

Carlton Corbin and the Emulous Line



Carlton and Geneva Corbin.

**Some bloodlines
live and die, some
live on and are
always in style.**

by Lori Riffel

Back in the late 1920s, the word “investment” was not used as commonly as it is today. And with the Crash of '29, it was used even less by most people.

So when Carlton Corbin—in his college days—made a deal to go partners on some Angus cows in 1927, little did he realize he was making the investment of his lifetime. His first five Angus cows cost him an average of \$217 and later, with the acquisition of the \$150 Emulous of Sangamon, would lay the foundation for the Emulous line of cattle.

From “Sangamon” to “700” to “7000” to the “Bobs,” the Emulous line spread like a fever from herd to herd around the country. And over the last five decades, it has left a positive impact on size, fertility, muscle and carcass performance in many pedigrees. Notables such as Early Sunset Emulous 60E, Ankonian Dynamo, Sayre Patriot, PS Power Play and Lovana represent direct Emulous influence. Emulous cattle have quite a reputation with the commercial industry as well—Carlton bred 28 Certified Meat Sires (CMS), including Emulous 7000, the very first CMS registered with the Performance Registry International (PRI).



Early days

Carlton grew up near Scullin, Okla., chasing steers up ramps into waiting railroad cars at the nation's second largest carloading station (the largest in the '20s and '30s was in Blackland, Okla.). His exposure was 100 percent to the cattle business—the commercial business that is, not registered at all—until he went to Oklahoma State University (OSU).

Carlton's father loaded thousands of steers on the railcars every year (up to

become a member of the judging team.

"The only reason I went there was to be on that judging team. I didn't know when I enrolled that you had to be a senior to be on the team. Here the team had already gone to Chicago and I wasn't even in judging class yet," he says. His advisor informed him otherwise, but added that as a junior he could make the junior team and go to Fort Worth. Carlton almost quit school then, but he didn't—sticking with it led

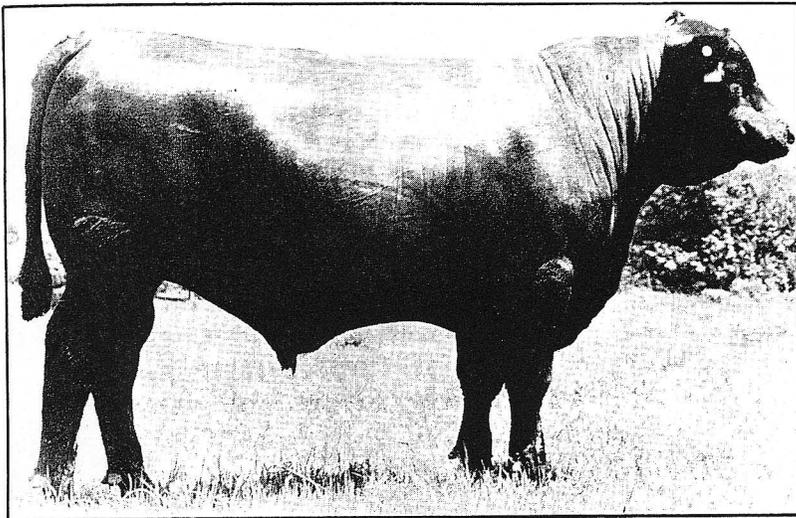
him to buy his first registered Angus cows.

Daughters of national champ

"I had been in college a few years when I went to a three-breed dispersion north of Stillwater with Ted Hogden then president of the Oklahoma Hereford Assn.," says Carlton. "There were some good Angus cows—daughters of the 1921 International champion Prince Marshall."

"There was a big crowd at the sale, so we climbed up on top of a shed to watch the sale. They started selling these Angus cows and they were going for market price," explained Carlton. "Ted turns to me and says 'if I wasn't president of the Oklahoma Hereford Assn., I would get in the Angus business right here.'"

Carlton was not vaccinated against getting in the business, the only problem was money. A deal was made: Carlton would furnish the pasture and Ted the money. Sitting up on that shed in 1927, Carlton got into the business by buying five three-in-one cow packages for a total of \$1,085.



90 percent of those loaded at Fittstown), and with the stock pens adjoining the Corbin land, Carlton was to be impressed firmly with beliefs he would uphold in the cattle business—the importance of supplying quality beef to consumers and receiving a premium price. The Corbins owned, operated and leased several ranches.

