

Greenway Angus owner Norman Clifton turned from commercial to registered Angus in the 1960s, then began developing a linebred performance herd based on the blood of Ankonian Dynamo and his sire Emulous Pride 70.

GREENWAY ANGUS

A Linebred Performance-Oriented Florida Herd

by Ann Gooding

The development of Greenway Angus, Ocala, Fla., in many respects parallels development of the state's beef cattle industry. Simply stated, it's a story of mediocrity evolving toward excellence.

"Back 30 years ago," says Greenway's owner Norman Clifton, "the cows in Florida were very poor quality—not only our own but everybody else's. But the Florida commercial people, in my opinion, especially in the last seven or eight years, have really started improving their cattle . . . I think every year the over-all quality of the commercial herds has improved . . . used to be commercial men came by the place to buy a bull and the first thing they asked was, 'Where is the cheapest bull you've got that's a 3-year-old?'"

There was a time—and not too long ago—when most of the cattle in Florida (native stock that trace to cattle the Spaniards brought to this country in the early 1500s) ran in the woods and were brought in once a year so the calves could be sold. Mature cows might weigh 800 lb., their calves anywhere from 250 lb. to 325 lb. at weaning. More likely than not, the next year's herd bulls were some of the better looking critters out of that calf crop.

Attention to Records

Now, though, higher interest rates and land costs are forcing better management. And Florida cattlemen are starting to pay attention to records. They are interested in performance—predictable performance. The name of the game is pounds.

And that's what Greenway's linebred performance-oriented herd has been developed to give them.

Clifton, who also owns Ocala Ford Motor Co. and recently acquired Ocala Ford Tractor, first entered the cattle business in the mid-1950s when he bought steers at about

400 lb., then sold them at about 700 lb. He fed them primarily on grass near what is now Greenway Angus, where he and his wife Mary Jane, son Norman and daughter Julie now live.

After his initial steer purchases, there followed a 25-year evolution to the registered Angus brood cows in the herd today—the ones producing performance bulls for Florida's increasingly sophisticated commercial market.

Step One

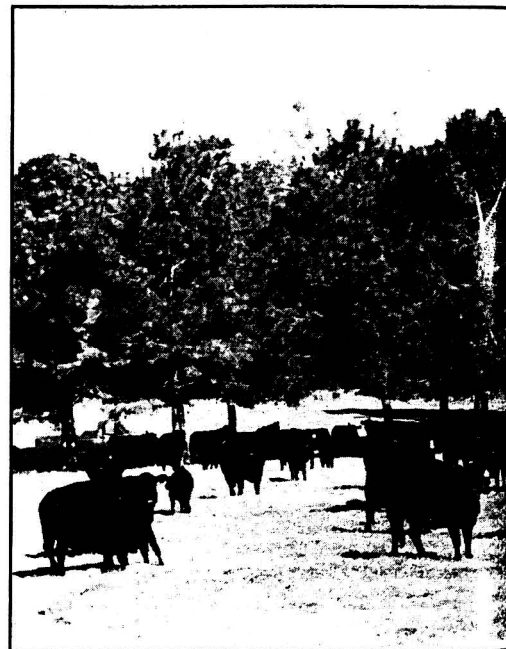
By the late 1950s, because Clifton decided he could get better quality feeder calves by raising his own, he bought some commercial cows. During the next few years he tried several breeds and combinations thereof before settling on Angus.

"The Angus did the best for us over-all, especially when we put them on horned Hereford cows. Those black calves with white faces were very popular and did very well for us. But we began to have pinkeye problems with some of our Hereford females. And we were always trying to improve our product. So we sold all of our Hereford cows over a period of two or three years and had all black cows. And then we began to upgrade."

And upgrading, by the mid-1960s, led to purebred Angus. The first 30 registered females came from Baldwin Angus Ranch at Ocala; then during the next two years some 80 head were purchased from Francis Storza, Moccasin Hollow Farm at Alpharetta, Ga.; top heifers were kept as replacements and the herd built to a few hundred head. But Clifton still wasn't satisfied. The evolution continued.

