



The Haas family. From left: Bryan, Teresa, Laurie, Sharon, Bruce, Brett and Dick.

Angus

by Lori Riffel

FINE-TUNED PRECISION

In building an engine, precision and fine tuning are essential to produce a marketable end product. A piece of equipment must be predictable and consistent to run in all kinds of cars.

The same course is followed by Haas Angus in their cow operation at Leroy, Ill. Studies of pedigrees, selective matings of top equipment (genetics) must blend in unique precision to produce those top individuals that are marketable and genetically and physically predictable to run (work) in all kinds of Angus operations.

The Haas family's precision over a period of 12 years has lent the "H A" prefix much acclaim. H A Miss Bartman and Wrangler are perhaps best known among the numerous nationally recognized individuals that are sought after because of the Haas breeding.

But it is not just the production of one or two great animals that is important here. It's the breeding of many animals predictable for growth, development and the ability to work in anyone's herd.

And that is where the Haas precision becomes finely tuned. With a herd of 20 cows, the plan is to produce individuals—all of high caliber.

That of course could be everybody's goal, but the Haas family is so positive about their program, one can hardly doubt there will be many more like Wrangler or Miss Bartman.

Strong start

The herd began in 1973 with the collection of individual females from "here and there," as Dick puts it.

"We bought heifers in the Dakotas, Montana—anywhere we could trace down a really good female," he says. "Then we started basing everything on cow families and we wanted to select strictly from top producing cows."

During their third year in the business, two of the three Haas children, Bryan and Laurie, showed the grand and reserve champion females at the 1976 Illinois Angus Futurity and set new records that year with prices of \$4,000 and \$3,750, respectively.

It was about then the real goals of Haas Angus were formulated: To raise

and sell an elite product, and be competitive in the show ring. Their merchandising program was to be founded on show ring successes.

By 1976, the Haas family felt they had acquired the right females to form the nucleus of the herd, and buying was slowed. Since then, major motion has gone into the production of Haas-bred cattle.

Genetic advancement is made through heavy use of artificial insemination (95 percent of all cows are A.I.'d annually). And it is for this same reason Haas decided to enter an embryo transplant program in 1980 and to rebuild herd numbers.

"We spent so many years selling good heifers that two years ago we did more extensive transplant work and now have 14 replacement heifers," says Dick. And the Haas family won't refuse to sell the good ones—even to the point when they know it will be tough competition on show day. But Dick adds they only compete against their heifers in open class shows, not junior shows. A helping hand is extended at

shows to juniors who have purchased females from Haas Angus.

What brought the success of 12 years in the business? Simple, a lot of H-I-A, Haas Individual Attention.

The Haas family includes Dick and his wife Sharon; their oldest son Bryan, his wife Teresa, and son Brett; daughter Laurie (she's a credit specialist for Growmart Inc.); and son Bruce. Each spends many hours studying cow families, and this comes in handy when they select sires to use in the A.I. and E.T. programs.

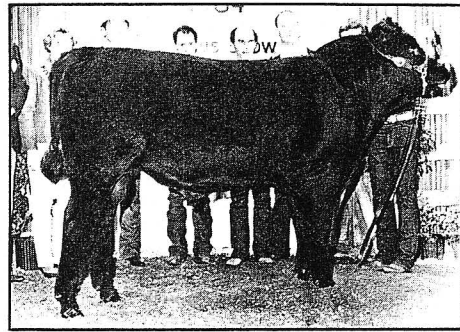
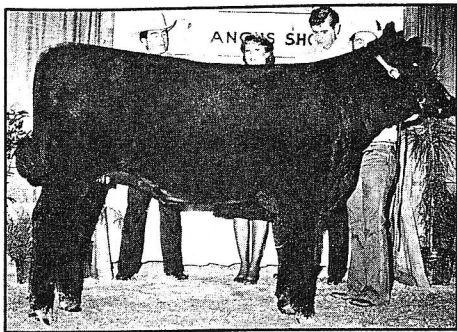
Selective matings

"We go back three generations and as far as five. We study the differences and the composition of pedigrees and we usually stay with an outcross," says Dick. Bulls must have a good mother—a proven producing cow.

