

WESTBROOK ANGUS: A PIECE OF THE TAPESTRY

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Farming in Jefferson County has a rich history that we're just beginning to explore. Recently we've read stories about the Bishop's dairy farm and Roger Short's beef farm, both in Chimacum. The big story seems to be that in this county, as in many others, small family farmers are holding on by mule-headed determination but are losing ground to consolidation and the high costs of farming. The small stories are about what these farmers bring not only to the marketplace but to our community: continuity and commitment.

Julie Bogg's family farm is another piece of the complicated tapestry that is farming in our county. Her family has lived in the Chimacum Valley since the middle 1800s. Her grandparents bought the original 80-acre farm on West Valley Road, where Julie and her husband Chuck, who also works the farm (when he's not at his day job as Fire Chief ??), now live. Her grandfather Westergaard had a big chicken operation here. The farm passed to Julie's mother, who now leases 70 acres to Julie for her beef operation. Today, Julie raises Black Angus beef pastured on the home farm and leases 160-plus acres on Van Trojan.

On a drizzly morning in September Julie took Mindy Dwyer, our newsletter layout artist and illustrator, and me, for a walk on those Van Trojan acres in search of her cows. With a bucket of beer mash in hand, and calling "Boss!" to bring the cows in from whichever patch of grass they were working at, we followed a cow path past the remnants of old farms—abandoned farm equipment, unused farm sheds, an old cabin. After about a half-hour's walking, the cows ambled up from a meadow, 19 Black Angus all intent on one thing: that bucket of beer mash. Julie spread the contents over the ground and we stood back to watch as several came forward to breakfast on hops and barley, the byproduct of Water Street Brewing Company's beer brewing.

Julie told us about farming in her neighborhood as we walked back to the road, the cows following behind us single-file. She's been farming for much of her life, she explained; she also drove a school bus for 28 years and worked for the forestry department for 10 years. For more than 25 years she's been raising Black Angus cattle and providing artificial insemination (AI) services in the area. Her focus has been on developing breeding stock.

Currently, Julie raises around 60 head of cattle. She's been selling beef by the side directly to customers for years; recently she's started selling Westbrook Angus packaged beef to The Food Co-op, adding to our local beef mix. Her cattle are raised on grass and finished on hay and a grain mix that contains no animal products. She also supplements their diet with beer mash that's local and organic, full of vitamins and high in protein. The beef isn't certified organic, but cattle aren't fed any antibiotics or injected with any hormones. "That's just always been our practice," Julie explained. The farm also raises its own hay, a wild grass mix that's fed to the cattle.

As we stood talking on her porch at the end of the interview, Julie pointed out the old slaughterhouse across Chimacum Valley where local cattle were once brought to slaughter. Today, her cows are trucked to a USDA inspected facility in Basin City. She explained that the mobile slaughter unit local beef farmers have been anticipating has hit a snag—the compression unit wasn't strong enough to cool processed beef. It's back to the drawing board for the time being. The complications implicit in either shipping cattle long distances for slaughter or relying on large mobile units to come to a nearby farm got us thinking about that old slaughterhouse and the by-gone farming infrastructure that's so missed now.

What's the future for Julie Bogg's farm? Julie told me that neither of her two kids, a son and a daughter, are interested in farming. They have lives in other places they're very happy with. Just as we got started, in fact, Julie shared with us the news that her daughter-in-law had just become a U.S. citizen. What seems certain is that Julie loves what she does and does it with great passion. As we walked with the cows, she offered this piece of advice: "Do what's your passion to succeed."