



Ella met Temple Grandin at the Dakota Territory Bison Association Conference in Rapid City on Saturday.

The conference is an annual event. I attend whenever I can. Usually alone. This year when I mentioned that Temple Grandin would be there, Gail, daughter Amy, and granddaughter Ella, all insisted on attending.

Temple Grandin is well known to farmers, parents of autistic children, and teachers.

She is a Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University and she is autistic.

Psychiatrists define autism as a pervasive developmental disorder of children, characterized by impaired communication, excessive rigidity, and emotional detachment

Born in 1947, she was originally diagnosed as severely retarded. She did not speak until she was over 3 years old.

Fortunately, Professor Grandin was blessed with incredibly good caretakers.

She is a best-selling author with many books on autism and livestock handling.

An award winning movie was made about her life in 2010.

Her autism is evident, even now. Nevertheless, through hard work and her own form of brilliance, she has used her autistic mind to provide unique insight.

That insight applies to human development of course. She is well known as an autism expert and activist.

Farmers know of Dr. Grandin from her work in animal handling. She has been particularly effective at designing facilities for low stress movement of livestock. Her work has greatly improved animal slaughter facilities throughout the world.

Autistics think and remember in pictures. As far as we know, animals also think and recall in pictures.

Most of us think in words. Words provide a crucial mental tool for abstract thought.

Dr. Grandin is able to “see” structures and corrals, as animals perceive them. That insight enabled her to create new designs that minimize fear and anxiety for the animals.

In case you are wondering, animals fear pain and social separation. They do not fear or anticipate death. As far as anyone can determine, no farm animals have the mental ability to contemplate death.

That has profound meaning to we who raise livestock.

As animal caretakers, we are obligated to provide as good a life as possible and a death free of stress.

I was able to meet and speak with Dr. Grandin before her presentation, as were Ella, Amy, and Gail.

We already own some of her books, of course. We, including Ella, have seen her movie.

I bought several newer books and Ella selected a couple for herself.

All signed by the author.

Ella was mesmerized by Dr. Grandin’s presentation. Ella raised her hand during the Q & A and asked, “What animals have you worked with the most?” “Cattle” was the answer, although she has done substantial work with other species, especially bison.

Ella is holding one of her new books in the photo. Best regards. Tom