voices. She's made lobbying trips to Washington, D.C., tracks national legislation, cajoles elected officials and encourages producers to speak up and tell their stories. She's a graduate of the American Farm Bureau's communications "boot camp," which trains producers to become public advocates for farming. The nursery has no genetically engineered plants, but when Jackson County was debating a ban on GMO crops, Bailey traveled there to hear the arguments and absorb information.

At the Oregon Farm Bureau's annual convention in December, Bailey was elected second vice president and gained a spot on the board of directors. She also won the Outstanding Farm Bureau Woman award, given for exceptional contributions in furthering the Oregon Farm Bureau's goals at the local, state and national level.

Bailey was flabbergasted. "I'm honored by the award, I can't believe it," she said. "I don't do what I do for the recognition, I do

it so I can keep farming."

Bailey's Farm Bureau involvement began with the Multnomah County branch. Attending her first Oregon Farm Bureau annual convention as a county representative sealed the deal, as Bailey was struck by the manner in which members hashed out issues.

"I loved the grass roots policy process," she says. "I hadn't seen anything like that before. I was hooked."

Bailey has since become one of the Farm Bureau's leading advocates for reconnecting with a public that's now three generations removed from the farm, doesn't understand agriculture and is swayed by anti-farming activists. Bailey says she heard a conference speaker put it this way: "In the absence of your voice, issues are being decided by people who don't know us and don't like us."

She credits her husband, Larry, for setting the family on the course that's led to her leadership position. The family was bouncing back and forth between Hillsboro and Gresham when Larry proposed that he leave Intel and they move to the rural nursery to make a go of it. He took the lead the first few years as Angela cared for their children.

"He just dove in, he read books, he built greenhouses," Bailey says. "Even when we didn't know what to do, we just did something. You learn as you go along."

"Larry, to me, is the unsung hero of this whole story," Bailey says. "He's the one who said, 'Let's do this.'"

Larry Bailey has since taken a position that allows him to use his engineering training; he's a patent agent with a Portland law firm and Angela Bailey has assumed primary responsibility for the nursery.

In that sense, Bailey believes she's carrying on for her mom. "She loved trees, loved the ag industry and loved her customers very, very much."

Barred owl attacks joggers in Salem, Ore., park

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — MSNBC host Rachel Maddow inspired Oregon's capital to post new warning signs in a park where four runners reported attacks from an angry owl likely defending its nest against perceived threats.

One jogger, a surgeon, said the owl hit him twice in Bush's Pasture Park in Salem, and so hard he thought he was having a stroke or an aneurysm. Another said the bird swiped his longtime running cap and nicked his scalp.

Maddow suggested on air last week that the city should post a vivid yellow warning sign using the iconic pedestrian stick figure bent forward at a run. Above, claws extended, is a raptor.

Salem officials liked the idea.

Mark Becktel, parks and transportation services manager, said the city secured rights to reproduce the sign and is posting 20 of them.

"It's just making people aware that there's an owl there that for whatever reason swoops down and goes after people's hats," he said.

Officials previously put up handbills with printed warnings that Maddow said weren't strong enough.

Birders say the assailant is a barred owl, an aggressive bird that's especially so during the current mating season.

Barred owls are also known to attack spotted owls, which are protected



Danielle Peterson/AP Photo/Statesman-Journal

John Kleeman, Parks Operations Supervisor for Salem, Ore., installs signs at Bush's Pasture Park on Feb. 12 warning visitors of the recent owl attacks. MSNBC host Rachel Maddow suggested the signs when she recently featured a story about an angry owl that has attacked four runners at the park.

under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Much of the angry owl's play in the press was in fun.

ing among 11 suggestions.

Coming in third, at 188 votes, was "Rachel Maddowl." The MSNBC host suggested the sign design during a 14-minute segment Feb. 5 about wackiness in Oregon.

Among her topics were a Republican leader who collects urine samples for scientific research and allegations that former Gov. John Kitzhaber's fiancée used his office to win contracts for her consulting business.

Politically, "Oregon is nuts," Maddow said.

But what amused her most was the threat "looming over the state of Oregon right now, looming silently and occasionally swooping down and terrifying the state — and sometimes drawing a little blood."

Giant African snails seized at Houston airport

HOUSTON (AP) — U.S. Customs and Border protection inspectors in Houston seized six live giant African snails that are a popular delicacy across West Africa.

The snails were found after a passenger from Nigeria declared the animals during a U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspection.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture,

the giant African snail is fast becoming an invasive species.