Performance a Natural

Because his was still a feeder calf program, Clifton was pound conscious. "That's what we sold," he says. "That's the way we



made a profit." And a little later, when commercial bulls became Greenway's product, their buyers were interested in pounds. So going performance was a natural.

About that time A.I. was becoming fairly common and Clifton decided to use it to try a number of bulls. For the next several years Greenway cows were bred artificially with semen from a number of bulls representing a number of bloodlines and a number of herds. After comparing offspring, Clifton decided Emulous breeding best suited his purpose. And one bull in that line was out-performing them all—Ankony

Angus Corp.'s Emulous Pride 70, sire of Ankonian Dynamo.

So began the Ankony-Dynamo influence at Greenway.

In 1973 Clifton went to Ankony's Highmore, S.D., division and came back with a full brother of Dynamo and a couple paternal half brothers. The next year he purchased Ankonian Momentum, an Emulous Pride 70 son and the top-performing bull out of the 1973 Ankony calf crop. Then came Ankonian Prestige, also by Dynamo and the top Emulous-bred bull in the 1974 calf crop. From among the 1975 calves came a Dynamo son out of Momentum's mother, and from a special mating of Momentum to Dynamo's mother came the 1976 calf Ankonian Momentous.

Dynamo Daughters

Then in late fall of 1974, 110 Dynamo daughters (all seven to eight months old) were ticketed south from Highmore. And in spite of the radical environmental differences, they adjusted quickly enough to produce nearly 100 calves after the first breeding season, and the remaining 10

The Ankony connection and Dr. Long's influence don't stop there. Greenway manager Chuck Graff came to Florida via Ankony, where he worked under Dr. Long. A Bancroft, Neb., native, Graff earned a bachelors degree in animal science and his masters in nutrition and beef management from the University of Nebraska. He and his wife Nancy and daughter Jennifer moved to Florida in 1978 and, says Clifton, they have become a very important part of the Greenway operation. (They now have a second child, Amy.)

Greenway Performance Records

There's still more from Ankony and Dr. Long. Twice a year for the last five years, Dr. Long has rated Greenway cattle on the Ankony scoring system, a system he devised while with Ankony. He visually evaluates each animal on a score of one to 10 (10 being the most desirable) for five traits that indicate composition of an animal's weight—freedom from waste, muscling, frame, structural soundness, sex and breed characteristics.

All calves—whether they be bulls, steers

ton and Graff have meaningful contemporary groups with which to work. That's why, incidentally, Greenway cattle are not shown or consigned to outside tests. If an exceptional animal was pulled out of the regular regime, then within-herd performance information would be sacrificed.

Taking performance one step further, cows are also weighed. Each one goes over the scale when her calf is weaned, then that information is used to determine her efficiency. Although Clifton and Graff want good-sized cows, they feel there are traits more important than their weight.

Greenway mature cows average between 1,100 lb. and 1,200 lb. at weaning, but since they are evaluated on their offsprings' ratios and scores, size won't save a cow if her calves don't measure up. And there's another point to consider. "I'm not sure it's how big they get," Graff says, "but how fast they get there. If our bulls can sire calves that will increase weaning weights for commercial breeders, then they are doing their job."

Greenway bulls, 95% of which sell to commercial breeders at private treaty, are priced according to their performance and



Within today's 350-head herd are about 150 Ankonian Dynamo daughters and 180 females by either Ankonian Momentum or Ankonian Prestige. Because they think the Dynamo line is one of the strongest lines going, Greenway's Clifton and Graff intend to stick with it, mating half brothers and half sisters and even three-quarter sisters to intensify the line's advantages.

calved after the second breeding season. They were bred to Ankonian Momentum.

That marked the beginning of Greenway's line- and inbreeding program. Credit for influencing him in that direction, says Clifton, goes to Dr. Robert Long, presently at Texas Tech University, who was then senior vice president at Ankony.

As a consequence, within today's 350-head Greenway herd are about 150 Dynamo daughters and 180 females sired by either Momentum or Prestige. Not surprisingly, there are several cases of two or three full sisters in the herd.

or heifers—get individual impartial appraisals at both 205 and 365 days; the scores go on the dam's production records as well as on the individuals'.

