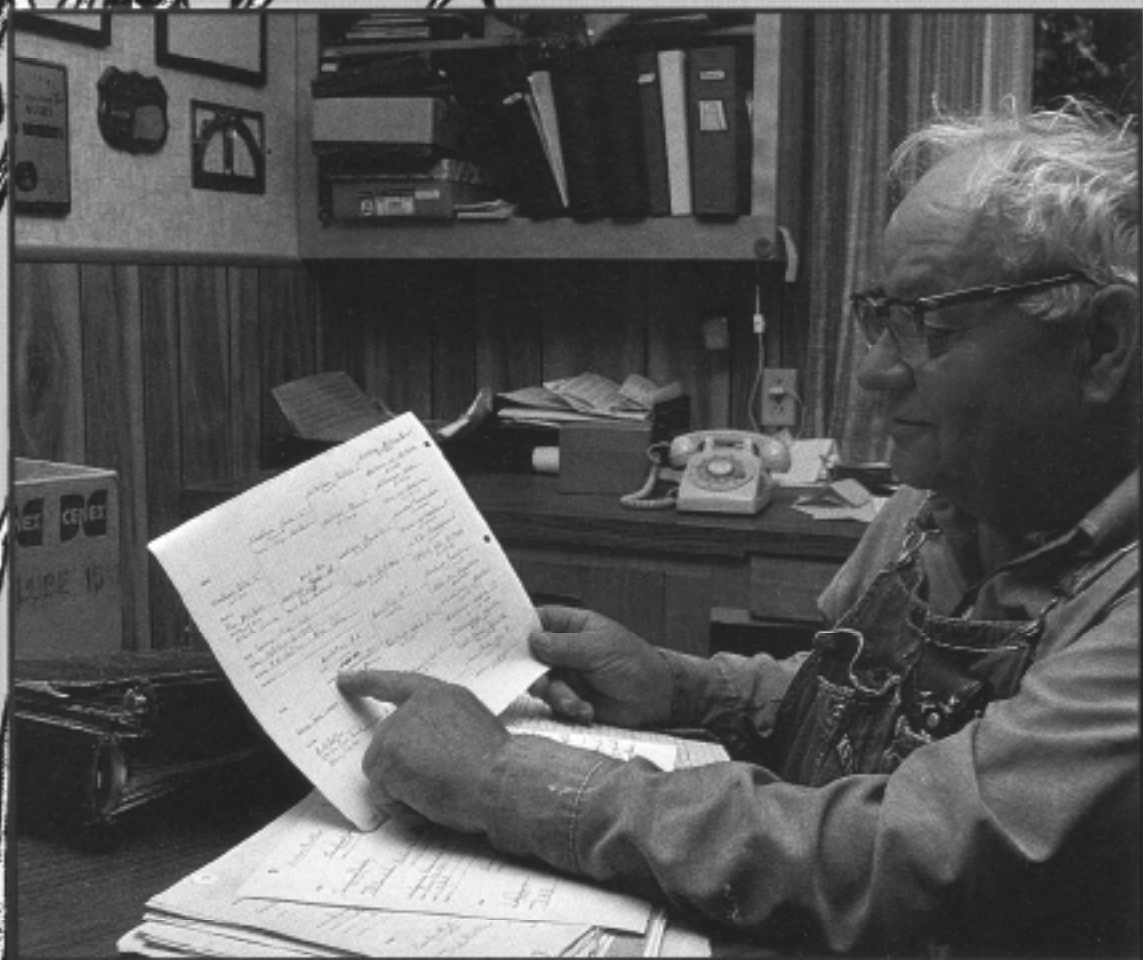




This family pioneered twice



Doran Butler
Spring Cove Ranch
Bliss, Idaho

By Jim Cotton
Editor

Over the mantle in the Doran Butler living room, there hangs a peculiar and treasured relic. The piece is an 1876 Model Winchester, an oddity because it's a full-stocked carbine and indicative of the military application (and aspirations) Winchester had in mind. It was built at the request of General George Armstrong Custer.