"We usually wintered 20,000 to 25,000 steers when I was growing up," says Carlton. "And I didn't get interested in the breeding end of these cattle until I had been in college a couple of years."

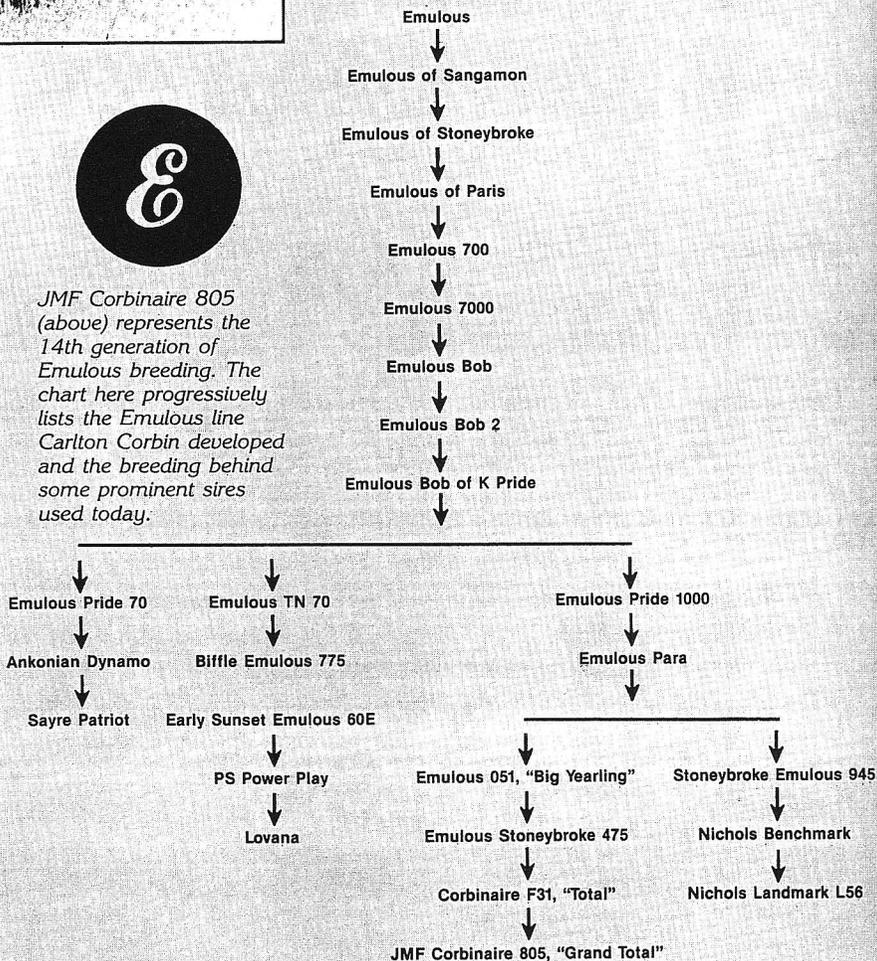
Getting to college was a bit of an ordeal for Carlton, for his family was set on him attending Oklahoma University and becoming a lawyer. But a Sunday edition of the Oklahoma Daily that featured OSU's winning livestock judging team swayed his mind from Oklahoma University to OSU.

"There was this big section in the Daily about OSU's judging team winning the Chicago International, complete with pictures of 'blocky' cattle," says Carlton. "I studied it carefully and thought I would just go out there and make that judging team."

Carlton thought that with his enrollment that fall he would automatically



JMF Corbinaire 805 (above) represents the 14th generation of Emulous breeding. The chart here progressively lists the Emulous line Carlton Corbin developed and the breeding behind some prominent sires used today.



For the next two years, Carlton would load up his whole herd and take it to the Osage County fair. Since there wasn't any other Angus competition, he would enter each animal in a different class. The fair was paying big premiums for the times (\$50 for first), and in just two years, Carlton accumulated enough premiums to pay Ted the \$1,085 he owed.

Winning team

Carlton and his OSU teammates brought home the traveling Spoor trophy in the fall of 1928 when they won the Chicago International livestock judging contest. But the winning didn't come easy. Carlton almost lost the contest on a class of Hampshire ewe lambs because he had the flu—he was running a fever of 103 degrees, and the

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sheep seemed to him to be circling in the rafters.

"The group leader told everyone to back off and let this member of the group who was sick go up and handle these lambs—if he could," says Carlton. "I couldn't see their legs or head, so I went to the front of them and pulled their heads up so I could get them in focus and I placed them strictly on what their heads looked like. I got the class right."

