

Women in Ag

Promoting ranching and beef

By HEATHER SMOTH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — For Linda Henderson and her husband, Lynn, ranching is more than a business; it's a way of life.

With their son, Bryce, the Hendersons own a cow-calf operation east of Ellensburg, Wash. She grew up on a cattle ranch in this valley. Her husband has also been involved in agriculture all his life. They were married in 1987.

They raise hay for 250 cows and lease some pasture. Linda helps on the ranch with everything — including feeding and branding and does the bookwork.

Linda has been president of the Kittitas County Cattlewomen and president of the state Cattlewomen.

"I've enjoyed being able to



Linda Henderson with one of her horses.

Megan Zapel

promote agriculture and cattle and be a voice for producers who can't always go to meetings and participate in efforts to fend off some of the legal and environmental challenges that ranchers face," she said.

"We all need to tell our story.

"My husband and I both love ranching and taking care of the animals — and we are continually improving our genetics," she said.

It's a good life but a hard way to try to make a living, she said.

Farming is a 'complete life'

By HERB SWETT
For the Capital Press

GRAND RONDE, Ore. — Piper Klinger, who with her husband, Bob, raises sheep near the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation, was introduced to farming while a student at Ohio State University.

A native of rural southern Ohio, she did not grow up on a farm. Her father was a carpenter. While at Ohio State, she was a technician at the university's agricultural experiment station and involved in a study of cattle.

She then attended graduate school at Oregon State University, where she spent many hours at the university sheep barn testing lambs.

That is where she met Bob Klinger, who was the sheep farm manager. When they were married, she



Herb Swett/For the Capital Press

Piper Klinger with some of her ewes and lambs.

said, they lived rent-free in a house on campus that was built to house herdsmen.

They have been farming together since 1983 and for the past 20 years have owned their farm. They raise chickens for eggs on the side.

All their sheep are of the versatile Polypay breed. Their wool is sold to Pend-

leton Woolen Mills. The sheep fit for breeding go for that purpose on the farm or are sold.

"The thing I like most about farming is the animals and the outdoor life," Piper said. "It is a complete life for me. I grow my own vegetables, have plenty of eggs, and there's never a dull moment."

Ranching holistically

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

BLACKFOOT, Idaho — Wendy and Mark Pratt came from ranching backgrounds. Her family homesteaded in 1870 and Mark's family in 1904. She grew up on a ranch 10 miles away from their present operation near Blackfoot, Idaho. She and Mark married in 1990 and have 3 kids.

When her kids were young she stayed home with them.

"We got into low-stress handling of livestock, which was fun, and this added another dimension to what we were doing every day. Mark's mom raises border collies, and the dogs are an integral part of the ranch," Wendy said.

"My dad was an old-fashioned naturalist and I became focused on conservation ranching when Mark and I took our first course in holi-



Wendy Pratt with her ranch helpers.

Courtesy of Wendy Pratt

tic management 30 years ago," Wendy said.

Ranchers were battling a lot of bad press — a movement to get cattle off public lands, like "Cattle Free in '93" and other anti-cattle propaganda, she said.

"I hated to think our industry was hurting the

land. When we took a class in holistic management, it changed the way we look at the world. We can see how everything is connected and fits together. There is a social, financial and ecological element to our activities; that's the basic tenet of holistic management," she said.

'We farm soil, not plants'

By GEOFF PARKS
For the Capital Press

SANDY, Ore. — Lili Tova's history of working on farms in Oregon stretches back only 17 years, but she started "getting her hands in the dirt" as a child and then while gardening as a teenager.

Now, the 37-year-old is owner and manager of Flying Coyote Farm in Sandy, Ore., and farms her 37 acres using certified organic and biodynamic principles.

"Biodynamics means looking at the farm as an organism," Tova said. "It encourages you to be saving your own seeds and seeds from within your region as well as trying to import as little fertility from off-farm as possible. We use some of those principles and we're certified organic, but we're not totally biodynamic."

"We farm soil, not



Lili Tova, owner and manager of Flying Coyote Farm in Sandy, Ore., tends the mid-May growth of her greenhouse pea plants.

Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press

plants," she said, "so we try to grow the healthiest soil we can through our tillage practices, the type of fertilizers and tillage equipment we use."

"When I first started farming there were far fewer female-owned farms than there are now," she said. "I

feel very lucky that most of my farm mentors were women farmers, and that wasn't necessarily by design but by happenstance. I started farming just because I loved being outside, growing things and working hard. It's also something I feel I'm good at."

Ranch woman makes dream a reality

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — Marty Stingley and her husband, Russ, are ranchers near Ellensburg, Wash. She grew up in Kirkland, a suburb across the lake from Seattle, and came to Ellensburg to go to college.

"I planned to become a graphic designer or an architect," Marty said.

"Between classes I had a job at a local hotel restaurant, where I met my future father-in-law. He introduced me to his son, Russ, who was born and raised on a ranch. It was his dream to continue ranching," she said.

She joined him in making that dream a reality.

"We moved to our current place in 1978. It's just 160 acres and he was converting from sheep to cattle — and had to teach this city girl about farming and ranching," Marty said. "It was a hard time to try to get started on our own; the



Marty and Russ Stingley.

interest rates were high and we were trying to buy a place and equipment."

They had a neighbor with sheep who got flooded out that winter. He brought his 200 ewes to the Stingleys' corrals.

"We helped lamb those ewes and that was quite an experience for me," she said. "I had a crash course in ani-

mal husbandry."

She and Russ have four children — Ryan, Ruley and Rustin and a daughter, Katie. They now have 12 grandchildren, and another one on the way.

"Our kids now have their own ranches, but we all live within 5 miles of one another and run our cows together," Marty said.

Farmers market a way of life

By GAIL OBERST
For the Capital Press

INDEPENDENCE, Ore. — Hang out at Martha Walton's booth at the Independence Farmers Market on Monmouth Street and you're sure to hear all the latest news.

Martha, the market's manager, has been selling flower and vegetable plants here for 30 years, in addition to her job at Central School District. Friends stop by to unload their wishes and worries and walk away with hanging baskets of flowers and containers of garden starts.

Gossip and cash is fair trade for a woman whose greenhouse work begins when her school day ends. Her weekends — March through October — are busy at the market.

Martha grows almost all her plants in one 4,500-square-foot greenhouse on property she and her husband own on High-



Gail Oberst/For the Capital Press

Martha Walton was born into farming and has managed the Independence Farmers Market for 30 years.

way 51 north of Independence. In addition to dozens of hanging flower baskets, she sells 30 varieties of tomatoes, 18 varieties of peppers and dozens of other vegetable, herb and flower plants.

"I'm not sure how it happened," she said of her market management. The city asked her to do it, and she agreed. In retrospect, Martha's dedica-

tion has been a boon to a town with agricultural roots that run as deep as Martha's.

She was born the youngest of 14 children on a dairy near New Philadelphia, Ohio, a small town south of Akron.

"We sometimes counted 21 at the dinner table," Martha mused. "We all worked on farms and we worked hard."



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