

Matthew George Young Stockman Award 2014



Matthew George, Stockyard Hill, Victoria was tragically killed in a car accident in 2007, at 21 years of age.

His absolute love of animals, thirst for knowledge and passion for breeding was coupled with his dream to travel overseas to study developments in beef cattle breeding and to bring this knowledge back to Australia to enhance herds by sharing this knowledge with fellow breeders.

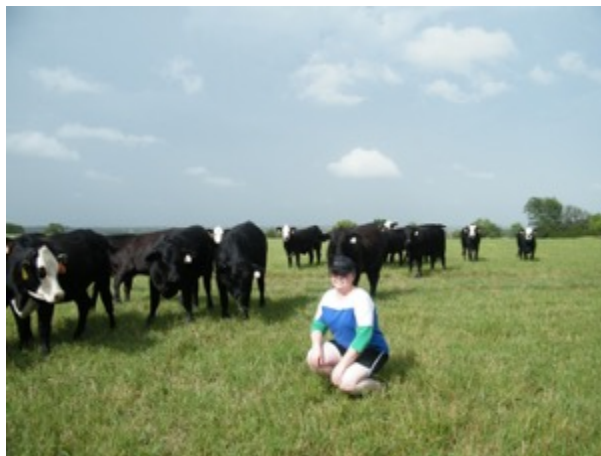
The Matthew George Young Stockman Award (MGYSA) was established in 2008 as a sub-fund of The Ballarat Foundation to allow young breeders, aged 18 to 25 years, the opportunity to live out Matthew's dream.

The annual award recipient is announced annually at the Royal Melbourne Show. Jackie Elliott was the recipient of 2014 award and as the winner she was presented with a custom made belt buckle.

Here's her story of her travels and time spent in America.

Education of Youth in Beef Practices

My name is Jackie Elliott; I was born and raised on a fifth generation beef and sheep property in central Victoria. I work in South West Victoria, providing livestock producers with farm supplies and animal health on farm and in store for Western AG. I spend most of my spare time on my parent's farm at Byaduk, Victoria. I am 23 years old and have recently returned home from an amazing beef industry study tour of North America after being the successful recipient of the 2014 Matthew George Young Stockman Award (MGYSA), a sub fund of The Ballarat Foundation.



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Why Beef production is a part of my life.

In January 2011, my family relocated to the Western District of Victoria, our property Weerangourt East is situated at Byaduk and currently runs our stud and commercial herd of 100 Brangus, Angus and Ultra Black cattle along with 800 first cross ewes producing 1200 prime lambs annually on our 620 acre property.

At seven, I received my first show calf, a cross bred poddy heifer from the neighbours, after her mother died. I dragged that calf around in a horse halter and knew nothing about 'ring craft'!

Fifteen years later, with a passion to explore opportunities in livestock production, it was time I took a trip to the United States. I was excited to meet and learn from outstanding leaders of junior shows who work to promote education of young professionals in the Beef Industry.



What made my trip possible?

In September 2014, I was awarded the prestigious Matthew George Young Stockman Award, for displaying excellence in Agricultural Show participation and involvement in my community. The MGYSA was established for young breeders, ages 18 to 25 years, to have the opportunity to live the dream of Matthew George – travel overseas to study developments in beef cattle breeding to bring this knowledge back to Australia to enhance Australian herds. The award offers an annual recipient the opportunity to travel overseas, become an ambassador for the industry, study beef cattle breeding programs, developments and practices, and then share their new-found knowledge to advance the beef cattle industry of Australia.

My personal reason for applying for the MGYSA was the opportunity to expand my knowledge and broaden my horizons by experiencing the Beef Industry outside of Australia. I knew I was ready to learn and absorb all the information I could embrace from the North American Beef Industry. My thirst for knowledge drove me to want to find out all I could about everything from breeding to showing, selection to management practices. I was so excited to be able to bring that knowledge home to use on our own enterprise as well as to educate and share with others in our Australian industry. My wish from this opportunity was to have the experience and training to be able to give back through education and resources to anyone who wants to know about beef production and what is available to assist them in being the best stockman.

