

# WORKING TOGETHER

## Mother/daughter cattle ranchers



SHAY GRAVES/  
Tribune  
Louise (bottom) and Sandra Korb of Burr Oak, Kan., are a mother/daughter team raising purebred Hereford cattle. Sandra returned to the ranch from a job in Chicago after her father passed away to help Louise run the operation.

### A ranching family

SHAY GRAVES  
Hastings Tribune

**L**ouise and Sandra Korb are bucking the traditional ranching way. It is often a father and son who run a family farm, but for the past 11 years, the mother/daughter team of Louise and Sandra have been the owners and managers of this Hereford ranch.

The Korb family has been raising cattle in Jewell County since 1870.

Sandra's grandfather, R.J. Korb, registered a Hereford bull born in 1933.

Louise married Boyd Korb in 1943. Her father had a lifetime membership to the American Hereford Association.

"When my husband and I got married, he only had a few Hereford heifers and the herd grew from there," Louise said.

Louise and Boyd showed cattle during the late 1950s and early 1960s. They attended state fairs, district shows and even the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

At many of those shows, they were competing against rich oil and cattle business people, Louise said.

"Mom and Dad really made the Hereford cattle more popular by showing them in Denver and in a lot of shows," Sandra said. "They made the cattle more valuable, and they were able to sell some for big money at the time."

Louise also said that she and Boyd did everything together on the farm.

"When my husband was still alive, we had his and hers tractors," Louise said.

They usually worked 14- to 16-hour days before Louise would come home, fix supper and clean the house.

Sandra said that the farm where the ranch is currently located was purchased by her parents with money they raised from their cattle business.

"They started all the windbreaks," Sandra continued. "We've just built on since I've been back. This place has always been a work in progress."

After Boyd died in 1992, Sandra, the oldest of three children, moved home to help her mom continue the family business.

Before returning to the ranch, Sandra had been working for a fashion magazine in Chicago.

She graduated from Kansas State University with a major in English Literature.

After teaching for a period of time, Sandra

moved to Chicago, where she worked as a columnist, writer and editor.

Sandra had a simple reason for coming home. "When there is a death, there is major upheaval with a family business as to what will be done," she said. "That was the motivating factor to try to carry on."

Part of coming back to the farm was coming back to the career that she had dreamed of as a child.

"I've always loved animals," she said.

As a child, Sandra would create a Hereford newsletter that she would sell to her father each month for a quarter.

So after years in the magazine business, Sandra came home to fulfill the second half of that childhood dream — as a cattle rancher.

Louise had many reasons to be thrilled when Sandra came home. Louise knew that she would not be able to run the ranch by herself, but she was still hesitant.

"I thought it was great, I just wondered if she would stay," Louise said.

"She still wonders that," Sandra joked. "I guess she didn't think I'd make it here."

With the change in business for the two also came a change in their relationship.

"Now we're not just mother and daughter. We're business partners," Sandra said. "And trust me, when you're in business with someone you get very well acquainted."

Sandra has always been impressed by her mother's work ethic and willingness to learn new things.

"I've been blessed with good health and high energy," Louise said. "She's been good for me. When she came back, she kept me learning more."

Said Sandra: "I do give her credit because I watch other people her age, and with a lot of them where they advance to at a certain age is where they want to stay. Much to her credit, she is always willing to explore and try new things."

### Staying up to date

SHAY GRAVES  
Hastings Tribune

**B**URR OAK, Kan. — Louise and Sandra Korb are more than just a mother and daughter. They are also business partners. The Korbs run their small Hereford cattle herd on a ranch near here that has been in the family for 130 years. They raise their cattle

without the aid of harvested grains, relying on forages year-round.

Despite the fact that the Korbs do not feed their cattle grains, their cattle still compete in the market with those that are fed grain. Sandra said that their animals are still considered to be very competitive against cattle from both the United States and Canada.

"We probably are the only herd in North America that reports for total herd performance that only feeds our animals forages," Sandra said.

Sandra told of a man from Oklahoma who bought several heifers from them.

"He told us that they gained six pounds a day," Sandra laughed. "We just interpreted that meant he was happy with their rate of gain."

She attributes some of their possible rate-of-gain to the fact that they were raised on forages. The man put them on a wheat pasture so that would have also contributed to big gains, she said.

Currently, the Korbs have 20 heifers that they plan to breed in the spring. At that time, they plan to be delivering around 60 new calves.

They also have 20 replacement bulls up for sale. She said that they do not necessarily feed their cattle only forage as a selling point.

They do sell some grass-fed beef to individuals for food, but not very much.

"We're afraid that if we advertised we would

have a higher demand than our supply," Sandra said.

Most of the animals they do sell are through word-of-mouth advertisement.

Sandra and Louise basically run the ranch completely on their own. They do have two helpers around for an occasional hand, when needed.

There is one man from Burr Oak that gives them muscle when needed, Louise said. He helps to build fence and move cattle.

During calving, the two have a neighbor who helps out if any trouble arises — something their veterinarian appreciates, considering that he would have to drive all the way from Smith Center.

"We try to keep it as much as possible a low cost input and minimum labor input operation," Sandra said.

Even though she spent many years working for a fashion magazine, Sandra is very knowledgeable about the cattle that she raises.

"I'm a professional student," she said. "It's all about the challenge. Raising cattle without keeping data would bore me."

Sandra and Louise have gone to several grazing schools to learn more about grazing their cattle more efficiently.

Sandra has also gone to animal nutrition seminars and other classes to learn more.

With any spare time that the two women do have left, they read numerous publications on a variety of topics relating to cattle.

"It's a learning experience, but it's fun," Louise said with a smile.

With a strong drive, Sandra sees the adventure and challenge as the parts she truly loves.

"If I'm going to do something, I want to do it well," she said. "I am a person who likes to think outside the box."

Some of those ideas, Sandra has incorporated into the running of the ranch.

Before Sandra came back to the farm, the calving was done in the lot, often at night.

"I find it to be more successful to do calving in the pasture where they can move around," Sandra said.

They have also started feeding at night, which many say promotes calving during the day.

Overall, Sandra and Louise are proud of the operation they run, even with its struggles.

"One of the hardest things to maintain is balance in life and in raising cattle," Sandra said.



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