"Ours has the serial number 1040, one of the very first productions," says Doran, cradling it. "It was designed for Custer's Seventh Cavalry, but the company couldn't get it delivered before the Little Bighorn. If they'd been packing these repeaters, the outcome could have been much different."

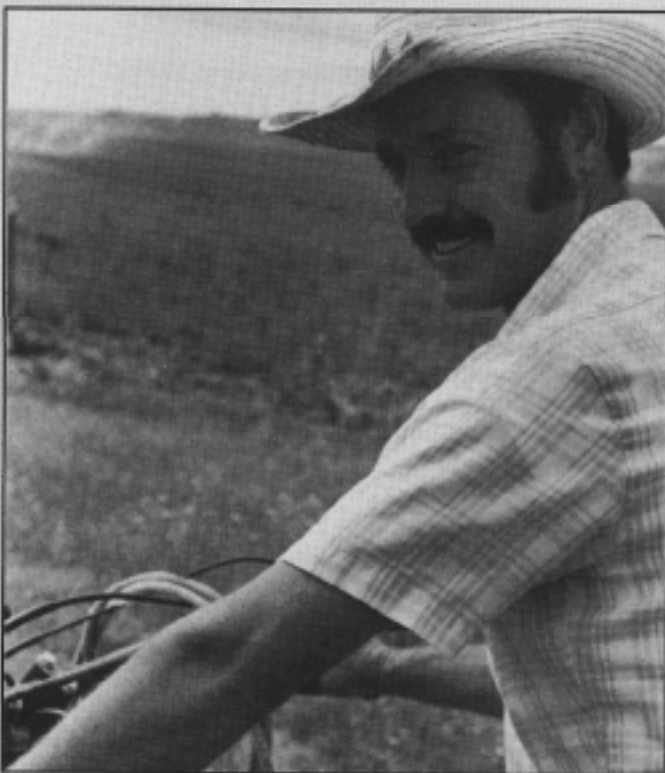
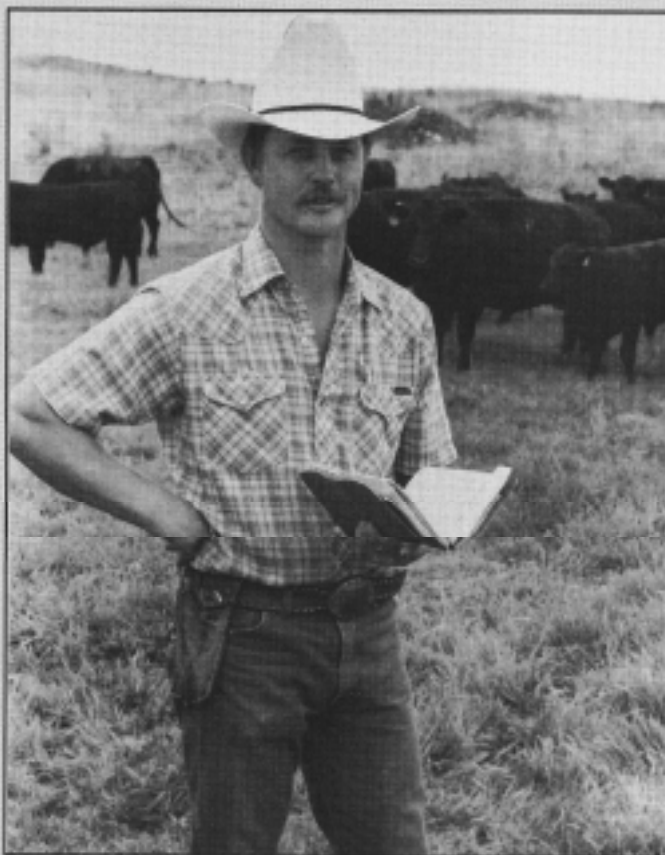
The product of circumstances good or ill. Many of today's situations are dictated by the vision of our forebears or some pivotal decision made in the family's past as the results echo down through to the present. The Doran Butler family is proof.

