

## People &amp; Places

## Student balances beef sales, studies

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

When COVID-19 hit, Peyton Curtis came home to the ranch.

Curtis is a junior at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. She returned home to her family's Ritzville, Wash., ranch last March at the beginning of the pandemic.

"I was doing my online classes at my dinner table, wasn't having too much fun doing it, and I said, 'I'm bored,'" Peyton remembered. "The next thing I knew, I was starting a business."

Curtis is founder of The Herd, a farm-to-table beef delivery service that sends beef raised on her family's ranch, the Curtis Cattle Co., to customers.

The ranch runs a 1,300-head cow-calf operation. The beef is processed at the Curtis family's packing plant.

The family had long discussed making such a move, Peyton said.

Her father, Miles Curtis, said it's unclear who first suggested the idea this time around.

"We both blame each other," he said. "We both kind of poked at each other for long enough that we finally made (it) happen. ... She was the one who finally said, 'You know what? We keep talking about this, Dad, I'm bored and I'm sitting here at home, let's try it.'"



Courtesy of Peyton Curtis

**Peyton Curtis, left, with her family, younger sister Finley, mother Bren, younger brother Brix and father Miles. Peyton balances handling marketing and customer relations for the family's farm-to-table beef delivery service, studies as a college student and as a veterinary intern.**

The ultimate goal is to sell all the ranch's cattle through the business, Miles Curtis said.

Peyton has one more year of college, then plans to attend veterinary school. She is presently at a four-month internship at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute in Kentucky.

"I love large animals, I love cattle, I love horses. It's kind of what I know," Curtis said.

The Herd quickly became a full-time job when it started last June. The Curtis expected a few orders from family and friends, but 30 orders quickly turned

into 250, and business hasn't slowed since.

Peyton handles marketing and customer relations.

She says she doesn't have a background in marketing or sales, but is learning on the fly.

The most important thing, she said, is to be completely transparent and honest with customers.

Miles isn't surprised by his daughter's success. He notes that Peyton told him that her internship asks her to perform several tasks "because I'm capable and because I grew up on a ranch."

"I'm bragging a little bit

and I'm pretty damn proud of her," he said. "Ranches raise kids that are capable in general."

As she pursues her career as a vet, Peyton wants the Herd to keep growing. She might take a "gap year" to focus on the business, she said.

"I spend a lot of time with it already, it's basically my full-time job on top of my other two full-time jobs, with school and my internship," she said.

She also runs her own four-horse brood mare herd.

"I am a busy gal," she said. "I'm always doing something."



**Western  
Innovator**

**PEYTON CURTIS**

**Age:** 21

**Title:** Founder of The Herd

**Hometown:** Ritzville, Wash.

**Education:** Student at Cal Poly, studying animal science

**Family:** Mom Bren, dad Miles, younger siblings Brix and Finley

**Website:** www.theherd5c.com

But her ultimate dream is to be a veterinarian, with a focus on helping ranchers improve their herd genetics.

"I think I've wanted to be a vet since I was about in first grade," she said. "I'm most comfortable around animals and being outside."

Growing up on the ranch, she would spend many mornings feeding cattle with her mom and dad and summer days riding horses with her grandfather.

"It's a huge part of my upbringing and it's a large part of who I am, my skill set and my work ethic," she said. "It's a big deal for me."

## Ranching couple reflects on their 55 years of marriage

By STEVEN MITCHELL  
EO Media Group

JOHN DAY, Ore. — As many people rushed to make dinner reservations for Valentine's Day, a Grant County, Ore., ranching couple, who have been married for more than a half a century, said it was just another day.

Eugene "Perk" and Charlene Perkins, who will celebrate 55 years of marriage on March 6, told the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper their relationship has always been more about consistency, commitment and companionship, and less about obligatory cards, candy and flowers once a year to show their love for one another.

Charlene said an "underlying deep love" brought them together, and it's endured and grown stronger over the years for the couple who raised two kids in a "working ranch family."

Charlene recalled their wedding day, in detail, as if it happened yesterday: from the "fluffy" handmade dress she sewed herself to Perk, a working cowboy, wearing a white satin shirt and blue jeans.

She laughed as she told the Eagle about the preacher in a flower-print



Blue Mountain Eagle

**Eugene "Perk" and Charlene Perkins on their 25th anniversary.**

shirt whom neither had met before their wedding who agreed to officiate the wedding on short notice.

Charlene, who was 19 at the time, said she wanted to get married in a church with a preacher officiating. She said all she knew was the colorfully clothed preacher, named Reverend Blackburn, was a Christian and could match them in March.

"I knocked on the door, and here comes this guy, and he had a flower



Blue Mountain Eagle

**Eugene "Perk" and Charlene Perkins cut their wedding cake in 1966.**

shirt on and a vacuum cleaner in his hand," she said. "That's the preacher."

Perk, who was 24 at the time, said the couple went on to have two "great kids," four "awesome granddaughters" and two great-grandchildren.

Perk jokingly said Charlene told their story for the both of them during his interview: "I'd probably lie anyway."

Jokes aside, he said the couple worked "side by side" over the years

and kept things simple.

"Neither one of us did a lot of talking," he said. "But if something was bothering us, we were not scared to tell the other person, and if we didn't agree, then we didn't agree. We just went on."

He said society as a whole does not value marriage like it did in the past.

