

A True Friend & Ally

CLARK ANGUS RANCH OF TEXAS LOOKS ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE FOR OPPORTUNITIES

TO MARKET QUALITY-BRED GENETICS AND TO BUILD INDUSTRY ALLIANCES.

BY MERRIDEE WELLS

Bill Clark has experienced 40 years of the Angus business and all it has to offer. From the fanciful belt buckle cattle of the 1950s to the advent of real world beef genetics and economics in the 1990s, this Houston businessman has seen it all.

Clark feels it's a great time to be in the cattle business, but is driven by the vision of a beef industry where producers are rewarded for quality genetics and consumers are rewarded with a consistent quality beef product.

Clark Angus Ranch annually produces 250 Angus bulls and 150 females to sell. With a reputation for breeding quality in quantity, buyers come from all over the United States, Mexico, Central America and South America to take home Clark Angus genetics. A high percentage of buyers are repeat customers.

With the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), we hear a lot these days about the creation of a global market. In Clark's case, however, it's nothing new. He's been internationally marketing his beef genetics for years with satisfactory results.

"Other than additional health requirements, selling cattle south of the border isn't much different than selling domestically," Clark explains. "Cattle that go to Mexico don't even have to be quarantined, as do those going to Central America and South America."

Clark Angus Ranch has two operations in Texas, one near



Bill and Geri Clark, who established Clark Angus Ranch in 1952, have become true friends and allies to the beef industry.

Huntsville and the other outside Crockett. A registered herd of 700 animals and commercial herd of 300 animals are managed at these operations.

Waymon Ashley, retired regional manager for the American Angus Association, reports that Clark Angus Ranch is the largest Angus breeding operation in Texas. Ashley's also quick to point out that despite the time and

management it takes to manage an operation of this size, Bill Clark is "truly committed to the breed and spends as much time as he can actively participating in Texas and American Angus Association programs." His dedication and leadership abilities were instrumental to his election as president of the American Angus Association in 1975.

Bill and his wife, Geri, are

familiar figures at Texas Angus functions. It's rare that a cattle sale is held in their state or a neighboring one where they are not present. Bill also makes a point to attend national Angus shows and sales such as the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville and the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Contact with international buyers has come in a variety of ways. Clark, a long-time participant in the Houston Stock Show, became acquainted with foreign cattle breeders who have attended the show and liked what they saw in the Clark show string. Eventually these cattlemen became customers. Other buyer contacts have come from word of mouth, as satisfied customers tell others.

Clark says the one thing to remember when dealing with south of the border customers is that their timetables are different than ours.

"These folks, particularly the Mexican buyers, don't have the hurry up and get it done attitude we have here in the United States," Clark says. "Deals which would be concluded in 30 days here, usually take 60 to 90 days in Mexico. It's just their way."

All cattle are sold in U.S. currency. Payment is made with a cashier's check or letter of credit, drawn on a U.S. bank, with payment due before cattle are shipped. All additional expenses incurred after the cattle leave the ranch are the responsibility of the buyer.

Over the last decade, Clark Angus Ranch has sold several

hundred head of bred and open Angus heifers as well as bulls across the border. "The buyers are knowledgeable about our bloodlines, familiar with expected progeny differences (EPDs) and have a good eye for cattle," Clark says. "I think the best part about this market is that it makes room for more domestic sales. It's not just local money being circulated."

Many people find it remarkable that Clark Angus Ranch can annually merchandise such a large number of cattle without hosting a production sale. Bill Clark prefers, instead, to sell the cattle private treaty. This eliminates the extra work and expense of hosting a sale.