"A bull should be able to produce daughters that look like his dam," he adds. Each female is evaluated on the basis of her pedigree and what needs to be corrected structurally, and then an A.I. sire is hand-picked for each female. It was this "H-I-A" that produced H A Miss Bartman for Bryan.

Miss Bartman (a daughter of Briarhill Bartman) caught the attention of many prestigious Angus breeders early in her 1982 show season, one of which was the then Gunston West of Lampasas, Texas. Gunston West offered to buy Miss Bartman from her reluctant-to-sell, 19-year-old owner Bryan, so he priced her at what to him was an overwhelming amount of money thinking that would probably make them pass her on by. Bryan received the check for the full amount.

Miss Bartman went on to be the reserve grand champion heifer at the



HA Miss Bartman (pictured at left), brought national recognition to Haas Angus. Wrangler has most recently reaffirmed the success of this 12-year-old operation.

1982 North American in Louisville and upon the Gunston West dispersion in June of 1983, she was sold to Hartley Angus and Berry Angus in Texas for \$66,000.

"We take a lot of pride in having produced Miss Bartman and we were also proud to see four of her offspring shown in Denver this year," says Dick. "It relates back to our program of selling the good ones that'll work."

The mating which yielded Wrangler (reserve intermediate champion at the All-American Angus Breeders' Futurity and at the North American, and a class winner at the 1985 National Angus Show) was hand-picked on the same criteria. His dam, H A Lucy, had been entered in the E.T. program because of her background qualities, and one of the bulls to best complement her was Progression.

"I liked Progression and I especially liked the cow family on his dam's side," says Dick. In July of 1983, five heifers and a bull were born from the Lucy-Progression flush and the three Haas men drew numbers for their picks. Dick drew the bull, but the person you see most in Wrangler's pictures is his red-

headed and youngest son Bruce. He has become Wrangler's personal handler.

R&J Ranch acquired one-half interest at the Futurity in this up-and-coming young herd sire; the Briggs, Texas, operation expects some 200 calves by Wrangler this year.

What makes a donor cow?

"A donor cow must have excellence all the way through," says Dick. "It has to be a proven fact that this animal is not a fluke. In other words, that she can produce more than one exceptional individual."

Donor cows have to earn their positions by excelling maternally and by producing above-average natural calves.

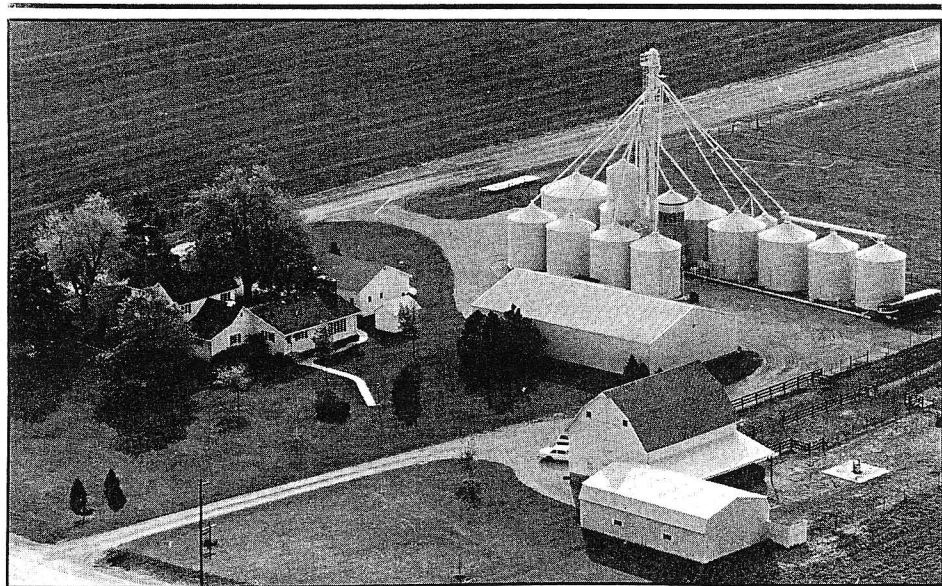
The Haas program currently centers around two cow families; the Lucy and the Lass line.

