

Cattle in the Rockies: Ken-Caryl Ranch

by Ann Gooding

High in the Colorado Rockies, with only a few foothills separating it from the sprawl of suburban Denver, lies Ken-Caryl Ranch, where last Nov. 17 a bull calf sold for \$111,000 and set a new record for money paid at public auction for an Angus calf.

Just a short distance from the sale barn, the world headquarters of Johns-Manville, internationally recognized building material producer, rises silently out of the rocks.

Deer roam the hills above ranch headquarters, while nearby lie several subdivisions, evidence of the city's invasion of cattle country. Suburbia already has claimed about half of what was originally a 10,000-acre cattle ranch; even so, thanks to the terrain, Ken-Caryl maintains a certain privacy in which it carries on the business at hand. Cattle production.

Although blacks have dotted its mountain pastures for only eight years, Ken-Caryl Ranch has had a reputation as a purebred producer since the 1920s. Newspaper publisher John Shaffer owned the ranch then, naming it after his two sons, and he raised Herefords. They were good ones and they first brought Ken-Caryl's name to the attention of the beef cattle industry.

Johns-Manville

When Johns-Manville, a corporation with 27,000 employees situated in 36 states and 20 foreign countries, purchased the ranch for its headquarters, J.B. "Burt" Jobe, then the corporation's assistant vice president, took charge of developing what was to become a quality Angus herd. This was not his first experience with Angus—Jobe previously had developed a herd of his own on the east coast.

The first cows brought to the ranch in the fall of 1971 were good big cows, mostly Canadian, gathered by Illinois cattleman Tim Pierce. The original herd of about 300 cows was pared down to 200, leaving only the best quality seed stock.

The stage was set when Ed Winters joined the crew in the spring of 1972, moving into the managerial position three years later. Winters, every inch a cattleman, grew up on a Kansas cattle ranch and before settling in at Ken-Caryl worked with some top Hereford herds. When one of those herds (that of John Rice, Longmont) dispersed, Winters put his knowledge to work at Ken-Caryl.

Colossal Mignonne

The first fall the ranch was in business, SF Colossal Mignonne 991 walked out of the show barn to take grand champion female honors at the International Livestock Exposition, Chicago. She went on to claim the same title at both the 1973 National Western in Denver and the Ft. Worth stock show. Then she earned

\$23,000 in Ken-Caryl's first production sale, going to New York to become the property of Dr. Carl Slanetz. Her influence remains in the herd, though; in last fall's production sale, a daughter and a granddaughter earned \$20,500 between them, one selling to Silver Plume, Colorado Springs, the other to 76 Angus, Aladdin, Wyo. And Colossal Mignonne was only the beginning.

Under Winters' supervision, Ken-Caryl cattle have earned a solid reputation both in the show ring and in the pasture. For example, in 1979 the Ken-Caryl program produced both the grand champion bull and grand champion carload at the National Western. The program produced the high selling bull calf at auction. And that same program produced about 100 commercial bulls that met ready acceptance from buyers in several states.

Mr. Angus

Ken Caryl Mr. Angus 8017 was a result of the Ken-Caryl program. Featured as a calf in the 1977 production sale, he claimed that year's top bull calf auction price when Angus International paid \$55,000 for two-thirds interest.

Mr. Angus didn't just happen; he wasn't a fluke. His pedigree tells a lot of the Ken-Caryl story.

His grandsire on the bottom side, Bordens Antaeus 270, a Wye-bred bull coming out of the New Mexico herd of George Borden & Son, in Winters' opinion is the best purchased by Ken-Caryl. The fact that his blood mixed well with the nucleus of Canadian cows is evidenced by his 140 daughters in the present herd of 220. Incidentally, Mr. Angus' dam, one of those daughters, brought \$40,000 in the produc-

tion sale last fall, going to Mother Cow Associates, Ansley, Neb.

Appearing on Mr. Angus' top side is Northern Prospector 1125, a bull Winters picked from the Erdmann herd at Wetonka, S.D. A show bull in his own right, having claimed grand championship at the 1977 Calgary Stampede among other winnings, 1125 has nicked with Bordens Antaeus 270 daughters to produce some impressive progeny, including not only Mr. Angus but eight of the bulls in the grand champion carload at the 1979 Denver stock show.