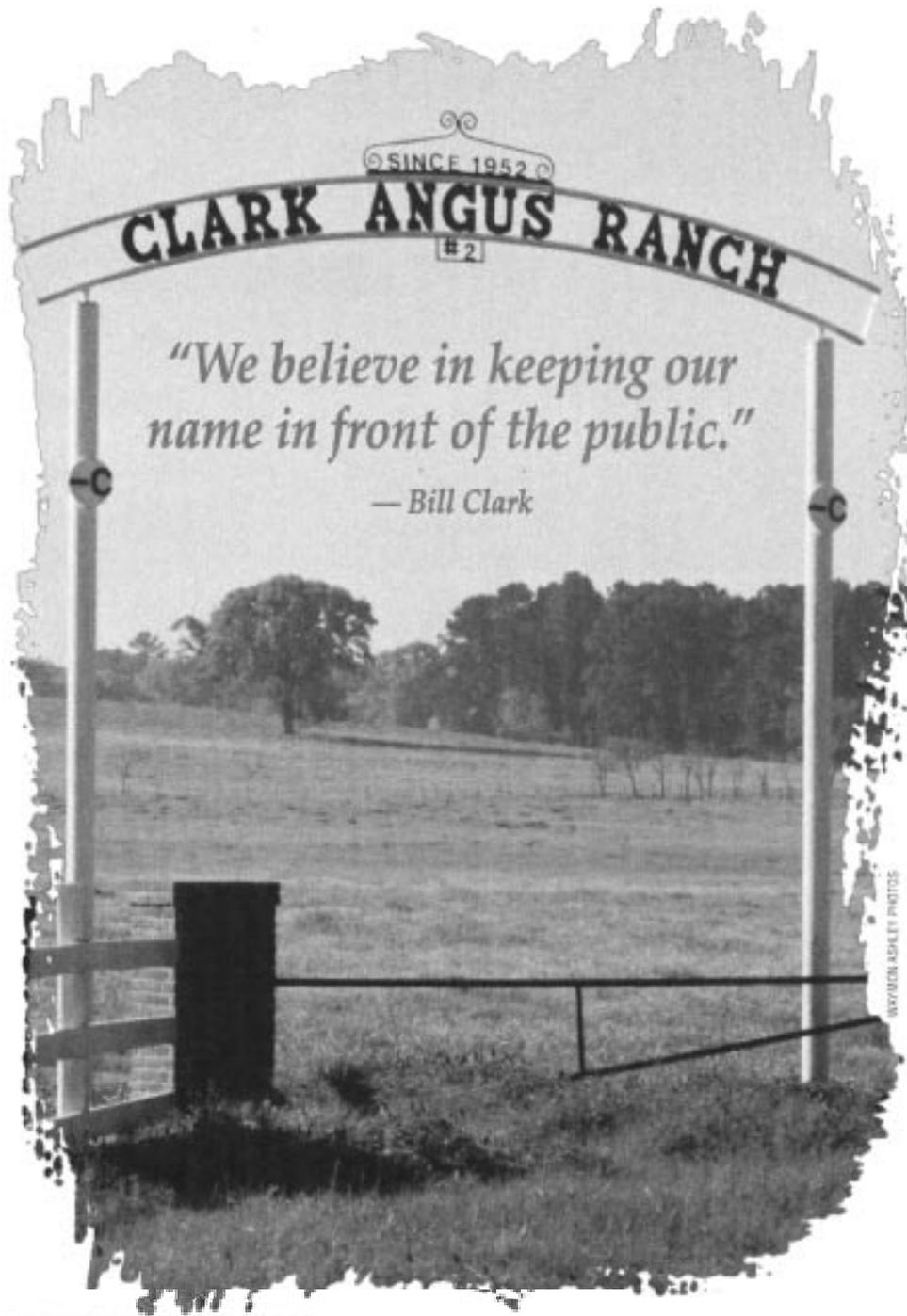
So what is their marketing secret?

First and foremost is the man himself. "I've known Bill Clark since 1960, when I began working for the Texas Angus Association," says Ashley. "Bill is a gentleman who keeps his word. He's gained a reputation for dealing fairly with customers."

Clark is also a good merchandiser. "When you go to Bill's place to look at sale cattle, they are in a pasture of their own and grouped according to price and kind. Buyers like that," Ashley says.

Another of Clark's strong suits is his advertising program which is, in his own words, "consistent."

"We don't run a lot of big ads," Clark says. "But we run a lot of small ads all the time. We believe in keeping our name in front of the public."



Building a reputable Angus ranch has taken more than capital. It's taken dedication by the man, his family and staff, and the desire to make lasting improvement to the Angus breed. During his tenure on the American Angus Association Board of Directors (1966-73), Clark helped implement two landmark programs, which today are successful examples for the entire beef industry.

"We began the performance program, which now has the largest database in the beef industry," Clark says. "We also began groundwork for the Certified Angus Beef Program, which is now the most successful branded beef program in the world."

No wonder Clark places so much emphasis on performance and carcass traits in his own breeding operation. "We breed cattle for moderate

birth weight, rapid growth and positive carcass traits," Clark explains. "Our customers have become quite educated over the years about EPDs and now they're becoming enlightened about carcass traits. We are committed to giving them the best."

With the numbers Clark Angus Ranch encompasses, it's a given fact that an

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Cattle are bred for moderate birth weight, rapid growth and positive carcass traits at Clark Angus Ranch. Clark Angus genetics are now in demand by cattle breeders in Mexico, Central America and South America.

aggressive artificial insemination (AI) program is important in building the genetic pool which has become a Texas mainstay. "We believe in using AI bulls which offer us the traits we're looking for," Clark says.

Clark Angus Ranch also relies on quality people to carry out this AI program. Ralph Glass, Clark's manager in Huntsville, has worked for



him for 26 years. "He's a top AI technician and he knows the cattle," Clark says.

It's also necessary to have good cleanup bulls available and Clark has a definite theory about that. "Too many people are willing to use just any ol' bull as cleanup," he says. "We don't agree. We want to buy the best genetics we can afford so we can be proud of the cleanup bulls, as well."

Clark, true to his word, doesn't think twice about spending \$8,000 to \$10,000 for a good bull. In fact, he makes it a practice to be in Denver each year to preview the National Western Angus sale bulls on "The Hill" and the Angus bulls available in the carload competition in "The Yards." He usually purchases at least

one bull each year to bring home to Texas.

What does the future hold for Clark Angus Ranch?

"More of the same," Clark says. "We're going to concentrate harder on carcass genetics. We'd like to become involved in the Certified Angus Beef Value Discovery Project and Texas A&M University's Ranch to Rail Program. Carcass genetics are the wave of the future and we want to be a part of it."

Ashley, who points out that Clark's program not only is the largest in the state, but may be the oldest, says Clark has kept up with breed changes and made the most of them.

"He weathered the storms," Ashley says. "Little cattle, low

prices — nothing has discouraged Bill when it comes to raising Angus cattle. He's always out there looking for better ways to do things."

The ability to sell what you produce is the greatest measure of a cattle breeder's success. No doubt, Clark has lived up to this standard. Still, it's his genuine character and reputation for an honest deal that makes him an admired and respected part of the Angus business in this part of the world.

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