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"We went out to Glenkirk Farms a lot when I was on the judging team at the University of Missouri. It was really by accident that we found Power Play through Glen Klippenstein there. This bull has kind of brought our breeding program all together."

—Paul "Butch" Meier,
Butch's Angus, Jackson, Mo.



On Hitching

One's Wagon

To A Star

■ by Jim Cotton, Editor

Subject: taking a hard swallow and keeping a healthy outlook toward the future. One of the definitions of success is seizing opportunity and not letting go. Now, it's likely Paul ("Butch") and Eileen Meier possess the tenacity and industriousness to make most anything work to a satisfactory end. Investing in the bull PS Power Play was their special moment of truth. Confidence paid off.

"Butch's Angus" has been one of the Power Play owners since 1978, and the Meier herd located near Jackson, Mo., is presently comprised of nearly 60 percent Power Play influence. It's a small family-sized situation, and the Meier-Power Play story is a

reassuring one for this business: the little guy can dream and occasionally, he wins.

Lady luck, some would claim. Certainly, risk, gambling, the odds are factors that erode even the best and soundest decisions. Fortune represents a big wedge in the pie of every seed stock operation. The best laid plans of many experience reverses which just aren't that easily recovered. The Meiers undoubtedly weighed those elements and agonized over the "what ifs" in any undertaking of the nature this untried calf represented. Foremost, they had no national aspirations for Power Play. He was just a darn good calf that held promise of advancing their program markedly.

"It was a big investment for us," Eileen Meier recalls. Lots of excitement that spring when the first Power Play calves were due. Six-year-old Brian Meier, the couple's first born, was scheduled to arrive then as well.

"Butch would say, 'Where am I supposed to be if they happen at the same time?' We managed to plan it so he could attend both events!"

Butch describes the Power Play discovery as "really by accident. We were looking for cows at the time. It was mentioned during our visit up at Glenkirk that they were thinking about selling their share in this young bull prospect they bought from Penn State.

"Glenkirk had also bought into a bull called Masterpiece and were concentrating their efforts on him. So, we ended up buying their share of Power Play."

Maternal ability in the bloodline was a big attraction for Butch. The sire, Early Sunset Emulous 60E, was respected for ease of calving and maternal ability.

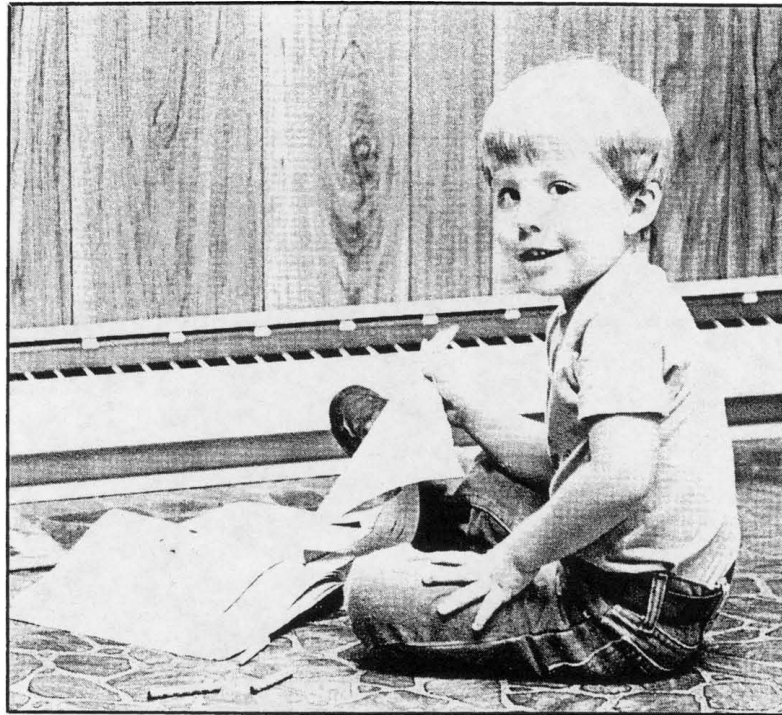
"When we bought that one-third interest, we were just buying him for ourselves, strictly. We didn't have any idea we would merchandise semen from him. It was new to us because we hadn't A.I.'d that much. I did wonder what we had gotten ourselves into. I opened an account at the bank and I thought those first 25 free checks would be plenty. The bank thought Power Play was an electric company."

—Eileen Meier





Steve Birk of the farm and Gregory Meier.



"Angus," says Gregory, three, when asked, "Which cattle are best?"

"My sons will be the fifth generation on this place. We haven't always been in the Angus business. My folks got me started through a 4-H project, right when they were starting their black herd.

"Brian, six, is starting to show now. That's been a satisfaction. And . . . being able to raise a family in an environment of learning and teaching responsibility."

A ride in the rain is a lark and all part of the life.



"Those were things we really wanted to work into our herd at the time. We were looking for something to add additional frame also."

Eileen remembers being impressed with Butch's appraisal of the calf in front of him.

"He's the only bull I've ever seen Butch look at that he couldn't fault. Now, there are a lot of bulls that are bigger or taller because of how the breed has progressed."

Butch mentions frame as one of his concerns. Working toward frame alone means sacrificing too many desirables, he thinks.

"We might be in need of backing off and re-considering the traditional strong points of Angus," he says, citing the breed's maternal traits especially.

"I think this summer I heard more judges select for maternal qualities and correctness," adds Eileen.