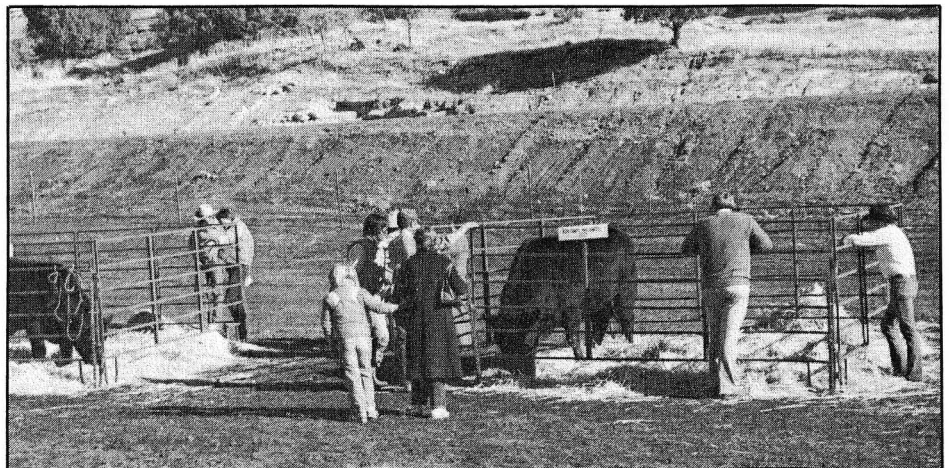
Best to Date

To date, the best-known result of the Ken-Caryl program is, of course, Mr. Angus. Not only does the bull show well, he produces, and last November's production sale proved the popularity of his progeny. His high selling son to date, Ken Caryl Ironsides 0489, holds the breed auction price record. Buck and Barbara Stevens, Point Reyes, Calif., own the bull, although he's still at Ken-Caryl waiting for his debut at this year's National Western.

And this year, as in the past, Ken-Caryl will be well represented at that show. There will be a carload made up mostly of Mr. Angus sons. There will be a pen of three coming 2-year-olds. The string on the hill most likely will include not only the Ironsides calf but also Warrant, Hulk and Mr. Angus, who is returning to defend his championship title. A sale bull and a pen of heifers for the Foundation Female Sale will round out Ken-Caryl's stock show entries.

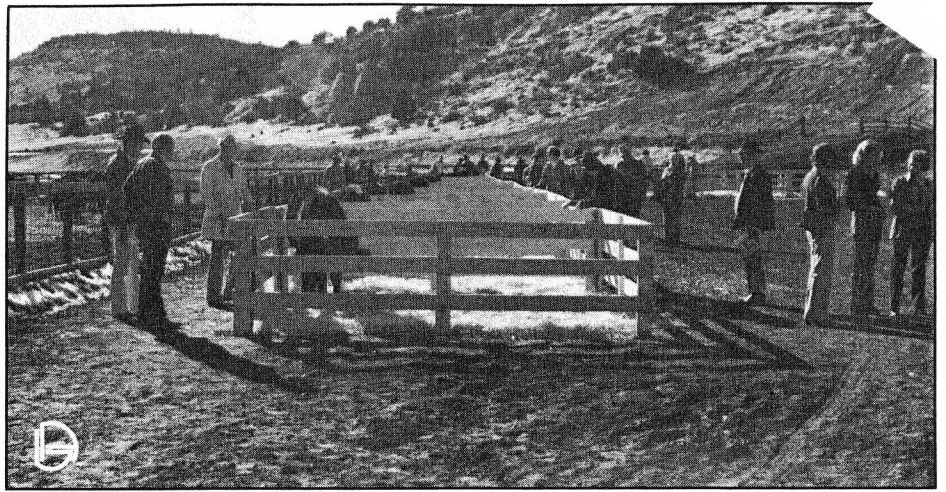
Winters is justifiably proud of his cattle's show records, for Ken-Caryl has picked up wins at many major shows, but Winters is interested in running a practical ranch and

Two powerful bulls, Warrant and Mr. Angus, were on display sale day.





Manager Ed Winters instructs a Ken-Caryl hand.



Above is a scene from sale day '79.

have some red meat in them. There's some frame around now with no meat." Winters cautions, "Daylight doesn't weigh anything. I like 'em tall but they've got to have meat, muscle, quarter, length."

Winters practices what he preaches. Ken-Caryl cattle win in the show ring and a lot of them sell to registered breeders but, Winters says, the largest percentage go to commercial cattlemen. The ranch sells 90-100 bulls a year at private treaty to commercial breeders in Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, with a few going to Kansas. Last year more than 100 such bulls sold to average \$2,700. This year Winters anticipates being out of bulls by March 1.