The six snails, seized Feb. 2 at George Bush Intercontinental Airport, are prohibited in the U.S. and have

the ability to reproduce very quickly.

Customs and Border Protection Port Director Charles Perez says there is no penalty when international travelers make a

truthful declaration.

On an average day in 2014, CBP agriculture specialists around the nation discovered 425 pests at U.S. ports of entry, and 4,447 materials for quarantine.

Calendar

FEBRUARY NATIONAL

Feb. 23-26 — Potato D.C. Fly-In, sponsored by the National Potato Council, Mayflower Renaissance Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C., www.nationalpotatocouncil.org

OREGON

Through Feb. 21 — Oregon Logging Conference, Lane County Fairgrounds and Convention Center, Eugene, 541-686-9191, www.oregonloggingconference.com

Feb. 24-25 — Oregon Dairy Farmers Annual Convention, Salem Conference Center, www.dairyfarmers.com/101-convention-general

Feb. 28 — Oregon Small Farms Conference, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Oregon State University LaSalle Sells Cen-

ter, Corvallis, <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfc>

CALIFORNIA

Feb. 25 — Sutter-Yuba-Colusa-Yolo-Solano-Sacramento Walnut Day, Veterans Hall, Yuba City, 530-822-7515, <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

IDAHO

Feb. 26-27 — Idaho Hay and Forage Conference, Best Western Burley Inn, www.idahohay.com, 208-888-0988 or cindy@amgidaho.com

Feb. 27 — Drones for Forestry workshop, 1:15-4:30 p.m., University of Idaho Extension, 1808 N. Third Ave., Coeur d'Alene, \$15, 208-446-1680

MARCH OREGON

March 16-17 — Oregon State University Blueberry School, LaSells

Stewart Center and CH2M Hill Alumni Center, OSU campus, Corvallis, <http://osuberry.ucanr.edu/>

March 20-23 — Oregon FFA State Convention, Silverton, www.oregonffa.com

March 20-22 — Northwest Horse Fair & Expo, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, [www.equinepromotions.net](http://equinepromotions.net)

CALIFORNIA

March 3 — Walnut (7-year-olds) No Pruning-Pruning Comparison Field Meeting, morning, Nickels Soil Lab, Arbutus, 530-822-7515, <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

March 3 — Walnut (2-year-olds) No Pruning-Pruning Comparison Field Meeting, afternoon, Nickels Soil Lab, Arbutus, 530-822-7515, <http://cesutter.ucanr.edu>

March 17-18 — Fruit Ripening & Retail Handling Workshop, Uni-

versity of California-Davis, <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Education/fruitripening/>

March 22-24 — California Fresh Fruit Association Annual Meeting, The Grand Del Mar, San Diego, www.CAFreshFruit.com

APRIL OREGON

April 18 — Oregon Women for Agriculture Auction and Dinner, Linn County Fair and Expo Center, Albany, 503-243-FARM (3276), <http://owaonline.org/>

CALIFORNIA

April 18-21 — California State FFA Conference, Selland Arena, Fresno, www.calaged.org/stateconvention

IDAHO

April 8-11 — State FFA Leader-

ship Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, www.idffafoundation.org/

MAY WASHINGTON

May 14-16 — Washington FFA Convention, Washington State University, Pullman, www.washingtonffa.org/convention

CALIFORNIA

May 1-2 — Forest Landowners of California annual meeting, Holiday Inn, Auburn, www.forestlandowners.org/

JUNE CALIFORNIA

June 15-26 — Postharvest Technology Short Course, University of California-Davis, <http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Education/PTShortCourse/>

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EO Media Group
dba Capital Press

An independent newspaper
published every Friday.

Capital Press (ISSN 0740-3704) is
published weekly by EO Media Group,
1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem OR 97301.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, OR,
and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to
Capital Press, P.O. Box 2048 Salem, OR
97308-2048.

To Reach Us
Toll free 800-882-6789
Main line 503-364-4431
Fax 503-370-4383
Advertising Fax 503-364-2692

News Staff
N. California
Tim Hearnden 530-605-3072

E Idaho
John O'Connell 208-421-4347

Idaho
Carol Ryan Dumas 208-860-3898

Boise
Sean Ellis 208-914-8264

Central Washington
Dan Wheat 509-699-9099

E Washington
Matthew Weaver 509-688-9923

Oregon
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To get information published
Mailing address:
Capital Press
P.O. Box 2048
Salem, OR 97308-2048

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