



Carol Thompson

by Jeri Lynn Gilleland

For Carol Thompson of Potlatch, Idaho, the past year and a half has been quite an adjustment. When her husband Dale was killed in a tractor accident in late summer of 1982, Carol was left to make all farming and ranching decisions by herself, besides holding a managerial position at a large farm cooperative. For over 20 years Carol and Dale had shared the responsibilities of their 300-acre row crop operation and 100 Angus cows. Because they had worked side by side, Carol was amply prepared to step in and take over. But it was also the close bond between them in everything they did that made going it alone so difficult.

"Dale always respected my opinion and I respected his. We never went into anything that we didn't talk about and try to figure out what was right. One of the hardest things now is having to make all these decisions alone," says Carol. "I guess I can be very, very thankful that I was active in the whole farming operation."

Would never sell the cattle

Her love of the cattle and her involvement in the operation are why Carol never even considered selling the farm. Besides, Carol reasons, selling out did not seem practical from an economic standpoint.

"Dale and I had been updating our machinery and we had quite a few pieces that were fairly new and wouldn't break down as easily. The machinery was pretty well paid for and the trade in or resale value would not have been that great because of the economy. I thought it was best to keep the machinery and find someone to run it," reflects Carol. "And I would never ever think of selling the cows," she adds with a smile.

"Of course, you get a lot of advice from other people. But unless they really are sitting in the situation and know all the circumstances, then no one knows what is best for you except yourself," says the petite blonde.

Born and raised a farm girl in the same community where she now lives, Carol learned much about farming from her father. As "Daddy's girl" Carol would follow her father about the farm. She gained crop and livestock knowledge traditionally reserved only for farm boys.

Carol exhibited Angus steers and heifers as a 4-Her, and her passion for livestock followed her to the University of Idaho at Moscow where she spent 2½ years as an animal husbandry major—a rarity for women in the early '60s.

Carol's 4-H cows were the start of her and Dale's Angus herd. More cows were purchased along the way and eventually they had one of the largest Angus herds in Idaho. A cattle partnership of the Thompsons and Carol's parents was known as Deep Creek Angus Ranch. Today, the Deep Creek Angus name is carried on by Carol and her mother Edith Brincken.

Job responsibilities are great

Carol's farm chores and responsibilities must come during the early mornings or late evenings and on weekends. During the week, most of her daylight hours are spent on the job at Palouse Producers Inc. For nine years she has commuted 60 miles roundtrip to work for this large co-op catering to farmers' needs. In that time she has worked her way up the ladder to her present position. Carol is responsible for all accounting and transportation of the corporation. With 17 Palouse Producers plants in a 130 mile radius, the dispatching of all trucks is no small task, especially in fertilizer season. That's why Carol is often seen with a two-way radio strapped to her belt. "In busy season I'll dispatch 75 truckloads of liquid fertilizer day and night to farmers, field tanks and other plants. Everyone wants fertilizer at once," says Carol. While pressures are often great, Carol says her job is always interesting and never boring.

"I've been really lucky. I'm the only female that has ever been in a managerial position there. And the guys have accepted me with no problems," she says. Her reference to luck is typical of Carol's modesty. She has been successful in a "man's world" because she can talk farming, fertilizer, seed or cattle with anyone. She greets each day with a burst of energy rare to most people.

Carol admits her busy schedule has been good for her. "I just had so many things going that I didn't have time to sit and think about anything else. I kept my mind constantly working which is the best way for me," she explains.

Even so, life hasn't been without frustrations. "There's times when I wish I could just pick this up and move it 1,000 miles away. But that's not possible, so I've just taken one day at a time," Carol says.

Help needed on the farm

One of the biggest headaches was finding help for the farm. Carol found herself facing the spring of 1983 with no one to put in the crops and the machinery not ready to go into the field. Someone was finally found to plant the crops, but he left in early summer to take a job closer to his hometown. So then it was find someone for fall. Allen Ham-montree answered that call in late September. Allen has worked out well and Carol furnishes him and his family a house just down the road from her.

Carol learned several lessons when searching for farm help. "When you have to keep having a different employee, things just don't get done. You have to have someone permanent," states Carol. "You have to have someone you can get as interested as you are in the farm."

While Carol knows how to run the farm machinery, she readily admits to not enjoying it. "The thing I have troubles with, and



As head of transportation for Palouse Producers Inc., Carol dispatches fertilizer trucks from her two-way radio. Spring and fall seasons keep her extra busy both on the job and at home.

I don't think I will ever be good at, is the breakdowns. When something breaks down, I don't always know how to fix it," says Carol. She says the physical labor is much easier nowadays with all the hydraulic machinery, but laughs and admits she sometimes has trouble figuring out how to hook up the hydraulics.

Her warm smile broadens as she reiterates the fact that it is the cattle which give her the most enjoyment. Angus cattle were a major part of her life with Dale. Today, they are even more so.

Made it through calving, rebreeding alone

Last spring Carol calved 109 cows by herself. Of those, she lost only 4 calves. According to Carol, the cows are easy to take care of by herself. She has a gentle cow herd (many are pets) that usually comes when she calls them. She has little trouble cutting out several head to bring up from the pasture.

