

Meet the New BCCA President:

Larry Garrett, Vanderhoof, B.C.



Larry Garrett was acclaimed BC Cattlemen's Association President at the Annual General Meeting in Smithers, B.C. this past June, becoming the Association's 42nd President. Even before joining the Board of Directors, Larry served as the Chair of the Livestock Industry Protection Committee and his participation in the Association has grown from there. Like many before him, Larry's motivation to take on the role of President is his desire to give back to the industry.

They Stayed for the Water: Family History and Ranch Succession

Larry's family began ranching in Canada in the 1950s, emigrating from Oregon to British Columbia in search of suitable land. George and Tiny Garrett came from the desert of Oregon and when they came upon this ranch in Vanderhoof, "they were just in love with all this water," says Larry. In 1958, Larry's parents purchased what is now known as Garrett Ranches Ltd. from Fred Wright. Wright, a blacksmith originally from England, established the ranch in 1916.

Larry ranches with his wife, Karen Markle, and one of his three daughters, Jeannie. Jeannie plans to take over the ranch one day. "We are in the midst of succession," says Larry. "My belief has always been whichever kid comes home gets the ranch." As part of the requirements for ranch succession, Jeannie has completed a five-year apprenticeship on the ranch, working alongside Larry learning the ropes of the ranch operation. "She is very passionate about the ranching operation. She's got the cow thing figured out, now she just needs to figure out how to fix things," chuckles Larry. Adding, "nowadays, a lot of this stuff, you just call a mechanic anyway."

For the rest of Larry and Karen's blended family their careers have taken them to places beyond Vanderhoof. Larry's oldest daughter, Laura, is a nurse in Red Deer and his youngest daughter, Donna, just opened a restaurant in Kelowna. Karen also has two children that live off the ranch: Judd a computer technician in Salmon Arm and Coji a cabinetmaker in Kamloops.

The Ranch Operation: Cattle & Timber

Over the years, Larry has fine-tuned and customized his ranch operation to his land base. "One of the things I have learned, travelling around the world, is that you need to figure out how you fit in as quick

as you can,” says Larry. Garrett Ranches Ltd. is a cow-calf operation that has developed a model of backgrounding and retained ownership.

Larry explains that their range is poor and the calves don't weigh much when they come home. Since they can put up some good quality hay and have access to good meadows and pasture closer to home, they background all their calves through the winter. “We've got into a system where we use our really good hay and feed our calves. We background the calves and bring them up to some target weights,” says Larry. Come spring, they sell some light heifers and go to grass with their steers. Replacement heifers are turned out for 30 – 35 days with the bulls; heifers are preg-checked in September and “then we have a batch of heifers we sell in mid September,” explains Larry. “We keep about 100 to 120 heifers and we get about an 80 percent conception rate in 30 days.”

Timber also plays a role in the ranch operation today. Larry explains that when his dad bought the ranch they cleared the land that was easy and left the big timber and the rocky pieces of land in trees. The land left in trees does not offer much value for grazing so it made sense to leave it in trees.

“We didn't do any real logging until we were forced into it with the beetles,” says Larry. His father bought into the idea of sustained yield where, as Larry explains, you only harvest a bit of timber each year or when you needed the income. In hindsight, he says it was a bit of a mistake not to log earlier but at the time, cattle were the focus. Now, trees are part of the ranch mosaic and Larry has placed a greater emphasis on his timber operation.

Ranching is the cure for boredom.

“I've done a bit of psychology 101 on myself and the thing I actually enjoy about ranching is I get bored easy,” says Larry. “I have learnt that one of the things about ranching is you never know what your going to do when you walk out the door in the morning. You know what you are going to try to do. You're going try to bale some hay or go fix some fence but you had better be ready for a surprise!”

BCCA Involvement

In 2008, the BCCA President at the time, Roland Baumann, “twisted my arm” says Larry to become involved with BCCA as the Chair of the Livestock Industry Protection Committee. “Once I got involved, there was some other people who



Cattle in the feedlot



Horse and calving barns



Larry's daughter Jeannie



encouraged me to put my name in to be president.” The idea resonated with Larry and he was elected to Vice President in 2016 and acclaimed to President this past June. Larry has also represented B.C. on the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency between 2012 and 2017.

Value Added: BCCA

Since becoming involved in the provincial association, Larry has had his eyes opened to the value the association offers its members and the industry as a whole both provincially and nationally. “I don’t think anybody realizes all the stuff BCCA does,” says Larry. He offers traceability as an example of the value of BCCA. “If we didn’t have our organization, traceability would be forced on us and it would be totally unworkable. It would have been total chaos. There are a lot of guys that have hounded away at that for hours and hours to make it something that is workable. It is still going to make people unhappy, but I think it is to a point that it will work.”

Going Forward

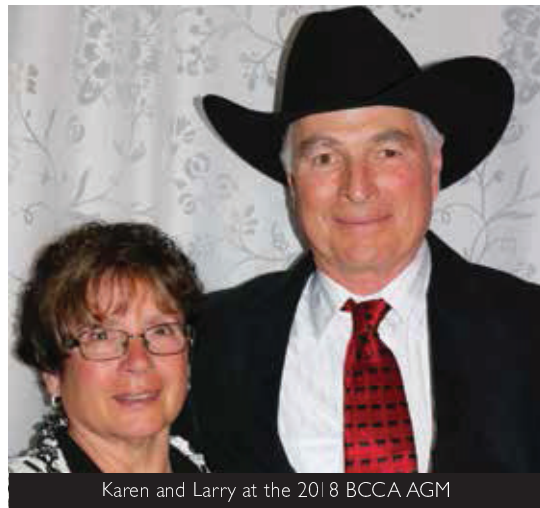
Larry also sees that we are in a different time with new challenges

facing the industry. “We are in a new world here, I think we all need to be ready to roll with the changes,” says Larry. Meeting consumer wants (not needs, emphasizes Larry), will be one of the biggest hurdles the industry must overcome. Larry believes that the beef industry offers a good product, both nutritionally and environmentally, and that the Association can help ranchers tell their story and meet the critics and detractors head on. The biggest opportunity for our industry says Larry, “people will start realizing the benefits of meat and recognize the ruminant as the most amazing animal on earth.”

BCCA will be putting some resources together to tell our story and build our public trust by collaborating with the national Public Trust initiative and the BC Agriculture Council program.

See you this fall!

One of the things Larry is most committed to is hearing from the BCCA members. During his term as president, he plans to attend regional association meetings across the province. “I have committed to go to as many as I can,” says Larry. “I want to come and hear what our members have to say.”



Karen and Larry at the 2018 BCCA AGM



Jeannie