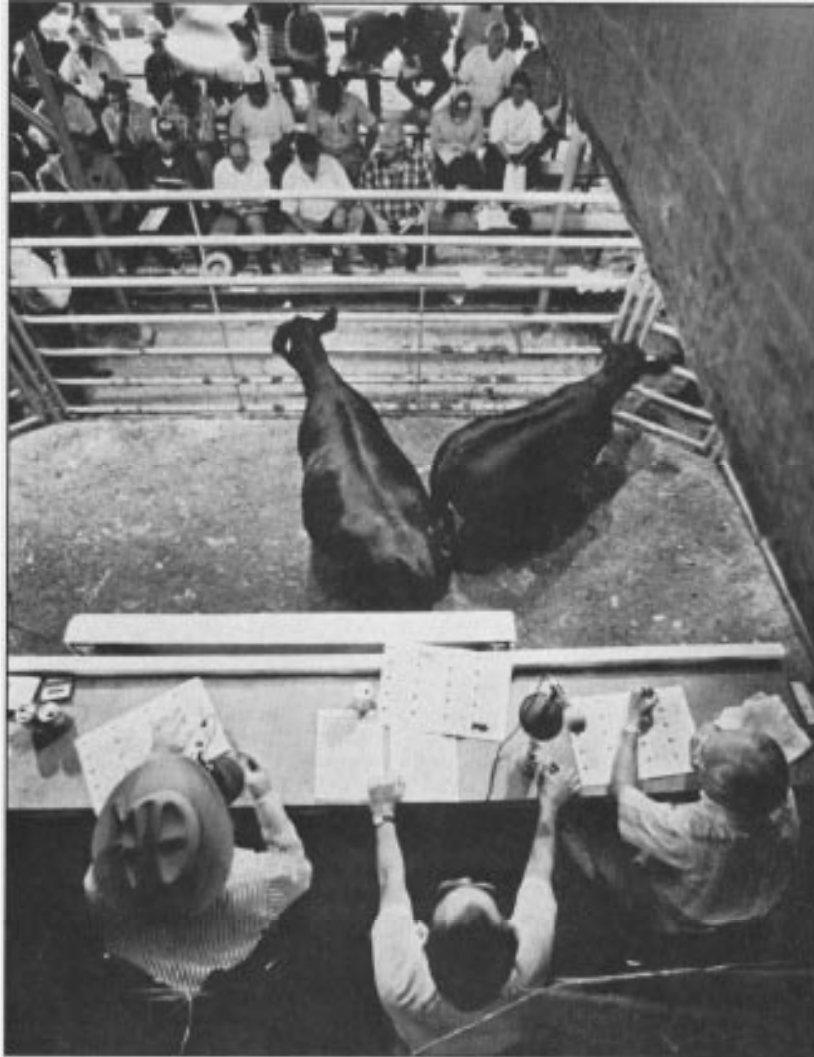

Bye-Bye Bessie

by William B. Pope



The auction in progress from six feet above the auctioneer's head.

It happens to the best of cattlemen. The day comes when the cows no longer come home.

It recently happened to William D. Pope of Hawkinsville, Ga. After 39 years in the cattle business, he decided to retire. With mixed emotions he had one last auction October 3.

The registered Angus herd at Southside Farms has been known by cattle breeders throughout the United States for some time. The lead sire, Shoshone Intent KGEA 27, has been used in 164 herds in 33 states. The 10 previous Pope auctions have put cattle

into many of those states.

When Southside's very first Angus were bought in 1957 to replace a Hereford herd, the shortest, stockiest cattle were bringing top dollar. Pope could only afford the cheaper cattle which were taller and framier. Sixty-six head were bought for \$8,000 at one farm and 14 head were purchased at another for \$1,750.

"When the Angus association found out they were wrong in promoting short cattle, we were in pretty good shape," says Pope.

Another boost for Southside came in 1959 when Pope started performance

testing the herd. "That was as early as anybody in Georgia, or even in the South, performance tested their cattle," he says. "We culled all the bottom-end cows by their calve's weaning weight."

When artificial insemination in Angus started in 1970, Southside immediately began using A.I. bulls that were available. Twenty replacement heifers from the Biffle herd in Oklahoma were a big boost to Southside during this time, as were 30 replacement heifers that were bought a few years later from the Spur herd in Oklahoma.

Perhaps the biggest advancement to

Southside came in 1980 with the purchase of Shoshone Intent KGEA 27 from Shoshone in Cowley, Wyo. Past customers of Southside have commented how this bull's progeny have good growth and his daughters have great udders. Pope feels that "Intent" has done more than anything else to put Southside on the cattlemen's map.