Carol was some concerned with her availability last spring for heat detection. She would check the cows every morning before leaving for work and when she returned home she would stay with the cows until dark. An androgenized cow in one pasture was of little value. "I think I had some cows out there that would have been better heat detectors than the androgenized cow but they did not have on chinball markers," Carol reports. "I put all the heifers with the cow and she would not jump a heifer at all."

Carol has been doing A.I. work for the past five years. Unhappy with conception rates, she attended a 9-day A.I. course offered last spring by Washington State University at Pullman. "I used to be reluctant to use high priced semen if I was going to breed them myself. I came out of the class feeling very confident to finish breeding all of the cows on my own," says Carol. Before that, she often enlisted the help of Jean Neumeyer, a University of Idaho student and Angus breeder from Bonners Ferry.

A total of 700 acres of hay and pasture ground furnish forage for Deep Creek's 100 cows and 40 first-calf heifers. Carol's home sits at the foothill of one of the pastures.



Carol Thompson



As a complement to the Angus cattle, oats, wheat and barley are grown on the Thompson farm in the rolling hills of northwest Idaho.

Jean's parents Bob and Hollyce Neumeyer are among those Carol has leaned on for advice and help. Although Bonners Ferry is 150 miles away, Carol frequently visit with them by telephone.

The Neumeys and Thompsons had owned bulls together for close to 15 years and had traveled together to sales and shows. Bob says, "Carol's had some rough times during the past year and a half, but she hasn't let it set her back. She's got a lot of guts and she's determined. Carol is dedicated to breeding good cattle and that's what she'll keep on doing."

Several marketing channels

Last fall the Neumeys and Carol (Jaynbee Ranch and Deep Creek Angus Ranch) held a joint production sale in Spokane, Wash. (a central location between the two ranches). It was Deep Creek's first production sale venture. However, the firm is no stranger to consignment and Angus association sales in the Northwest. Sale toppers are a habit. "We've always tried to take some really good females out to shows and sales. I think it is the best advertising you can do," says Carol.

But the majority of the purebred stock is marketed right at home. Heifers move well in a good walk-in market. Because there are few commercial cattlemen in close proximity the bull market is not as strong. Normally the best 25 bulls are kept, but less were kept last fall. Some steers are sold as show calves, the rest are usually marketed as feeders at nearby Lewiston. This past year was an exception, though, as all 1983 steer calves were sold in a group right off the farm.

Records, bloodlines studied as tools

The Deep Creek herd has been enrolled on the AHIR program since its inception. While strict attention is paid to the records,

figures are not the only criteria used for culling and selecting replacements.

"Sometimes there are circumstances that will not show up on the records. Generally, we give the cow a second chance. If she doesn't nick good with one bull, we'll try her on another bull," notes Carol.

The Deep Creek herd delights in having 13 cows that have made the Pathfinder status. Many of those go back to a son of Schearbrook Shoshone 290N, a bull popular for his maternal traits. Other bulls recently used naturally in the herd trace to sons of PS Power Play, Sayre Patriot, Ken Caryl Mr. Angus 8017 and a grandson of "Great Northern."

Carol keeps a watchful eye on what is happening in the Angus breed as she determines what A.I. sires to use. Newest bloodlines in the herd include 1983 calves sired by "Mr. Angus," SVF Power Pack, "Jack Son" and Thomas Big Shot. This year's

crop, which will begin hitting the ground this month, will be by the A.I. sires QLC Winchester, Premier Independence KN and Progression.

3 Bar Cody 1292, a young bull Carol owned jointly with 3 Bar Ranch of Platteville, Colo., also serviced a number of cows calving this year. Carol's interest in this son of Fairfield Hi Guy recently sold at the Denver Angus Bull Sale.

Carol is particularly excited about a new herd sire purchase she has made. As a member of Overdrive Breeders, she owns an interest in Ken Caryl Overdrive 304H, the Pine Drive Big Sky son that topped the Ken Caryl sale at \$90,000 for two-thirds interest.

Enjoys working with people

Carol especially enjoys time spent at Angus events. This past fall she was one of Idaho's five delegates to the American Angus Assn. 100th Annual Meeting. She serves as secretary of the Inland Empire Angus Assn. and vice president of the Idaho Angus Assn. as well as being active in the Western States Angus Assn.

As a 4-H leader Carol finds enjoyment working with area youngsters enrolled in beef projects.

She exhibits some cattle herself at fairs in the Northwest, and in past years Deep Creek cattle have been shown at the Western National Angus Futurity in Reno.

Friends made at shows and sales are the highpoint of her travels. "In farming you don't have the contact with people that you do in the cattle business. You could travel clear across the United States, and within the day or night there would be some Angus folks to stop and visit."

It's not easy for one person to manage 300 acres of grain farming, run 100 cows and hold a managerial position at a large farm co-op. But with Carol Thompson's drive, determination and spirit, she's getting the job done and getting it done well. AJ



Carol Thompson and her mother Edith Brincken own the cattle which comprise Deer Creek Angus Ranch.