



A STATESMAN & CATTLEMAN

*Most people know him as the man behind Glenkirk Farms.
But Glen Klippenstein also serves the people and agriculture industry of Missouri as a state senator.*

by Julie Grimes Albertson

Standing on the floor of the Missouri Senate is a man who political insiders are watching. He has a strong, dynamic presence, not unlike many who have chosen this profession. What's different about this man is not his presence, but his priorities.

"Agriculture is based on a handshake; what I say is what I mean. We take it for granted. I think that sense of honor and responsibility must be carried into government" says Klippenstein.

This cattleman has made it his mission to take what's good about agriculture and apply it to politics.

The Klippensteins have been in the business of agriculture for generations. Originally from Germany, the clan emigrated to the Ukraine in the 15th century to escape religious persecution. They later came to Canada and the United States.

Glen is one notable member of the family who has continued the tradition of living off the land. He spent his first 11 years on a homestead in Saskatchewan before moving to Pennsylvania.

"My family left their farm and friends and moved 2,500 miles because Mom and Dad believed the education of their five children should be their top priority," Glen says. The sacrifice was obvious considering his mother had seldom been more than 25 miles from home in her entire life.

"When I went to that school in the East, a big thing for me was to prove to those city kids that farmers weren't such hicks." He must have proved his point as

the young man was both valedictorian and student council president in high school.

Glen is doing the same thing in a legislature with priorities divided between the major population centers and the large rural areas of the state. "North Missouri is the area that I'm representing. If there's a war going on, I'm going to do everything I can for my constituents."

Glen believes that those in the

business of agriculture are taken for granted by policy makers. "Most legislators have respect for us without knowing us. They assume incorrectly that since we provide so consistently, there's no need to be concerned about us. Overkill on environmentalism and a disrespect for private property rights are a great concern."

Klippenstein the senator has set out to improve the lives of his rural



Glen Klippenstein, the statesman, debates an issue on the Missouri Senate floor in Jefferson City.

Glen Klippenstein, the family man, says he believes 'parents give their children stability by having the courage and compassion to say no. I think those are rules for citizens and government to live by.'
 Pictured (back row from left) are Ivan, Brett, Linda, Brian, and Noel; (front row from left) Kim, Glen, and Nancy.



constituents. They have suffered at the hands of big-city interests long enough, he says. "If there's a choice between funding a city program or one for a town, the city wins. I believe that if rural America were more prosperous, inner cities would follow."

Politics could have touched Glen early on in his life. Herman Purdy, Glen's animal science advisor at Pennsylvania State University, encouraged him to take a job on President Eisenhower's Angus farm. But the future entrepreneur wanted to try it on his own first.

Young Klippenstein went back to the Pennsylvania farm that his father managed. He and his father rented it and began raising horses. All the cropland was put into high quality hay, which was sold to a nearby race track.

"I finally had enough money to get into the beef cattle business," Glen says. However, the beef industry's gain was the equine business's loss. "Four years out of college I sold all my horses to buy Linda an engagement ring."

Thus began the next generation of Klippensteins.

Glen and his wife, Linda, have raised four children — Brian, Brett, Noel and Ivan. Growing up, each child was involved on the farm. Glen was determined to share this part of his upbringing with his own children.

"We're the result of our genetics and our environment," he says. "What genetics didn't offer me, environment did. That was a real love for the soil, livestock and community. We grew up knowing the value of family life and community."

The community the Klippenstein's chose to raise both their children and cattle was Maysville, Mo. Glen and his partner in the cattle business, Kirk Pendleton, selected northwest Missouri to begin Glenkirk Farms.

"We came to this area and knew it was right. It's in the center of the country with rolling grass countryside and lots of cows. We could tell the people had a strong work ethic, and we felt comfortable with them."

The partners began with Horned and

Polled Herefords in 1966 and eventually experimented with other breeds. In 1977 Glenkirk bought its first Angus cattle in order to diversify and spread the risk. "We had Simmental, Limousin and Chianina before the Angus. We sold all the exotics and bought Angus because we decided that what we needed was an absence of problems. We believed that from our experience, Angus did most things the best, especially when crossed with Herefords."