Here's a family who emigrated to the West-twice-and established a way of life where roots and tradition are never far below the surface. Like the old lever action saddle gun, there are daily reminders; someone struggled not so long ago to grub the sagebrush from these pastures. Folks "neighbored" to dig its ditches, vital arteries for this desert land. Ranchers pooled their tools and buried self-interest to preserve or restore the fragile grasses. What's grown alongside the herds and irrigated fields of today is an enduring ethic—"They sacrificed and survived and so will we."

It's a saga, beginning when Pleasant Bassham Butler (1850-1932)—"Grandad"—left the Ozarks of northern Arkansas in 1883 and traveled overland to Clover Creek near the present site of Bliss, Idaho. With him were his wife Sarah, then 21 years old, and four daughters from his former wife, who was deceased.

The family took up residence at a stagecoach station called Cold Spring. Here Arthur H. Butler was born in the depths of a brutal winter, January 17, 1888, six miles from what was to be his future and permanent home.

Doran recalls his grandfather recounting the difficulties faced by the family then: "It was a struggle to keep the old log cabin warm. Another thing was the



Art Butler is a graduate of the University of Idaho, degreed in animal science. Dan Butler is also a U of I graduate with a Master's in range management.

decline of the plentiful herds of deer and antelope the settlers depended on so heavily for food."

When Arthur was eight years old, the family decided to return to their old home in Ozarks. What followed was a long, hard trip of four and one-half months with the family a-horseback and in wagons. They drove 75 head of horses and the small boy rode most of the way helping with the herd. It was not an easy trip, the most anxious moments witnessing a raid by the Dalton Gang in southeastern Kansas.

The Butlers bought a small farm in the Ozarks, but Doran recalls "the lure of the West was strong", and in two and one-half years, they sold the land and headed west again. It was a slower trip with all-winter stops at Aurora, Mo., and Coffeyville, Kan., where the children attended school. The family stayed for two years in Windsor, Colo., and finally in March of 1902. Arthur and his father arrived back in Idaho and sent for the family.

IT WAS FAR FROM EDEN

Instilled in the family lore is the question: "Why did Granddad settle in such a poor spot?" It was a barren place then, alkali soil, rocky hills, and little irrigation water.

"It was close to good range," said the elder Butler, an insight that proved prophetic. Then the country offered winter range to the south toward the Snake River. The sagebrush was sparse and there grew lots of bluebunch wheatgrass. Close to the higher hills and the Camas Prairie was abundant summer forage.

According to regional history, the original Oregon Trail went south of the-river near Bliss, so the-range had little use until 1870 when the Lewis Ferry was built to provide passage across the river near Salmon Falls Creek and south of Thousand Springs. The range began to deteriorate when traffic increased, for with every wagon passing, there were probably four head or more of cattle and horses in tow. They lived off the land as hauling feed was extravagant.

Homesteading was on the minds of most, and the only product the pioneers had to sell was cattle. Many drives were made to points as far as Omaha, Neb., or south to the railhead at Kelton, Utah.

The year Arthur was born was the infamous winter of 1887-88 when a once-a-century siege of the country wiped out the herds and many of the settlers. Hay-making became a common ranch practice. Hay was not grown as it was the era preceding irrigation. Only the teams and some milk cows enjoyed what hay was available. Granddad Butler brought the first mowing machine to Clover Creek in 1890, a purchase from the Sears and Roebuck Company.

Sheep claimed much of the former cattle range until 1910. Arthur, then a teenaged boy, worked for the Clinton Sheep Company on Calf Creek and would describe the difficulties the herders had keeping the bands separated as some numbered up to 3,000 a band.

Homesteading continued during the early 1900s with more restrictions imposed and some attention given to reclamation. Irrigation became the watchword. While it made the land more productive, the projects consumed the better range land and made less total range available.