Records don't stop there. Greenway is also enrolled on AHIR, the American Angus Assn.'s performance program, and calves are weighed at birth, 205 and 365 days.

All Cattle Treated the Same

And in keeping with their performance doctrine, all Greenway cattle are treated alike. Calves are weighed and scored, and they receive the same care, attention and ration. And numbers are such now that Clif-



Chuck Graff, Greenway manager, moved to Ocala in 1978, bringing with him a masters degree in animal nutrition and experience working under Dr. Robert Long at Ankony Angus.

scores, with a certain amount of emphasis put on each measured trait.

Repeat Customers Want Records

The first time a commercial man comes to Greenway, Graff says, he may look at weights; the next thing he's interested in is frame and muscling. The next time around he may request all 7-frame bulls with 100 or better ratios. And repeat customers are starting to look at records before they look at bulls.

Greenway sells yearling bulls, not a common practice in Florida. But Greenway is doing it very successfully. The younger bulls require more care from their new owners, but that is of decreasing concern in an industry that's becoming more involved in management.

It was with an eye to this yearling market

that Clifton moved calving to October and November. "We used to calve in the spring (February through April)," Clifton says, "and if you are a commercial breeder in Florida, you want to have your calves come around Christmas. But we have changed our breeding season to accommodate the bull market." And those October and November bull calves are long yearlings, ready to go to work, when the area's prevailing breeding season rolls around.

The breeding program is being recognized by cattlemen, as bulls have been sold to Texas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Missouri and Georgia as well as to Florida cattlemen.

Fall Calving a Challenge

Greenway's calving season does challenge management. Under fall-calving conditions, Greenway bulls are on test during the summer months when the area's intense heat and high humidity interfere with consumption.

But Clifton feels Angus do very well in spite of the weather. "Our bulls grow at a lesser rate, but we have a satisfactory growth rate right on through the hottest months. However, if the same bulls were on feed during the winter months, they would probably be 125 lb. heavier as yearlings. But that would eliminate us selling yearling bulls to the commercial man, because they would be less than a year old by breeding season."

Feed consumption isn't all that's affected by environment and fall calving. With 50 inches of rainfall a year and sandy soil, Florida can't produce strong, highly nutritious grass. In addition, Ocala is just far enough north to get a killing frost that deteriorates grasses' food value just that much more.

And even though Greenway's pastures are improved and do receive 150-200 lb. of anhydrous ammonia per acre, the bahai and bermuda grasses supply little energy. They will maintain a cow, but the nutrition level is not high enough to support a successful A.I. program, especially one geared to Greenway's fall calving, where peak feed requirements occur when grass is at its weakest.

Corn Silage

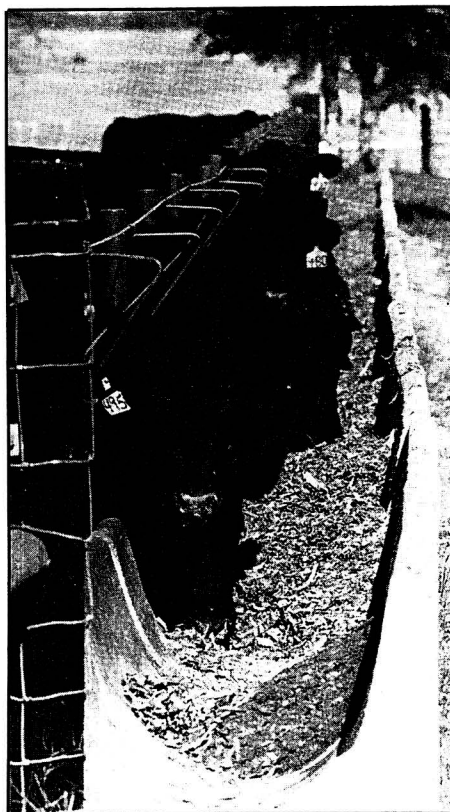
Until two years ago, a little grain was added to the females' rations during breeding season, but it had to be shipped in from the midwest and its price was prohibitive. So Graff introduced corn silage. And although corn was not a crop common to the area, it did well and today takes up a couple hundred acres at Greenway and is followed with grain sorghum as a double crop.