Goals at Meiers include placing major emphasis on bulls with adequate size, size but not at the expense of milking ability. Butch summarizes his breeding program:

"To some extent we're intensifying the Power Play bloodline by using a bull called PS

High Pockets which is a Mr Angus son out of Power Play's full sister, PS Playmate 905. We're breeding Power Play daughters to High Pockets. They're really complementing each other.

"Getting a real useful animal may not be extreme in frame—more middle-of-the-road—but they'll have a lot of production them," Butch suggests.

Does he anticipate any special market appeal, then? Can this mating cover the broad spectrum breeders will grow to expect from "Butch's Angus," part-owner of the esteemed Power Play? The

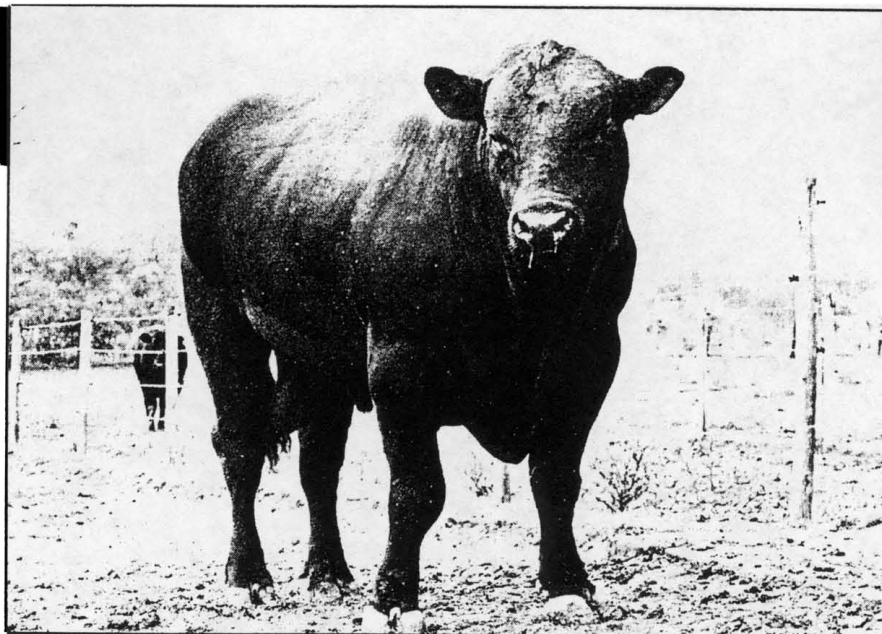
challenge, he acknowledges, is to rise to the demands posed by greater national exposure.

"We're trying to produce something that's going to be acceptable in the show ring as well as work in our production program," Butch points out in the farm's search for the "happy medium."

Local opportunities are appearing, some from the area's backlash against "eared" cattle. Butch appreciates the Zebu-influence cattle can make inroads because of the humidity of a Missouri summer.

"It's kind of run its course with the severe winter we had last year," he says. "The winters here can be so moist. There have been a lot of losses and fertility problems. I would say a third of the people coming through looking for bulls last spring were those folks who had ear cattle the last two years."

Owning an interest and merchandising semen from a popular bull has its glamorous moments for certain, but Butch and Eileen are under no delusions nor do they seem swayed by the heady role the bull and its progeny



The two-year-old Butchs Explosion by Pine Drive Big Sky and out of the Rosebank Connection 69, "10" daughter, TVF Southern Tall 501.

"We're just weaning his first calves. All we have are birth weights that we can document at this time. As a yearling, he weighed 1,152."



TVF Southern Tall 501 is the mother of Butchs Explosion.



are playing on the national stage. It's been a dogged learning process.

"People calling and ordering semen was all brand new to us. I was a bit lost—I never had any bookkeeping experience," Eileen says.

Power Play is standing at Hawkeye Breeders, Des Moines, Iowa, presently where the majority of his collection has been done. Butch reports good production

Butchs Magnitude D74 out of TVF Southern Tall 501 and sired by PS Power Play was sold in the 1985 Missouri Performance-Tested Bull Sale at Columbia. Half interest brought \$4,600. Magnitude was the highest grading bull in the 40-year history of the sale.

weekly, though semen sales and certificate requests have dropped some in the last two years, reflecting the conservative market prevailing.

The bull continues under the original ownership of The Pennsylvania State University, the McKean Brothers of Mercer, Pa., with subsequent interests purchased by the Meiers and Summitcrest Farms of Ohio, Nebraska and Iowa. An Argentine group also bought a breeding share two years ago.

The focus, though, remains on the hopes and efforts of a young couple banking on a promising yearling. After all, a calf capable of a yearling weight of 1,114 and a 110 ratio couldn't be too risky.

The Meiers had a choice complicating the Power Play decision. There was another bull Butch was considering, one that included possession. Power Play meant they would have to upgrade their A.I. program and facilities.

"We thought Power Play was a bit stronger and we chose to go with him and try to work that much harder to get our cows settled by A.I."

Minimizing the role of fate in the ups and downs of a seed stock enterprise is one of the challenges. And when fortune smiles, wouldn't you think those blessed most likely—in their quiet moments—breathe a sigh of relief not daring to wonder, why me?

AJ



Joe Hoffmeister, bull buyer and Meier customer: "We feed out a lot of cattle. Our cow herd is a mix of primarily black cows, some Limmeys, some Chi-cross cows. But . . . we're trying to hold onto a large percentage of Angus in order to be better able to sell on grade and yield."

"You have to have confidence in your cattle to sell on grade and yield. And in order to make cattle work on grade and yield, you need to have a big percentage of Angus black in them."