At this time, alarming deterioration of the perennial grasses was noted. Beneficial forbs had declined and sagebrush threatened to choke the land. Doran points out



Among his keepsakes, Doran treasures the old stamp and certificates common to early Angus registration procedures. Each herd had a unique and official stamp.

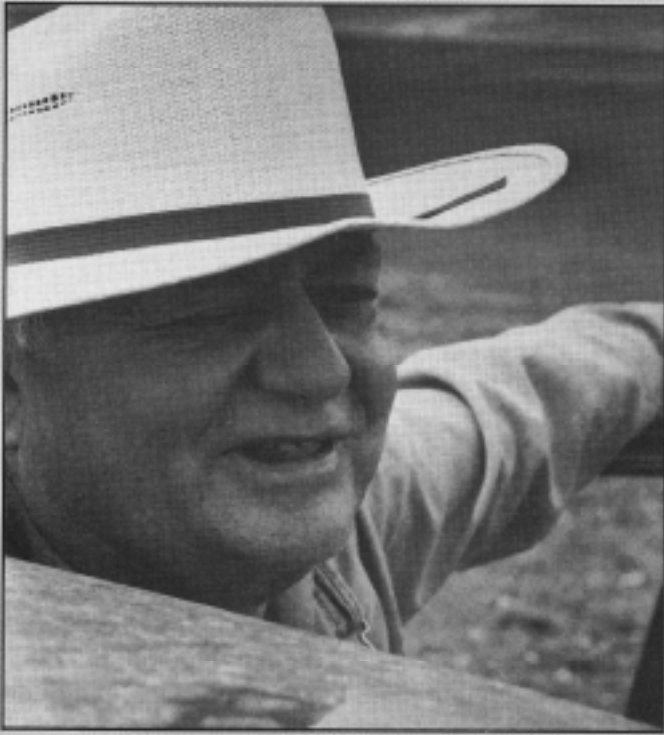
most observers felt horses were a major factor in the range depletion. Big game had disappeared almost entirely. "By World War I, the lower ranges were nearly useless for livestock."

Downey Brome, or cheatgrass, invaded. It was a winter annual, and the newcomer was blessed by some, cursed by others. "Cheat" became a common cover and provided early forage though nutritionally it was exactly as the nickname implied: a false filler. It proved to be a poor soil retainer yet highly competitive against some of the more desirable species. (The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 was drafted partially in response to the aggressiveness of cheatgrass and other range problems.)

ENTER THE NEW BREED

It was in this setting that Arthur Butler began to plot his future. The country held challenges and great things, great projects in store. Building, rebuilding, and "proving-up" on both the land and one's ability to carve out a destiny were alluring for a young man with drive and spirit. He married Effie Carrico in June, 1916, and was employed as a ditch rider on the west end of the North Side Canal in the Magic Valley.

From this vantage, he would frequently observe the experience of his elderly friend and neighbor George Fletcher with the local curiosity, a young herd of 30 Angus heifers. Fletcher purchased his stock from the Iowa herds of George McCulloch of Humeston and the Escher and