Matthews's parents and other members of the judging panel, believed in my dedication and passion to travel to the United States and undertake a Beef Industry study tour.

The award included \$5000 to spend on a three month international tour of personal choice. The award creates the opportunity to utilize the money towards travel, insurance and events. It encourages the recipient to stay with host families while on tour. I knew where I wanted to go, the most difficult part was picking when.



Getting Prepared for the Trip

With it being my first time out of Australia, I had to start from scratch. This included a Passport and suitcase! But more importantly - finding and securing host families. The MGYSAs encourages host families as a way to not only curb some costs of accommodation, but also as a highly important way to interact on a more personal atmosphere with those involved in the industry.

Once I locked in the travel dates, additional event searches led me to the Texas State Junior Brangus Show and the National Junior Brangus Show. But I needed a host family to stay with for both junior shows as well as perhaps spending time on their ranch. I started looking online for Brangus Breeders, but then decided to open the opportunity to someone who would not normally have the opportunity to host an international guest. I posted a note on the TJBBA Facebook page, including information about myself, the MGYSAs, how I could contribute to their family and operation as well as reciprocate the hospitality should they visit Australia. To my surprise, I received a quick response from David Parkey. David Parkey and his family kept in touch and helped achieve my dream of being a part of a team attending Brangus events. Putting that post on Facebook was definitely the best thing I did!



Where My Tour Took Me

I flew out of Australia on June 11, 2015. I spent my first night in Los Angeles, having to keep looking out the window to see if it was 'am or pm'. My first morning in LA, I was to get the shuttle bus from the hotel to South West airlines at LAX (the biggest airport I have ever been to). Buck and Sidney Thomason of Indian Hills Brangus collected me from the airport in Dallas, Texas and we arrived at their beautiful home in Cranfills Gap just before dusk. After no sleep for about two days it was an

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early night! Buck became my personal tour guide of Bosque County and Indian Hills Ranch. I experienced my first ever "Crawfish Boil" which are known as "Yabbies" in 'Straya (Pictured below)! I was also fortunate to cook up a leg of lamb, from the winning lamb at the county fair that Buck brought and the funds made go to the youth. We shared the lamb roast with their neighbour and their guests, Brangus breeders from Paraguay. My family eats home grown lamb several nights a week, so I learnt from a young age how to cook a good lamb roast with all the trimmings! Although we were unable to buy pumpkin, because its only available at Halloween unless you purchase is in a 'can'.



Indian Hills had some beautiful heifers; I wondered how I could fit some in my suitcase! I spent my days in the truck tripping around to Embryo Clinics, Sale Barns, Vets, Feed Stores and the close town of Hamilton. Hamilton was one of my favourites because it's the same name as our closest town at home! Buck and I had the most wonderful conversations about what I can do to promote young people in the Brangus breed and other breeds in Australia. Indian Hills has a long history of supporting youth programs including a painting that hangs on the wall of their magnificent living room that the Thomason's brought in an auction at the Brangus World Congress. Proceeds from that auction went to support youth in Australia.

Buck arranged other trips for me while I stayed with them including a visit to an Angus Ranch and a Santa Gertrudis breeder. In Australia we call them Santas, but in Texas they call them Gerts - so confusing! Additionally, I had the opportunity to visit a dairy farm that also breeds registered Brangus cattle. David and Jodi Jackson hosted me for a day to visit their ranch and see how a dairy is run in Texas.

Finally, mid-June arrived and it was a nervous trip in the truck with Buck to a BBQ house in Clifton to meet David Parkey, his wife Vanessa and their children Victoria (16), Isabelle (7) and Whit (6). They picked me up for a road trip to Bryan, Texas, for the Texas State Junior Brangus Show.