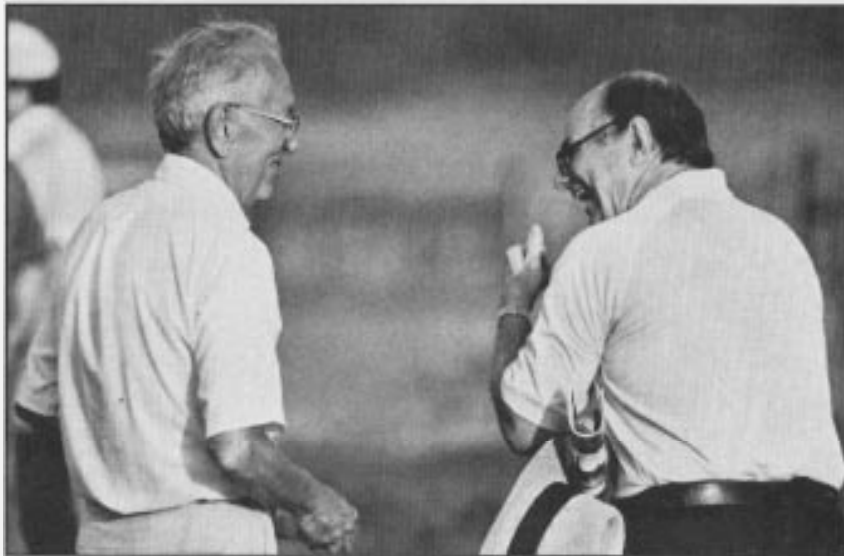
Before the October sale, there were many indications that the demand for Southside cattle would be high. Pope expected a good sale because of the many phone inquiries and catalog requests that he received. Contacts came from many of the Southeastern states, as well as from other parts of the country.

Another indicator was the report of David Gazda, regional manager for the American Angus Association. "I've had more inquiries about this sale than any sale I've been associated with since I started," he said on the eve of the sale. "There's been a lot of interest. A lot of folks are not just coming to be a part of the crowd. They're coming to buy cattle."

Sale manager Jarvene Shackelford also foresaw an excellent turnout and a strong market. "I've been in business for 15 years and I had more catalog requests on this sale than any sale that I've managed," he says. "And I've managed several other big sales that had more cattle than this one."

Everyone's predictions hit the bulls eye on sale day. More than 40 trailers were parked and waiting for the sale's end. "It's the most cattle trailers I've ever seen in Pulaski County at one time," said County Commissioner John Anderson in a later conversation with Pope.

Most of the 307 people who registered to buy cattle shuffled through the cattle pens at some point in the day and made the event look like a department store closeout. The cooks who had lunch ready at 11 a.m. found themselves still flipping burgers at 5 p.m.



Max Herrin (right), a retired bank president from Savannah Ga., talks to W.D. Pope on the eve of the sale, Herrin later bought 16 head of Angus.

The pre-sale speeches started soon after 10 a.m. and the bidding started about 10:30. All went smoothly throughout the entire auction except for one instance when a calf got in the sale ring with the wrong cow. The sale went so fast that at one point one of the bidders complained.

By 3:30 p.m., 239 lots of Angus had sold for an average of \$1,510 per lot. The lot 1 bull, Partisover Power Play, was the

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top bull at \$6,000. Lot 140, Cedar Creek Erica 46 and her calf, topped the females at \$3,475.

Pope's small herd of Gelbvieh cattle sold after the Angus sale.

The sale of Angus into Georgia and its eight closest neighbors was expected by Pope. Buyers from Oklahoma were a little unexpected, but the sale into Washington state would have been very unexpected if Pope had not received a call from an Angus breeder there just a few days before the sale.

"You've got the kind of cattle I want," said Pat Lawler over the phone.

"A super sale" is what Gazda labels the event. "Anytime you can sell that many lots and have that kind of average, it surely speaks highly of the program," he says.

"It was one of the best sales I've managed," says Shackelford. "We didn't have a lull period all day."

Shackelford cites a changing trend in cattle breeding as one of the reasons for the success of the sale. "Right now, most everybody has decided that they've been breeding cattle a little bit the wrong way," he says. "Everybody now is looking for cattle that have performance. The quality of cattle here are above breed average and the figures on performance show it."

Pope's plan for the future is to devote more time to the main activity that brought about the dispersal sale—managing Central Georgia Cooperative. At age 68 he felt the time commitment that the co-op required was as much as he could handle, even though he would have liked to remain in the cattle business.

Nevertheless, he put his mixed feelings behind him after the sale by realizing the necessity of his action.

M.K. Cook, an animal scientist at the University of Georgia and Associate Director of ANR/CRD, expressed his mixed feelings before the sale in a letter that appeared in the sale catalog:

"It's with a great deal of sadness and joy that I write a letter concerning your dispersal sale.

The sad part is seeing the hard work of a breeding program sold to the four winds. Part of the joy is the satisfaction of seeing the development of an outstanding herd and knowing that the cattle will work for the new owners."