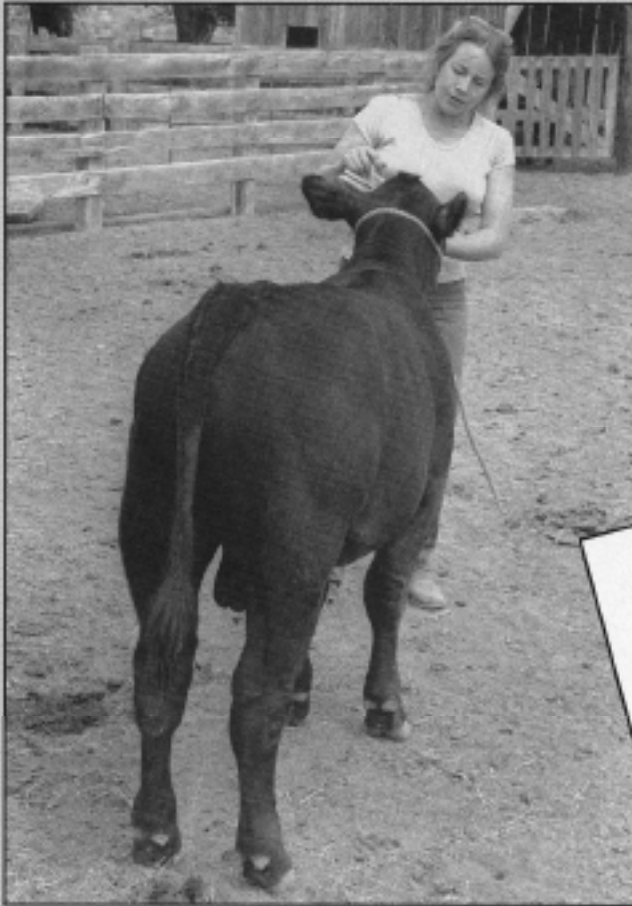


In 1971, Doran was honored as rancher of the Year by the Idaho Society of Range Management and also named its Grassman of the Year.



Effie Butler, pictured at 92, remained active and interested in the ranch and its progress until her death last October 23, 1987. She passed away as people used to, "quietly, in her sleep." Though a diminutive and gracious little lady, she labored like a man at her husband's side grubbing sagebrush when Spring Cove was little more than a dream

Bull #650 is a Pine Drive Big Sky son from a Star Trek of PLS dam. Number 901 is a Rito 9J9 son. The "650" bull recorded an actual weaning weight 9f 735 pounds, ratio of 118.



Mrs. Art Butler—Stacy—helps with the fitting and showing.

TO TELL THE AGE OF A HORSE

To tell the age of any horse,
Inspect the lower jaw of course;
The six front teeth the tale will tell,
And every doubt and fear dispel.

Two middle "nippers" you behold
Before the colt is two weeks old.
Before eight weeks two more will come;
Eight months the "corners", cut the
gum.

The outside grooves will disappear
From the middle two in just one year;
In two years, from the second pair;
In three the "corners", too, are bare.

At two the middle "nippers" drop,
At three the second pair can't stop;
When four years old the 3rd pair goes;
At five a full new set he shows.

The deep, black spots will pass from
view.

At six years, from the middle pair;
The second pair at seven years;

At eight the spot on the
From mid-

At nine

Spring Cove Ranch

PUREBRED ABERDEEN - ANGUS CATTLE
PERCHERON AND SADDLE HORSES
PHONE BLISS 2513

ARTHUR BUTLER & SONS

BLISS, IDAHO

Ryan herd. Quipman E was the name of the yearling bull.

Like most Idaho natives, Arthur asked Mr. Fletcher, "Why didn't you get some good red cattle instead of those blacks?"

"Just watch'em grow," was Fletcher's response.

Arthur Butler watched for the next two years, and after the death of his friend, he bought half the herd from the estate and half interest in the bull. "From that time to this, our whole family have been Angus boosters," says Doran. The date was March 1, 1919.

"When I was a kid, growing up in 4-H during the early thirties, black cattle were a real rare thing in Idaho and many odd questions were asked. 'Where did they come from? What are they good for?' Dad predicted that some day Angus would be the number one beef breed. He nearly saw that wish fulfilled when he suddenly passed away in 1955."

Spring Cove Ranch records reveal registration numbers of that first purchase numbered under 200,000 with even some four and five digit numbers appearing back in the fifth generation. The lowest number belonged to one old ancestor "Blackbird of Hillhurst", no. 3976.

"In those days, lots of emphasis was placed on cow families," Doran points out. "Some of the cow families in our old herd were 'Blackbirds', 'Nosegays', 'Jennets',

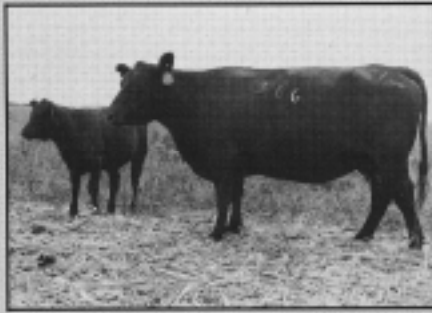
'Drumin Lucys', and 'Queen Mothers'. Our modern breeding techniques have done away with the cow family emphasis. A.I. has placed more attention on the bull lines."

