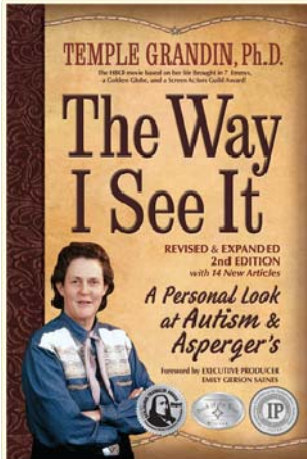


## A Career Born of Autism: Grandin Leaves Legacy of Change

We hear a lot these days about people who turn tragedy, illness or disease into a winning situation. In this case, Temple Grandin turned autism into a career, one that has been filled with success, much in



part to her ability to see and sense as animals do. Although misunderstood and ridiculed most of her childhood and adolescence, Ms. Grandin found her purpose in life while in college, touring slaughterhouses and feedlots. Even going as far as figuring out a way to fit in where only men had fit in before.

Temple was born with autism and Asperger's syndrome, a developmental disorder that affects a person's ability to socialize and communicate effectively with others. As displayed in the movie *Temple Grandin* the noise of a fan or the simply swaying of a curtain would not frighten or evoke unease in others, but to Temple it was terrifying. While on her aunt's farm she watched the cattle being worked and saw how quickly they calmed down while

in the squeeze chute. One day, although very unorthodox, she used the chute to calm herself down and found it to be extremely soothing and relaxing.

While working on her college degree she had the opportunity to tour several slaughterhouses and feedlots and identified areas in which both needed to be improved to handle the animals in a manner that was not frightening or dangerous to their well-being. Over time she started to design working facilities and feedlots and through her connections was able to slowly integrate those plans into actual designs that are still utilized today.

It can be as simple as the radius of a turn in a tub of a working facility or in a feedlot the grid pattern in the concrete floor, but those simple attentions to detail have earned Temple Grandin a reputation second to none on being a foremost expert on animal handling and animal sensory perception. That is why in the late 90s Ratcliff Ranch approached Ms. Grandin about designing the new beef working facility for the Blackwell Ranch north of Vinita, Oklahoma.

"Prior to building the facility, we researched various designers of working facility and determined that Ms. Grandin saw things the way we saw it. We wanted her to design a facility that made working the cattle easier, more efficient with the least stress possible on the animal going through the chute," said Ratcliff Ranch Owner Jim Ratcliff. She designed the barn, the tub, helped us with the choice of chute and then the half-moon of traps with five doors operated by hydraulics.

The facility is used for everything including weaning, yearly and routine calf working/processing, sorting and readying calves for the feedlot, artificial insemination, pregnancy checks and occasional embryo work.

According to the ranch hands, the attention to detail that Ms. Grandin put in the facility goes as far as even the height of the barn and the length of tin from the roofline to promote an area free from changing shadows based on the time of day the cattle are worked. Those details seem so minute to others, but yet to her are so important and are important to the animal's comfort as well.

Ratcliff Ranch is planning on utilizing the services of Ms. Grandin again in the near future when they enlist her help in reworking the backside of the sale facility. Auctions are very loud and very quick with lots of abrupt sounds. The more that can be done to keep an animal calm prior to it entering the ring, means ultimately more money in the ranch pocket and less stress to the animal. In addition, a portable working chute and tub will be added for work around the headquarter facility.

It wasn't inexpensive to build the Blackwell facility, but it has proved to be money well spent and Ratcliff Ranch is proud to have such a premier working facility that is both functional and practical. And more than that Ratcliff Ranch is proud to join Temple in her efforts to promote calm and humane cattle handling. Each of the calves on the ranch are born with a purpose, rather it be to be seedstock, semen sires, replacement females or ultimately a steak on a plate. But no matter their lot in life, it is the Ranch's goal to do it in a manner that is non-harmful and stressful to the animal.

Ratcliff Ranches is glad Temple Grandin and her family didn't let people's perception of autism deter her from not only a rewarding career, but a blueprint for the humane treatment of animals.