"We feel we've got enough strength maternally from those cows (Lucy and Lass) that we will flush daughters not yet proven," says Dick. Genetic predictability and the need to keep up with the times and trends justify the use of heifers in the E.T. program. Two yearling daughters of Lucy are being flushed this year before having a natural calf.

The Haas herd boasts of an 83 percent conception rate in the transfer of live embryos. This high percentage is credited to the fact that every animal receives individual attention in the way of health care, feeding and breeding. Having recipient females on the farm 60 to 90 days prior to transplanting also has added to the higher rate.

The Haas family didn't rush into the E.T. program without first justifying their reasons for doing it. That was to expand selected cow families and to produce superior females with predictability.

"E.T. is not for everybody. Just because a cow produced a heifer calf that sold in a local sale for \$3,000 doesn't make her a donor candidate," says Dick. He stresses the need to know cow



HAAS Angus

Dick and his two sons, Bruce and Bryan (right), discuss donor cow candidates. And at Haas, it takes "excellence all the way through."



families and the knowledge to pick out the producers.

"People that get involved in E.T. should have the capability of merchandising that product. If somewhere along the line they have 10 calves out of one cow, they must sell them someplace," he says. This is where the show steer business enters the picture at Haas Angus. The Haas family conducts quite a reputable business.

Steers, too

Haas Angus sets pretty much in the center of the Corn Belt's show steer country, and this creates a second market as good if not a better than bull market.

"If we can merchandise steers for \$1,500, we're still covering our E.T. costs," says Dick. The reserve champion Angus steer at the 1984 Illinois State Fair and at the 1985 Houston Livestock Show was produced by Haas, and three steers also bred by Haas won 27 different shows throughout Illinois, Iowa and Indiana last year. A steer they sent to Texas brought \$7,500 in a sale there.

"That's the type of animal we strive to produce and sell—the good ones," he says. And the show ring remains the supporting factor in the merchandising of Haas cattle.

"The show ring has made us what we are today. It has given us exposure on a national basis and we've been fortunate enough to be competitive year in and year out," explains Dick. He adds that it has given the Haas name a repu-

tation with other breeders—a reputation that their cow families will produce and that breeders can feel secure in using Haas bulls.

"When we started in the business, a lot of people thought we came to a show strictly to win. But our philosophy has always been that if you're going to do something, why do it half way? Why not excel?," says Dick. "So when we go to a show and have spent a whole year preparing for it, we give 100 percent. What you accomplish that day will be a total goal. The only thing that can defeat you there would be the judge—and when you decide to go to the show, you accept his opinion. So you go and take it—win or lose."

The top cut

Haas believes in only one cut—the top cut. There's no middle as far as Haas Angus is concerned.

"If they aren't superior, they go," Dick says. "We don't believe there's a middle, and one of our philosophies is if you've got two animals, one has to be better than the other." Calves are weighed and measured at birth, then at 205-day and 365-day intervals. All must meet the Haas performance standards.

"Our classification of a performance animal is one that excels in growth and maternal traits as far as weight gain and overall size, not just in pounds per day," explains Dick. If the calves don't meet these requirements, they're not offered to another person for sale, they're shipped to the local market.

"It's cost us a lot of money in one aspect, but secondly and more important-

ly, we've established a reputation of not selling anything that wouldn't work," says Dick. Haas breeds the cows and places embryos in recipient cows so the calving span is from January to July. This is done simply from a merchandising standpoint.

"We want to offer age diversification to people who come to select show animals," he adds.

And Haas customers have been satisfied, so much so that the yearly offering is snatched up in on-farm private treaty sales. Only a few head of the Haas herd are entered in public sales for this reason.

Farm land

The Haas family has to be an efficient time keeper during breeding season. It coincides with corn and soybean planting time, and 2,000 acres of crops takes some time on behalf of all family members.

The Haas farm includes 65 acres of grass which could handle up to three or four head per acre, but they want to keep the number around 20 to ensure that each receives enough H-I-A (Haas Individual Attention). That is the key to this fine-tuned operation. **AJ**



The next Haas generation, Brett, waves a hearty good-bye to the many visitors at Haas Angus.