"Nobody's willing to make a commitment," he said. "I mean, they call it progress. We've slid back so far its not even funny."

Perk said the world has drastically changed and he would not want to be a twenty-something again.

He quoted Rodney Dangerfield in the 1980s movie "Back to School": "It's a jungle out there. Don't leave home."

As Charlene looks back on 55 years of marriage, she said "an unbreakable bond" carried them through difficult times.

"We've had a lot of bad times," she said. "We've been through losing cows and getting cows and losing everything. Through it all, there was still that thread that couldn't be broke. Because it wasn't a thread, it was a rope."

## Small woodlands group bringing back Willamette Valley Ponderosa pine

Fifteen years in the making, a non-profit forestry group and Linn County, Ore., are collaborating on a project designed to highlight reforestation of the Willamette Valley Ponderosa pine.

The Linn County Small Woodlands Association is planting a grove of 50 young pine trees at Sunnyside Park near the town of Sweet Home.

Along with the trees, two interpretive signs under shelters will explain the history of the Willamette pine and the efforts of Sweet Home native Bob Mealey to restore the native race of trees in the valley.

Mealey started the LCSWA. LCSWA has money to pay for this project from the RHM Pine Fund, established by Mealey before his death in 2007.

The Mealey family is one of Sweet

Home's founding families. Bob Mealey was born in 1912. He graduated from Sweet Home High School in 1932 and from Oregon State College in 1936.

In 1989, he was recognized as the Oregon and Western United States Regional Outstanding Tree Farmer. He was also a fellow of the Society of American Foresters.

In 2000, the Robert H. Mealey Willamette Valley Ponderosa Pine Native Gene Conservancy Orchard was dedicated at the Oregon Department of Forestry's Schroeder Seed Orchard near St. Paul.

Growth in the pine fund's investments has produced money for the Sunnyside project and perhaps other environmental education projects with Linn County public agencies.

Pines for the Sunnyside project will be planted soon, likely this week.

The signs for the grove — located near the park's ranger residence — will be installed in the spring.

Community involvement in the project so far has included Sweet Home businesses helping to prepare the site for planting and a possible partnership with Sweet Home High School forestry students on the project.

"For many years, Linn County Small Woodlands has been looking for an appropriate way to both honor the memory of Bob Mealey, and stay true to his desire that the funds he set aside be used for community forestry education," said incoming chapter president Tim Otis.

"To this point, none of the proj-

ects we had considered really fit those goals," said Otis.

"When the board considered this opportunity to plant Willamette Valley Ponderosa pines in a Linn County Park, along with a kiosk describing the history of their preservation and development by Bob, we knew we had found a great project."

A committee of retired forester Joe Holmberg, Melcher Logging Co. partner Jim Cota and board member Larry Mauter is working on the project. Dozens of other board members and OSU Extension Service personnel have been involved through the years.

Included in the donation agreement with Linn County is a memorandum of understanding allowing LCSWA to maintain the signs and pine grove into the future.

## CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

**MONDAY-  
WEDNESDAY  
FEB. 22-24**

**Making and Maintaining Healthy Pasture (virtual):** 6-9 p.m. Livestock nutritionist and forage specialist Woody Lane will join Tualatin SWCD for a three-part, virtual workshop that will take a practical, scientific look at grazing and pasture management. This workshop is appropriate for both new and experienced managers of all

types of livestock. Details and registration on the TSWCD website: <https://bit.ly/3clXhOq>

**TUESDAY-  
WEDNESDAY  
FEB. 23-24**

**Cattle Industry Convention Winter Reboot (online):** National Cattlemen's Beef Association Winter Reboot sessions include an update on issues in Washington, D.C., and expectations with the new administration. Ten educational programs will be offered covering topics such as sustainability, as well as a technology tool introduction. A virtual marketplace will also be featured

**TUESDAY-THURSDAY  
FEB. 23-25**

**Spokane Ag Show (virtual):** Currently, we are finalizing the latest technology in virtual conferences and trade shows and expect recording breaking attendance at our virtual show in 2021. Website: <https://www.agshow.org/>

**THURSDAY MARCH 4**

**Applied Corrective & Preventive Action (online):** 1-5 p.m. This course will be interactive

and hands-on. Using exercises, actual scenarios, and group discussions, you will learn and use several tools. You will be ready to put your knowledge to work in your facility. We will explore common root cause analysis tools, including 5 whys, Failure Mode Effect Analysis, Fishbone diagram, cause & effect tools, and relationship diagrams. You will receive training and templates to use and modify as needed to create and maintain an effective corrective and preventative action program in your facility. Corrective actions are not just for food safety issues but all aspects of a food manufacturing facility.

Janna Hamlett, 208-731-9363, [jannahamlett@techhelp.org](mailto:jannahamlett@techhelp.org)

**TUESDAY, MARCH 9**

**Intentional Adulteration-Food Defense (online):** 8 a.m.-noon. This Food Defense Course will help you mitigate the risks and hazards of intentional contamination in food operations by protecting vulnerable elements in the agrifood chain and food production operations. We will explore Food Defense Plans to help you build barriers around vulnerable points to prohibit intentional adulteration. The course fee is \$495/each individual. Janna Hamlett, 208-731-9363, [jannahamlett@techhelp.org](mailto:jannahamlett@techhelp.org)



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