Original cows from the Fletcher purchase included Fanny Kintore 15, born in May, 1915; Olive Blossom, Kintore Janet, Kintore Garnet 15, Lucilla M., and Kintore Wanda 15—all with numbers in the low two hundred thousandths and forgotten now except for the foundation they provided.

TWO ROUNDS WITH DREADED DISEASE

One of the first hurdles the family encountered in their cattle enterprise was a significant one: tuberculosis. "With close cooperation of the veterinarians, it was cleared up, but it cost half the herd," Doran remembers. "Then in the 1930s, Bangs hit. It was cleared up with vaccination, but it bugged us for nearly 10 years. It cost us nearly half the herd just as T.B. did 15 years earlier.

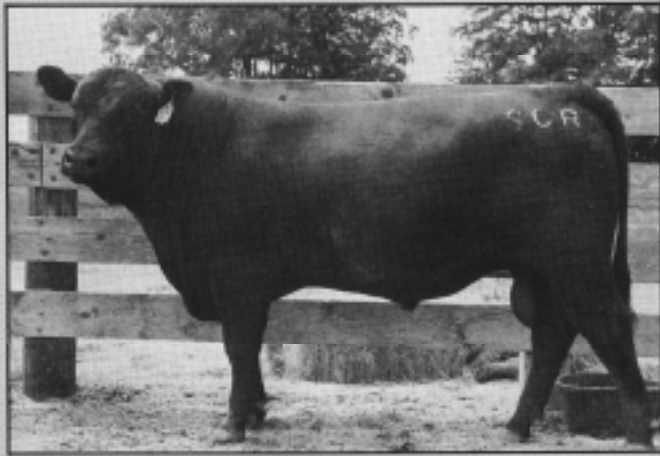
"Our records show that during the Depression, Dad sold bulls for \$25 and cows for \$10 to \$20. No one had any money and you couldn't borrow a dime on a cow. We had some genetic defects to deal with too (double muscling), but we've taken care of that by elimination of whole strains of cattle." The family sold several females to



Spring Cove Ranch, Inc.

Star Route
Bliss, Idaho 83314
308-352-4201

A "1976 model", she's a Bond of Wye daughter with a calf by the Spring Cove cleanup bull, a grandson of Great Northern



A PS Sasquatch son from a D Quick Silver dam, named .357 Magnum by the Butlers.



A daughter of Freemans Jet Commander (a "Knoppy" son and "Jetliner" grandson). She also is out of the same cow as the #650 bull. Calf is a Pine Drive Big Sky son.

"Pioneer Herd of the West"

the University of California for research as they purged the herd of the problem.

The Intermountain West was a kind of outpost for those pursuing anything out of the ordinary. Angus were far from a household word there even in the 1930s. "It was very difficult to find good replacement bulls," says Doran. "Up until the late Thirties, there were only three or four registered herds in Idaho. We did a lot of trading with these herds until genetically the herds were nearly one. Travel was difficult and good herd sires from the East were hard to come by."

Doran credits 4-H as one of those important elements in their progress. "In the summer of 1931, when I was 12 and my older sister Eleanor was 14, we each fitted our first 4-H steers."

Not only was the experience vastly educational to the youngsters, Doran recalls "it really got Dad excited about improving our herd. In January, 1932, we took those two steers to Ogden, Utah, to the livestock show. I won second in my class and Eleanor won reserve champion of the 4-H show. Dad and I were really impressed with the beautiful cattle there at Ogden. One herd we liked belonged to John and Elliott Brown of Rose Hill, Iowa.

