

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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## Significant Women in Agriculture Highlight: Barbara Jacques

A life fully devoted reaps fully deserved rewards.

Barbara Jacques, an Oklahoma native and current Shidler resident, has fully devoted her life to promoting and educating others about the agricultural industry.

“I was one of these kids that grew up and just wanted to be on my horse every day, all day long,” Jacques recalls. “If I got in trouble, my punishment was to be grounded off my horse, which was the most painful thing my parents could have ever done.”

She laughed.

Barbara grew up around agriculture but didn’t become completely consumed by it until she married a full-time rancher, Dave Jacques, in 1979. Together, the two established Seven D Ranch, which consists of a cow-calf operation, stocker cattle and a small hay operation. The Jacques continue to manage a cowherd and stocker operation for Dave’s parents as well.

“I think that was something that was just in my blood,” she said. “I can’t imagine that I would’ve ever married anyone who wasn’t in agriculture because that was what I loved and where I wanted my life to be.”

Jacques first developed a passion for teaching others about agriculture when she went to college and was surprised to learn many people did not have an understanding or appreciation for an industry that impacted their daily lives.

“I realized it is very important for those of us in agriculture to always try to be educating the people who aren’t in agriculture,” Jacques said. “Everyone has basic needs of food, water, clothing, and shelter. They need to understand that agriculture provides all of these things for them every day.”

## **Contributions**

In 2012, Jacques was appointed to serve on the Cattlemen's Beef Board by Tom Vilsack, U.S. Secretary of the Agriculture at the time. During her six-year term, she has served as both a committee chair and an executive committee member for the board.

"I'm very proud to have had the opportunity to serve on Cattlemen's Beef Board," she said. "I think that is a very important job. The beef board is a driving force that propels our industry forward both home and abroad."

The Cattlemen's Beef Board consists of 100 members who oversee the Beef Checkoff. In addition to research and promotion within the U.S., the checkoff works hard to put American beef on the global map, which a single producer would struggle to do alone.

"Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers live outside of United States," Jacques said, "so I think it is of the utmost importance for us to be able to market our products on a global level."

Jacques considers this honor to have been the most noteworthy of her contributions to agriculture, but says that her work with children through local, state and national cattlemen's associations has been equally significant to her.

Jacques' devotion to these organizations and the agricultural industry is undeniable. She served as the Beef in Curriculum chair for the American National CattleWomen, an Oklahoma co-chair for the National Beef Ambassador Contest, a National Beef Cook-off committee member, and an executive committee member for the Oklahoma CattleWomen for 10 years.

Additionally, she has served as president and vice president of the Oklahoma CattleWomen, president of the Osage County CattleWomen, and was named Oklahoma CattleWoman of the year in 2011.

### **Outreach**

Jacques found a great avenue to combine her passion for children and love for agriculture by serving on the advisory council of the highly successful Ag in the Classroom program.

On top of being involved on the ranch, Barbara taught art in public schools for over seven years, where she incorporated agriculture in her lessons. Barbara left public school to serve as a curriculum specialist and course developer for a private education company for eight years. She and her husband now own the Salt Creek Gallery & Marketplace in Pawhuska, where she works as a designer and silversmith.

Her latest endeavor includes hand-engraved western belt buckles and jewelry, fine art, clothing, handmade crafts made by local people and "cream of the crop" Oklahoma-made food products.

“We have a lot of people from all over the world coming into Pawhuska,” she said, “and I think if they want to take home some Osage County pecans or some Oklahoma honey or pepper jelly, then I think that’s a great way to showcase the outstanding products that we have in our state.”

Many of her customers are agriculturalists from the area, but numerous people from across the state and nation visit the gallery. Jacques feels she is teaching others about agriculture through her business and spends time with customers answering questions about the industry.

Heather Buckmaster, a friend and colleague of Jacques, describes her as a leader in the industry.

“While working on the ranch, taking care of her family, running an art gallery and producing beautiful jewelry, she also finds the time to advocate for agriculture literacy within our schools and serve in national leadership positions as a volunteer for the beef industry. She is an Agriculture Wonder Woman who I admire tremendously,” Buckmaster said.

When asked what inspired her to dive into agriculture and serve others, Jacques said it was never a conscious decision.

“It was just something that comes from the very core of my being, from my heart,” she said.

The tone of her voice encompassing a whirlwind of emotion made her passion for agriculture even more evident.

“Every year that goes by there’s a bigger need than there was the year before to make people understand,” she said. “We have to have agriculture.”

At 61, Jacques still has goals set to impact agriculture. She is already pushing for a children’s agriculture museum in the state and is planning to make handouts using Ag in the Classroom lessons to give out at her store.

Her daughters have also chosen to pursue agriculture.

“You can just tell that it’s in their blood,” she said, in hopes that her grandchildren will become the fifth generation of agriculturalists in her family.

Buckmaster describes her as a “tireless supporter of agriculture literacy.”

When asked about this statement, Jacques said with that same emotion, “This is so important to me. It’s just who I am. I will stop trying to teach people about agriculture on the day that I die.”

Barbara Jacques has truly lived a life fully devoted to agriculture, and both she and the industry have reaped the rewards of her dedication.

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**Editor's note:** This is part of a continuing series of stories on Significant Women in Oklahoma Agriculture. The project is a collaborative program between the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry and Oklahoma State University to recognize and honor the impact of countless women across all 77 counties of the state, from all aspects and areas of the agricultural industry. The honorees were nominated by their peers and selected by a committee of 14 industry professionals.



Photo caption: Barbara Jacques, recognized in the Significant Women in Oklahoma Agriculture series, has lived a life fully devoted to agriculture. Photo credit: Reflections Photography