"Religion and education were something important learned from our parents' sacrifices. We learned that you have to have roots in order to reach for the stars, otherwise you would get lost."

— Glen Klippenstein

The cattlemen set goals of building an efficient and consistent Angus cow. "We knew Angus had easy calving, doing ability and good carcass quality. Those are the things we knew we didn't want to lose. We wanted to get a little more growth and lean into them and improve their disposition," Glen says.

In a changing industry, Klippenstein maintains there will always be a need for the Angus cow. However, he does believe

the breed has an Achilles' heel.

"The fact that everyone is trying to be like Angus by copying the black hide could eventually affect the credibility of the breed," he says. "Saving that credibility will probably mean individual identification all the way through the carcass stage. Other breeds will have difficulty fitting the same niche."

Glenkirk maintains a 300-head herd of Angus cattle, but recently sold many of their Hereford and Polled Hereford cows. "We've cut down and simplified our business," Glen says. "We've always been in the numbers and genetics business, but we've cut costs. We are now producing bulls almost strictly for buyers who raise calves in order to meet the demand of consumers."

Klippenstein believes that government, like his business, needs to be simplified. "The bureaucracy part of government is set up in such a way that it is not conducive to change. For example, the pressure that is put on staff people in government to maintain their jobs is tremendous. Likewise, the pressure put on the highest echelons to build their empires is insidious," he says.

Breaking down the walls that governmental rules and regulations create is also high on the senator's priority list. "It seems to me that rules and regulations mean the government doesn't trust us," he says. "The bureaucrat says since I'm in this position of influence, I'm smarter and I'm going to make you do this."

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“What you say is the hell you will, and what we have is a confrontational situation. Citizens must govern, not out-of-touch bureaucrats.”

Applying his experience in agriculture to politics isn't limited to policy making. What most people believe to be the worst part of being a politician, the campaigning, is not a chore for Glen. That's not a surprise for those who know him, for he has been marketing both himself and his cattle since he began in this business.

Still, Klippenstein has had to change his approach somewhat as a senator. “I've had to be patient and not brash dealing with legislators. I visit with staffpeople, secretaries, anyone who has a lot of input. That way they know me, how I think, and understand that I don't have a hidden agenda,” he says.

His agenda is clear. “I'm very proud of agriculture and believe that its preservation is paramount to the future of our country. That means that, by and large, the government has to get the hell out of it,” Glen says.

A major part of both Glenkirk Farms

and the senatorial career of Klippenstein has been his wife, Linda. She has played host to thousands of people over the years and now has added responsibilities.

During last summer's flooding, Glen was very much in demand as a problem solver. When the senator wasn't available, it was sometimes left up to Linda to fill his boots.

A call came on one Sunday afternoon for Glen. The man on the phone had sand bags and people to fill them. He just needed the sand so they could try and stop a levy from breaking.

Glen wasn't home, so Linda was left to search for sand.

“I called everyone on the state level. There was none to be found,” she says. “I was finally able to reach someone from U.S. Senator Bond's office who was able to direct me to people who could get sand.”

It's precisely this kind of problem solving that has been Linda's forte in the cattle business and now the political world.

Ivan Kanak, a former partner at Glenkirk Farms, believes Glen's experience in the beef industry has helped prepare him for political life. “He

always dedicates so much time and energy into whatever he's doing — as vice president for membership at National Cattlemen's Association, chairman of the Beef Board and now as senator.”

Kanak was also among many Klippenstein friends and coworkers who helped in the senate election campaign. “I put my energy into the cause. Although I may not always agree with every political position he takes, I know that in his gut he does what he believes is best for everyone.”

For the Klippensteins, the

progression from raising and marketing livestock to the political arena has been a natural one. Unfortunately, the quality and integrity basic to those involved in agriculture is sometimes called to question in the hallowed halls of politics.

The difficulties of re-election are sure to touch the senator from Missouri's 12th District. What his political opponents don't realize is that Klippenstein the cattleman is accustomed to adversity, long odds and the need to persevere.

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