"The following year, we were back with more steers and purchased a bull from Elliott Brown-Revolution B 3, a grandson of the great international champion, Black Revolution and a double great-grandson of the immortal

Earl Marshall. That bull really got us going on herd improvement." Other important sire introductions were Woodlawn Duke 3 from Roy Ballhorn of Wetaskawin, Alberta; Great Oaks Bluemar with Briarcliff and Blackcap Revolution in the pedigree and purchased at the Denver bull sale from George L. McGregor of Michigan; and Blackbird Bell of Whiteway, purchased in Missouri in 1951. "Mr. Cosgrove, editor of the *Purebred Record* made the statement he was the best quartered bull he had seen in the West. We called him 'Whitey'."

Heifer purchases included two 30-head carloads purchased from the Sam Henderson herd in Alberta, Canada, 1949 and 1951, large-framed females which have proven to be some of the best foundation dams. "Today our best cows trace to them."

By this time, the post WWII era, Angus were becoming well enough established in the country that more association activity and sales were in demand. A small group of Idaho breeders met in Klamath Falls, Ore., during a Pacific Coast association meeting to formulate plans for an Idaho unit. The year was 1950 with Art Butler, Lloyd Barron, Cleo Stephens, the Tews family, and Ed Parsons and Sons laying the groundwork. Art Butler was elected president of the group in 1953, and he just on the threshold of witnessing the breed gaining acceptance in every quarter of the beef industry when he passed away in 1955.



Number 402 is a Scherbrook Classic daughter with a February OSU Game Plan heifer at side. (From the commercial herd).

A Kadence Shoshone 520 daughter. Her dam produced 11 calves with an average weaning weight ratio of 116.



FULFILLING THE DREAM

"He had just returned with our show herd. . . from the Elko County Fair in Nevada and would have been on his way to the Eastern Idaho State Fair in Blackfoot within the hour when he died from a heart attack. After Dad's death, we transferred our membership from his name to Spring Cove Ranch. In December of that year we had an auction to sell the cattle and settle Dad's estate. Ninety-six head of registered cattle were sold for nearly \$400 average, considered then a real 'hot' sale. We started the year 1956 with only six cows."

Back to a beginning, more than simply just starting over, because the family was building toward a new generation. Spring Cove was diversified into dairy farming plus Doran raised beans and sweet corn for local canneries. The range improvement went on and more land was brought into production under irrigation. Lessons from decades of selecting good-doing and functional cattle were applied, and the study paid off. For four consecutive years, the champion carcass at the local fair came from the Spring Cove herd. In 1972, Doran's son Arthur sent a steer to the fair that proved "incredible", a champion of its class and a top carcass animal with a Yield Grade 1 and Prime quality.

To this day, steers from the commercial herd and the lower end of the registered bulls and heifers are fed out to slaughter weights on the place. Slaughter cattle are sold on grade and yield with most grading Choice and Yield Grade 2 or 3. "Quite a few are Yield Grade 1, and only one steer in the last ten years was a Yield 4," says Doran.

Bulls are sold directly to commercial cattlemen in the area. It's the rare sale that's more than 40 miles from home.

"This year we sold about half our yearlings to repeat buyers." Three or four top yearlings are kept for cleanup after A.I.

As Doran approaches his 70th year, he can ease back with confidence and satisfaction for the efforts at building, planning, allocating resources, and vertically integrating have been well-spent. Both sons Art and Daniel have taken hold. Spring Cove Ranch Inc. is a continuing program with the next generation in the wings. Art and Stacy have a toddler, Sarah, and Dan and his wife Diana are expecting this month. She is a teacher and P.E. coach at Bliss.

"Both are good with cattle. Since the boys have been home we have gone to total A.I. Although we have been on AHIR several years with the registered herd, the commercial end was added in 1979. We've been on the Select Sires young sire program for several years, proving young bulls for the company's A.I. program."

LIVING ON NATURE'S TERMS

Most ranchers in the area are by necessity range managers and involved with the various federal and state agencies that govern public lands. doran himself

homesteaded 160 acres, and over the years the ranch has been deeded to the family in at least six transactions from 1912 to 1948 under the Carey Act, the Desert Land Act, several homestead acts, and public land exchange. Through sound range husbandry, they were able to arrange a private allotment with the Bureau of Land Management.

