



*Sisters (l to r) Janelle and Jill Sommers enjoy sharing life on an Angus farm.*

# SISTER ACT

*Jill and Janelle Sommers are two young women with common Angus Roots who plan a long and successful future with their cattle.*

*by Julie Grimes Albertson*

Jill and Janelle Sommers, Silver Lake, Ind., exemplify a new generation of young women in the Angus business. They own and manage their own herd of Angus cattle, and with the help of their family they've been a success in many facets of the business.

However, one of their greatest accomplishments, according to their mother, Sharon is that Jill and Janelle, ages 18 and 14, respectively, are great friends as well as sisters.

"Being involved in 4-H has had a lot to do with the girls getting along so well," says Sharon. "They've had the same goals and each has helped each other achieve those goals."

Sharon Sommers assists the young women on the farm and is given much credit by her husband, Dick, a veterinarian. "I guess I'm in

charge of herd health. My wife is a fine manager and I'm her hired hand," says Dick.

But there's even more family to share the credit for the Sommers' success. Dorris and Mildred Harrold, Sharon's parents, gave both Jill and Janelle their first Angus heifer when they were born.

Not only did their grandparents, of nearby Acron, Ind., begin a herd for Jill and Janelle, they travel to every show the young women participate in. "They're the best inspiration the girls have," says Sharon.

The Harrolds also inspired their own daughter. Sharon was the first ever Miss American Angus and has been an active member in the Indiana Angus Association and Auxiliary.

One major event for the family is their own Kosciusko

County Fair. Together Jill and Janelle have exhibited as many as 16 head of livestock in one fair. Their projects have included sheep, pigs, beef and dairy. Last year's county fair will probably be one of the most special for the Sommers' family.

A young neighbor boy Andy Shepherd, wanted to show a heifer at the fair. The Sommers have always considered him part of the family since his own mother and father were tragically killed, and Jill and Janelle were happy to share their livestock with him.

So Janelle gave Andy one of her heifers as a 4-H project. "We decided to give him the tamest heifer, which also happened to be the best heifer," says Janelle.

Andy's heifer won champion Angus heifer honors and returned for the supreme championship drive.

"When word circulated through the crowd watching the show that Andy was an orphan and was showing for the very first time, everyone was cheering for him," says Sharon.

Andy's heifer was then chosen supreme champion heifer of all breeds. "We were all very excited and happy that he was able to enjoy some success," says Jill.

Both Jill and Janelle have had their own share of success as well. In 1991 Jill's steer won the Indiana Beef Cattle Association's carcass contest. She was also a member of the winning intermediate sales team from Indiana at the 1992 National Junior Angus Show in Columbus, Ohio.

Janelle was a member of the first place livestock judging team at the 1991 Hoosier Beef Congress, where she placed third individually. She also hopes to follow in her



*The Sommers women own a herd of 30 Angus females. Jill and Janelle's cattle have had success both in the showing and in carcass contests.*

sister's and now Andy's footsteps and win grand champion heifer laurels at their county fair.

While the women of the family seem to garner most of the spotlight, father, Dick Sommers, is a constant source of support and

breeder. He also works as a consultant for veal producers in four states.

While Dick doesn't have an Angus background, he certainly is familiar with cattle as his family has been in the dairy business since 1939. His brother, Ron, still

Herd decisions are typically made over supper at the Sommers farm. Jill and Janelle are instrumental in choosing bulls to use on their females, but they also consult their parents.

"Our cattle have to have good EPDs among other things, but we've always watched very closely for good disposition," says Dick. Along with managing the farm, Sharon supports her daughters as a nine-year veteran 4-H leader. "The great thing about 4-H is as a parent, I get to be involved. Unlike athletics, where you just sit and watch from the stands.

Being involved with our girls as they work with their cattle has been very special to us, it's made our relationship," says Sharon.

Owning and caring for a herd of cattle has taught Jill and Janelle to depend on each other and their family but they also know if work needs to be done, they are capable of doing it.

AJ

*"I tell them that there's no one in the world with genetics as close as sisters have, so if you're going to criticize your sister, criticize yourself"*

*- Dick Sommers*

encouragement, although as a veterinarian, he has many other responsibilities off their farm.

Dr. Sommers' practice is limited to veal calves. He, along with another veterinarian, raises up to 900 Holstein steers per year and serves as a veterinarian for a feedlot and another Angus

maintains a successful herd of Holsteins.

Dick now artificially inseminates Jill and Janelle's 30 Angus females. However, he may soon lose that responsibility as both Jill and Janelle, as well as their mother, will learn to AI this summer.