Cows with calves are fed the silage from mid-November until some time in March when green grass comes. And it has turned out that not only is corn silage a higher energy ration than bermuda hay (the feed common to the area), it is more economical to produce in the Greenway operation.

The added nutritive value of the silage is enabling Greenway to tighten its A.I. program to 35 days and its natural breeding season to 40 days. And that in turn means

more merchandisable-age yearling bulls and more heifers that can be bred in their first year.

The weaned heifers, by the way, are carried on grass or silage with a little grain (to gain 1.25 lb. a day) until breeding season starts on Dec. 1, 26 days ahead of that for the mature cow herd.



Weaned heifers are fed to gain from ¼ lb. a day until the start of breeding season.

With one exception—Dynamo—the same bulls are used for both A.I. and clean-up. Moving the calving season one month a year from spring back to fall was one reason, because using the same bull both artificially and for clean-up eliminates any question about a calf's parentage. And according to Clifton, since A.I. matings are specially planned, using the same bull throughout the breeding season assures that the special matings occur. That way quality in the later-born calves is not sacrificed.

On-Farm Bull Test

Rounding out the performance program, 20 acres are being devoted to an on-farm test where the bulls receive a mixed silage and grain ration. Here the bulls can be merchandised easily—and they are a distance from the cow herd, which ought to result in better gains, says Graff, and definitely will be easier on the fences.

When the project is completed, Clifton and Graff anticipate selling 150 registered bulls through the pens. These bulls will be the result of their continued line- and in-breeding program designed to produce pounds.

Breeding Program

Because they think the Dynamo line is one of the strongest lines going, Clifton and Graff intend to stick with it, mating half brothers and half sisters and even three-quarter sisters to intensify the line's advantages. Their belief in the Dynamo line is reinforced by the information on Prestige and Dynamo in the AHIR Field Data Report.

To further intensify the linebred influence, 15 top Dynamo (straight Emulous-bred) daughters were placed in embryo transplant. The cows were selected on the basis of their own performance as well as that of offspring and their dams. More than 100 transplant calves were born at the farm in 1980.

Then so repeat customers will be able to buy an outcross bull without having to leave Greenway, Clifton and Graff have started a second line based on the performance-oriented Jorgensen herd at Ideal, S.D. Greenway bought Band 116 of Ideal 2118 7174, "Band 174," from Jorgensen and he is being bred to his mother and grandmother as well as a couple of top-producing similarly bred Jorgensen cows in embryo transplant. This bull, in keeping with the Greenway performance philosophy, was the top-performing bull in Jorgensen's 1977 calf crop; in 1979 his calves made up the top Jorgensen sire group in both weaning and yearling ratios.

There are some disadvantages to embryo transplant, Clifton admits, not the least of which is losing some performance information because a calf is being raised by a cow other than its natural mother. But, says Graff, "It was the only way to propagate enough females within the performance pedigree line we want." And all in all, both Clifton and Graff think embryo transplant is doing what they had hoped.

Three Herds

Ten miles north of the Angus herd at Ocala is a second herd of Angus females that are mated to performance-selected Brahman bulls to produce Braham-Angus F₁'s.

The top end of the F₁ bulls will be evaluated and selected the same as the Angus bulls and sold to commercial breeders.

The F₁ females will be managed on a third tract of land. These F₁ females will be mated to performance-selected Greenway Angus bulls to produce feeder calves.

According to Graff, when they are done building numbers, Greenway will be running about 900 head of cows, 500 of which will be registered Angus, all of which will have a place in the Florida beef cattle industry. There will be registered performance bulls, F₁ stock and feeder calves.

But that won't be the end of Greenway's progress. Clifton has been improving his product steadily since he bought his first steer calves. He has progressed along with—or probably a step ahead of—his state's beef cattle industry. He doesn't intend to stop now. △