It is safe to say the Parkey family is more than just ranchers in Archer County, they are the most beautiful family that went above and beyond my expectations of hospitality! Their team of three heifers and Victoria's first bred and owned bull allowed me the opportunity to jump in and help with everything from feeding to preparing cattle for the ring! The State Show was Isabelle's first show and she did an incredible job at all the competitions and especially showmanship with a difficult heifer, Pearl. On a side note - I fell in love with Pearl, and I had the honour to show her at the Brangus Futurity at Duncan, Oklahoma (Pictured below with Victoria, Vanessa, Isabelle).

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Being a part of the State Show gave me a huge insight to see how things are done the American way - engaging young people, educating them to grow and providing them with so much information to take home. The extra competitions such as photography, public speaking and digital art gave me a few ideas to take home to be used for our junior shows. I was the high bidder on two Yeti Cups supporting the juniors in the silent auction. The TJBBA also provided me with a souvenir t-shirt and steel design that now sits on my kitchen window at home!

Being part of the Parkey team was extremely rewarding. Victoria (pictured below) has to be the most determined and passionate young cattle enthusiast I have ever met. Her hard work paid off as she earned Senior Champion All Round for the State show. Another accomplishment for her came during my stay with the family; Victoria (Pictured below) was announced as a Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador. I am extremely excited that Victoria is planning on visiting Australia in 2018 for Beef Australia and I cannot wait to reciprocate her family's hospitality and show her around my State and Country!



One afternoon while all the show participants had interviews on for awards, I was lucky enough to spend time with Darryl McDonald, looking at some spectacular Red Brangus on his ranch just a few minutes from town.

The Parkey Family hosted me again for the National Junior Brangus Show (NJBS) in Duncan, Oklahoma. It was a big week with so much to see and so much to remember. I took notes most days to make sure I did not forget anything! Tyler and Jessica Dean, Jessica Johnston, Rachel Davis and the IJBBA Board of Directors were so welcoming and made me feel very involved in the event! I was given another souvenir shirt and bag of novelties to take home. I participated in the NJBS Silent Auction and was winning bidder on a wood carved photo frame that now holds a professional photo of the Parkey family and I with a winning heifer (Pictured below)!

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I stayed with the Parkey's for most of July on their Ranch. For the first part they got too much rain, but it is never too much when they had not seen it for so long! All the rain made it hard to access paddocks to view the cattle, so we did some other fun outings, like my first baseball game at Arlington watching the Texas Rangers in action (Pictured below). We visited the most amazing western clothing stores and of course Bass Pro Shop!



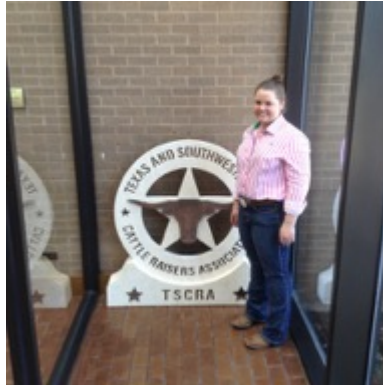
I had a week to fill so I headed to San Antonio to stay with Vanessa's parents, Franklin and Kathleene Runnells. Kathleene and I spent a couple of days eating plenty of Mexican food and sight-seeing at the Alamo and River Walk. I even got to step my feet in the Frio River. Kathleene writes a column for the local Devine News and she did a story of my trip the week I was hosted with her family. The Runnells planned a day for me to visit Texas White Tail Ranch, a hunting ranch and breeding facility for attractive Deere. I was gifted a antler to take home (Pictured below).



Another exciting event while staying with the Parkey's was an event for young producers with the Texas Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) in Fort Worth, Texas. It turned out to be the best unplanned event for my trip as I easily won the furthest travelled award! Prior to the event David took me to visit the TCU Ranch Managers office to learn more about the great program they offer. I met some wonderful people at the Young Leadership Conference, learning so much about

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Ben E. Keith and their operation, careers and leadership in the Beef industry and most importantly gaining valuable contacts while making new friends.