Operating on public lands does not mean a free ride, in contrast to urban misconceptions. Spring Cove and other cooperating ranches have had to share expenses constructing cattle guards, highway right-of-way fencing, crossfencing, water improvements, and reseeding or brush control. Crested wheatgrass adds significant leverage as it is an early greening perennial allowing cattle to leave winter feedyards earlier in the spring. An important introduced species, it replaces the old bluebunch wheatgrass Doran knew when he first became acquainted with the country.

As he's been honored by the Idaho Society of Range Management, Doran's understanding of range ecology, plant biology, and the policy of governmental agencies overseeing the custody of the range is pretty keen. He's been involved in some of the most difficult negotiations that have confronted both the agencies and ranching over several decades.

"After the big job of proving who had the priorities and therefore the grazing rights, the ranchers were told the right was a privilege and not property," Doran says of some early policy adoptions. "It could not be transferred off the base property. Use it or lose it was the only way it could go. Soon afterward, after WWII, that policy was changed to allow transfers from one property to another. That caused the right to take on a monetary value and buying and selling grazing became common. Many of the smaller rights were then bought up by the larger ranches making more economical units. This practice has made it tough for the small family ranch to survive. Many consider it socially adverse to the ranching society."

One of the factors compelling Doran's selection as an outstanding range conservationist was his war on weeds. Selection committeemen were impressed with his persistence toward weed eradication. "The time to kill a weed is when you see it," says Doran, applying a home-grown philosophy, though he follows the latest treatment and recommended chemicals. He's armed for spot treatment at any time and has reduced his annual outlay for weed control to a tenth of what it had been running in the early 1960s.

The Butler family's Pioneer Allotment is the scene of much of his devotion towards range improvement. This area's approximate elevation is 3,100 feet with eight to 10 inches of rainfall received annually. Eighty-five percent of that falls from November through June. The growing season is approximately 135 days experiencing

high evaporation rates in this semi-desert region of sunny days and high winds. Soils are loam to sandy loam with lava outcroppings. All in all, not a paradise for cow or grasslike. Yet, because of stewardship, the range capacity under the Butlers has increased 35. percent. Ten kinds of native perennial grasses were found during a 1971 ranch survey when in 1940 there were none.

Like their predecessors, the family has sought to bring the land into greater production, not be extracting what wealth it offers but rather through replenishing it. Massive water projects, range rotations, and letting things lie where the land only begrudgingly gave of itself helped the family live in harmony with a frugal and brittle environment. A marsh, for example, is left pristine and undrained as it supplies water table equilibrium, wildlife habitat, and the pleasures of nature study for the family.

Conscious of leaving things better than they were found, Helen and Doran Butler have enriched the community with good citizens through both their own parenting (seven children) and their years as 4-H leaders. Both were recipients of the Union Pacific Scholarship as was their daughters Jane and Becky Sue at the University of Idaho. Becky Sue was the Idaho representative to India in 1968-69 under the auspices of the International Farm Youth Exchange. Doiran has held offices in the Bliss Community Church, the SCS, school board, the extension council, grazier's association, and the Bliss Grange. "Participation. . . is the duty of every citizen," he says. He's just completed a hectic term on a local county hospital board. "I'm proud to retire with things in good shape and running well."

Pleasant Bassham Butler would have approved. The return to Idaho proved to be a fruitful decision in time though it's likely an occasional look back brought more comfort than forging ahead. The second emigration "took" and the land surrendered what it could to the folks who this time stayed and endured.

The old rifle resting on the mantle might inspire them to consider: what would today be like had the family never left the more agreeable Ozarks with its milder winters and abundant water?

Armed with single-shot Springfields, Custer's men couldn't turn the tide against Sioux repeaters. The outcome was sealed by a chain of decisions great and small and to speculate is just an exercise. Still, one wonders..