KIRBY, WV — Once a farmer, always a farmer — and for one West Virginia woman farming is her passion. For the past 21 years, professor Beth Loy, who has a doctorate in economics, has worked at West Virginia University.

Her beginnings were a bit different. She grew up spending most of her time on the 225-acre farm owned by her grandparents Errol “EB” and Glenn Loy of Kirby.

That West Virginia century farm has been in the family since 1852, changing “Loy” hands for six generations.

“As a child I spent all my time with my grandparents. I got off the school bus there every day,” Loy said. Although her career took her away from the farm, Loy’s roots were still planted deep in its soil.

After the passing of her father three years ago Loy began to gradually take over the farm. “My reason was I love being on the farm, I’m where I needed to be in my career, and my mom had a stroke,” Loy said.

Loy said when her mom had a stroke she decided to make sure her mom saw the family on the farm again doing what they did for generations, and that was to raise cattle.

“This year mom reached recovery and I decided to start serious farming,” Loy said.

Loy said over the past five years she’d split her time between Morgantown and Kirby working on the farm periodically investing in infrastructure such as fencing and water.

“We are lucky with water. We have three ponds, two spring fed fountains and four well-based fountains, two are heated,” Loy said.

Loy was very familiar in the “how to’s” of water and farm ponds. “My dad, Gary, worked for the Department of Agriculture. His job was to assist farmers with designing. He designed hundreds of farm ponds in Hampshire County, worked on erosion control and soil management,” Loy said.

In addition to working on the water supply Loy said one of the first things she did was build a catch/working pen, which is where cattle are sorted and vaccinated, and feet and eyes are checked. These are all a part of Loy’s “jobs” on the farm.

She also makes hay, square and round bales; cleans out fence lines; and isn’t a stranger to operating her grandfather’s 1955 John Deere tractor. “I have a new 2016 John Deere, but my favorite one is my granddad’s,” Loy said.

With solid infrastructure under her belt and a plan, she was ready to go one step further. “I went to Farm Credit and presented my business plan, which was to purchase a herd of Angus,” Loy said.

Loy said Farm Credit felt she had a good business plan and she was able to get her first herd. “When I told mom to get in the truck
Right: No pun intended, the old and the new, Betty and Beth Loy and their John Deere tractors, 1955 and 2016. Six generations have owned the Loy Farm since 1952. Betty and Beth Loy are numbers five and six.

Opposing page: Beth Loy and her Angus herd. "The herd is friendly enough to pet."

we’re going to get a herd of cattle, she said, “They’d better all be black like your grandfathers.” And they were, 22 pairs — female and baby — all Angus that will be grown without hormones and antibiotics.

Loy refers to her mom, Betty, as the administrator of the farm. “She knows how to administer orders and make sure we don’t rest on our laurels. She made sure I was raised to be very independent. Whenever she would hear something negative about her daughter, a female, running the farm, she would tell me to think about how proud my dad and grandparents would be if they were still alive. That’s always motivated me,” Loy said.

The 85-year-old matriarch takes care of the 30-herd of Savannah and Boer/Kiko goats recently introduced to the farm.

“The goats are my life. I check on them every day. I feed them and make sure they are OK. I talk to them and watch them when they are in labor. I keep up with their shenanigans of getting their heads stuck in the fence or knocking over feed troughs,” Betty said.

She said she has so much fun with the goats that life on the farm never gets lonely.

Farre Savannah goats are raised for meat. They originate from South Africa and are very hardy. Loy says her goats will go as breeding animals because they are so hardy, and some will be used for 4-H and FFA show goats. Beth Loy is a certified quality meat goat producer.

Loy says it’s not easy to be in the farming business. Beth is the one who cares for the animal’s feet, eyes and worming. “I trim the feed about every six weeks and worm them every six weeks. This area is wet. We really need a cold winter,” Loy said. She says you have to have a good support system if you can’t be there 100 percent of the time.

When Loy is in Morgantown, the family that leases the farmhouse helps watch over the farm along with her mom and friend Mark Smith. She said no farmer can do it alone and a business plan is necessary to be a success.

During the winter Beth plans to build a new heifer pen. “March will be the time for me to take my vacation. That is when this place will become complete chaos. That’s when the goats and the cows have babies. Everyone pitches in,” Loy said.

Loy’s mother Betty has been the influencing factor in Beth taking over and bringing the farm back to the way it was in the past, raising Angus.

The future for this female owning and operating the farm is already planned out. “I want to grow the herd, increase it to 50, and prove myself as a high-quality Angus grower,” Loy said. ☞

Betty Loy and her beloved goats. “The goats are my life,” says Betty.