The Parkey's sent me on my way to a new host family in David's truck. It was my first long trip on the other side of the road! I arrived at Farris Ranching Company in Tuscola, Texas, home of Danny and Mary Beth Farris, where Danny greeted me with a hug! With that we set off to check out the Brangus cattle that the Farris family has been breeding for thirty years. The cattle Danny runs were very impressive and reminded me of home. Danny showed me new reasons why Brangus cattle are the best performers especially in his harsher environment. I loved my one night trip so much, it turned into two! Their son, Payton Farris, is a leather crafter and I am now the proud owner of a hand crafted belt as a gift from the Farris family to go with my MGYS A Buckle. I was told "You can't leave Texas without a handmade belt!"



August brought the time for me head off on my next adventure to College Station, Texas. I met up with my brother, Geordie, and we were hosted by Wes Klett, the CEO of Anipro. Geordie and I attended the Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course. My favourite session was the Carcass Evaluation (Pictured below) where we learned how Americans grade carcasses using different techniques. I also enjoyed listening to the speakers talk on disease management and understanding your cow herd.



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Geordie was very impressed with the speech presented from Dr. Tommy Perkins of IBBA on EPDs, total herd recording and genomics in the United States Brangus breed and how the IBBA can help Brangus producers. This led Geordie to discuss our membership options with Dr. Perkins as Australian Brangus Breeders. We are now members of the International Brangus Breeders Association (IBBA), we plan to utilize our IBBA membership to report all calves from now on, so we can have a better understanding of our herd with a bigger data base to see where we can improve our breeding (Foundation Dam of Corumbene pictured below).



Following the Short Course, Geordie and I took a road trip to visit Mike Weathers, a Genetrust partner in Columbus, Texas. While there we looked for potential bloodlines to put to use in Australia. We then travelled to CRI GeneX in Strafford, Missouri, to view Angus and Brangus Bulls. It was quite an experience as we had the opportunity to see a bull in the flesh (Mound Creek) that we purchased semen from for our 2015 joining (we will see calves on the ground in August 2016).



Geordie and I took a couple of days to visit some friends that Geordie stayed with on his last trip to Texas in 2010. JD Hudgins (Locke Division) is where we spent two nights to take a look at world leaders in Brahman breeding (Grey Brahms pictured above).



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Detroit, Texas, was my next stop to visit Alexis Cowan (Alexis and I pictured below) and her family at Cowan Cattle Company. I met Alexis at the TSCRA event in Fort Worth, Texas, and she invited me back to stay with them. The Cowans showed me around their ranch and we visited the new sale barn at Paris, Texas. It was a very neat facility! We also spent a day at Schmidt Farms, another Genetrust partner, to see heifers and bulls (Pictured above)! Their breeders were beautiful animals and I really enjoyed seeing the new Ultrablack calves.



Alexis is a very talented artist, who loves the Brangus breed. I commissioned Alexis to hand draw a custom print of my family farm from photos at our property of a Brangus cow and calf, first cross ewes and her lambs and our beloved kelpie dog. Geordie, Annie (Sister) and I gave this to Mum and Dad for their combined 50th Birthdays and 25th Wedding Anniversary in January 2016.



Throughout my three month tour of the Beef Industry of the United States, I also spent two weeks travelling to Snake River Ranch in Wyoming to be hosted by Lance and Donna Johnsen and stayed a night with Anipro Distributers Greg and Cindy Bumgarner in Belt, Montana. I got to experience driving solo to Yellowstone National Park (Pictured below), tackling the Bear Tooth Pass (Pictured above). Driving the Bear Tooth pass was something that personally changed my views on travel and how much value it adds to life.



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I finished my trip with the Robinson Family in Oregon, celebrated my 23rd Birthday on a ranch riding horses, touring Hells Canyon and experienced what professional ropers do in one weekend; attend three rodeos in 24 hours.



Since returning home, I have a whole new reason to remind me why working in the Agricultural Industry is brilliant. Agriculture offers young people more opportunities and each day is different. Agriculture allows its youth to create networks with likeminded people across the world while having industry leaders to learn from.

After travelling around the United States viewing all types of beef breeds, there is definitely nothing that beats coming home to see your own Brangus herd! After three months away and hundreds of miles of travel, I am convinced that Brangus Cattle are the true beef performers - no matter where in the world you are.

The End

