

Darlene Rotta - 2011

According to friends and peers, Rotta has been a dedicated and devoted member of the SLO County CattleWomen since she joined the group in 1986.

When Rotta retired from teaching she returned to her roots at her family's ranch, Rotta Ranch situated in Huasna Valley, located southeast of Arroyo Grande. Her grandparents emigrated to the U.S. from Italy. Rotta and her sister Jean specialize in the sale of Angus range bulls.

In 1957 Rotta left her family's ranch to pursue a career in education after graduating from San Jose State with a degree in physical education. She would go on to teach for a whopping three decades.

According to friends, Rotta began her first four years in the field at Ripon Union High and the last 26 years at San Lorenzo Valley High. She taught a range of subjects including physical education, English, math, library, reading, driver's education and typing.

Darlene was born to Sam and Annie Rotta in Santa Barbara, then moved to Santa Maria when she was very young. Her family lived on a dairy until she entered her junior year in high school. When her parents bought a cattle ranch in the Huasna Valley, the family relocated for good.

Both Darlene and Jean are charter members of the first 4-H Club in Santa Maria. Darlene was also a Santa Barbara County All-Star and held club offices. In addition, she showed dairy cattle, steers and lambs per Farm Bureau officials.

According to friends and family, Rotta's pride and joy was raising one of the first 4-H guide dogs in the state. Her dog was the K-9 Valedictorian of her class. Rotta and her family enjoyed attending the graduation and meeting the guide dog's new owner.

Darlene has served as Membership Chair of the SLO CattleWomen for six years, working to build the group to have the largest state and national membership. Fellow members stated that due to Rotta's firm dedication to CattleWomen in the cattle industry, she was selected as Cow Belle Mom last year.

Darlene found her special place in CattleWomen by helping with fourth-grade field trips at three locations: Paso Robles, Madonna Inn and F. McLintock's. Fellow members said that when Rotta first started she was told that one class did not come to the field trip because the children lacked discipline. Rotta reportedly used her teaching experience and worked hard to convince the teacher to allow the fourth graders to attend the event. As the story goes, the teacher agreed, and the group now participates every year. Darlene has served as Event Chair for twelve years and said she'd like to thank all of the people who continue to help her with the project annually.

Another educational area where Darlene donates her time centers on helping with The Great AGventure sponsored by the San Luis Obispo County Agriculture Education Committee. Rotta has worked at the educational Paso Robles based event for fourth graders for several years.

Friends say Darlene would do anything to help kids, whether it comes down to giving her time or helping the youth earn money for scholarships. Friends also sang Rotta's praises when it comes to local county fairs, where she is known as a great supporter of children during auctions and livestock activities.

According to her peers, "Darlene says cattle work is in her blood." Congratulations Darlene!