Commercial Prices

Winters has seen commercial men pay as high as \$6,000 for a bull—only because that bull can do the job the commercial breeder needs done. Ken-Caryl's commercial customers are satisfied customers, he says, like the one who looked at some bulls a few years back, bought a set and has since bought two more sight unseen.

Contact with the commercial market is a critical part of merchandizing, Winters realizes, so he gets in his car and visits herds, spending three or four weeks a year on the road. "They can tell me what kind of

cattle I should be raising after they use my bulls," he claims, so the traveling serves two purposes. Not only does he get a chance to promote his cattle, but he gets to see what his bulls have done and what commercial breeders need, forming a guideline for his program back in Littleton. And since commercial men are becoming more and more conscious of the kind of cattle they are buying, Ed reasons, he has to follow his cattle to keep his program ahead of the business.

"And every once in a while when I'm on the road, I find one I like. Then I buy," he says. But when he buys, the animal has to fit in his program.

Practical Improvers

Winters wants to keep the place practical, so he tries to raise good cattle and buy only those animals that will improve the existing herd. His replacements generally come from heifers raised at Ken-Caryl, but every year he buys a half dozen or so really good females, females that will fit in the top 5% of the cow herd.

Winters has seen a lot of cattle, and it takes an exceptional one to get him excited. On a trip back east in the fall of 1978, one caught his eye; and now Sir Wms Warrant has been added to Ken-Caryl's herd bull battery. The Sir William Angus-bred bull by Wetonka 2446 is co-owned with Quirk Land & Cattle Co., Hastings, Neb., and Burt Jobe. He already has won supreme championship at the 1979 Western National Angus Futurity in Reno. He will have calves on the ground this spring.

And each year, in addition to the ranch's own herd bulls, Winters uses two or three outside bulls, selecting from the top available around the country.

Replacement selection within the herd is not much of a problem, Winters says, especially since he has old families of top producing cows to choose from. Some of those cows have four or five daughters working at Ken-Caryl. A replacement has to measure up, though, no matter what her lineage.

The Ken-Caryl herd has a number of half

is aware that commercial breeders are responsible for a good deal of his market. **Closer Than Before**

He thinks commercial and registered breeders are much closer than they have been before. And he's all for it. "We have to produce cattle that will get it done in the show ring, but they have to be producers, too. Cattle must have the genetic background to grow in the feedlot."

He adds that "Framewise, good cattle are big enough. But the industry has a long ways to go, because there still aren't enough good cattle. And cattle have to

These youngsters will make up part of Ken-Caryl's 1980 Denver carload.



to three-quarter sisters that account for uniformity both in kind and in performance. This uniformity results in less spread in performance ratios—no longer do three or four calves top the index.

The ranch does use the AHIR Program, taking birth, 205-day and, when applicable, yearling weights. Being more interested in well-grown big-framed bulls than in high rates of gain, the ranch itself does not run a bull test, but Winters has sent a few bulls to the Midland test station in Montana. Last year three of them—nothing fancy, according to Winters, just good, big, solid bulls—averaged \$4,000 from a repeat commercial buyer.

Ken-Caryl has not become involved in a transplant program yet, but Winters does plan to participate to a limited extent. He admits he's a bit leery of the program, that the cost is high and a tremendous amount of culling is necessary. Full brothers and full sisters, he points out, are not equal. And he says he's seen too many good cows ruined in such programs. "I don't like to mess with Mother Nature too much. It's best to just help her along."

High Desert Ranch

Winters describes the Ken-Caryl operation as a high desert ranch where most of the hay and all grain has to be purchased. It takes about 25 acres to run a cow, and "she needs a muzzle a half-mile wide, going about 20 miles an hour, to keep herself fed."

In eight short years, though, this high desert ranch has become a respected name in the Angus industry. The man in charge of the original development, Burt Jobe, has since retired from Johns-Manville, although he has remained very much involved in the Angus business. His position as Ken-Caryl's liason with the corporation has been filled by Bill Albe.

Winters' wife Helen has become a vital part of the operation, managing the record keeping out of an office at ranch headquarters.

Ken-Caryl's future, because of its proximity to the city, is less than certain. Its past is well-recorded, though. Good practical cattle, from the show ring to the feedlot, have written its history. A