The '20s and '30s were the days of the baby beef trends and Carlton's coach W.L. Blizzard followed them all the way, saying he'd never use an animal for champion that he couldn't see over.

"Those kind of cattle never did figure into the foundation of our herd. We didn't have any place for them," says Carlton.

Carlton went to Iowa State University to graduate school on a teaching scholarship, where he earned a dollar a day. That was the year of the Crash of '29, so good jobs were scarce. Getting in the cattle business in the early '30s wasn't too profitable, so Carlton took a teaching job at Washington State University for two years. When his father died, Carlton returned home to

Emulous of Sangamon

Carlton Corbin, Charles Bates and Lee Leachman (then with Bates) were once in Indiana looking at cows, and on their return trip they stopped to view the herd of J. Garrett Tolan, Pleasant Plains, Ill., before an upcoming sale.

"As we drove in that morning, there was this old bull in a shipping pen waiting for the truck to come by and take him to the stockyards," said Carlton. "I had Charlie stop because I wanted to look that bull over. We all got out and looked over the fence at Emulous of Sangamon; he was 10 years old and Tolan had just bought him with the whole herd from August Busch of Budweiser to get 12 females." (Sangamon was produced by St. Albans Farm, Pacific, Mo.)

The trio went on up to the Tolan house and Carlton inquired about the old bull. Garrett said he was sending him to market, that he couldn't afford to have him around on sale day because "those Dutchmen" will think I've bred all these cows to him.

When Carlton asked for a selling price, Garrett consulted the daily paper. It said seven cents a pound on bulls, but Garrett had to have a premium so they agreed on \$7.10 per cwt.—with the registration papers. Garrett just wanted the bull off the place by sale day.

Carlton was sure of his purchase; he had seen Sangamon around at the shows with the Busch show string and had been impressed. It seems others were impressed with the sire, too. Carlton explains how Garrett offered lunch to all visitors provided they would make note of the animal which impressed them most.

"Everybody had voted for a certain cow in a certain pasture," says Carlton. "When the notes went to the head of the table and Garrett began reading the numbers, he turned to his son John and asked about the cow. 'I can't remember her and everybody has this same cow written down.' John didn't know her, so he looks it up in the book and reports that she's out of one of the Busch cows. 'What's her sire?' Garrett asked. John sort of ducks his head and says, 'It's that ole bull you just sold to Carlton.'"

Carlton bred his 40 cows to Sangamon that year and the next, then shipped him to market for the last time.

"He was an easy keeper, a beef bull—correct, sound and solid," says Carlton. Two years later, Evermere T, a Sangamon daughter out of an Eileenmere 85th daughter, was the 1941 International grand champion.

"I was tickled to see the reports that she had won because she was a half sister to 20 some odd head of females I had down in the pasture," says Carlton. "And they were the only big Angus cattle in the whole country."

City stockyards. This brought him into contact with a lot of commercial cow operations, and for three years he bought Angus bulls on contract—all he could find—for these operations.

"I was also building up my own Stoneybroke herd and would get up to 100 cows at times. They wouldn't suit me, so I would sell them down to about 20 head and start again," says Carlton.

Producing top carcasses

Due to the strong commercial business influence on his younger years, Carlton has continually strived to produce cattle that perform—cattle that will grow fast, finish early and have

high yielding carcasses with large rib-eye areas, adequate marbling and tenderness.

Carlton worked closely with PRI and remembers, "At the time PRI was trying to finalize the rules for a carcass contest, Murray and I were working on producing a bull that would sire good carcasses with high cutability."

Emulous 7000, the top-gaining bull at the Murray College Bull Test, came off the 140-day test with the highest weight per day of age of all breeds (3.36 lb.).

Corbins used "7000" on Murray's commercial cows, and 21 steer calves

settle the estate and has been in Oklahoma ever since.

Carlton began forming the ranch at the Stillwater place (his family had relocated there when he started college) and later went back to his homeplace and started buying up land there (Fittstown) in 1934. At the same time, he was in charge of publicity and order buying feeder cattle at the Oklahoma

were fed out in an Oklahoma City feedlot the next year. CMS rules hadn't been finalized and Corbins didn't know what it took for a bull to qualify, but they submitted the steer data to the PRI convention. CMS rules were finalized there and Emulous 7000 was the first to qualify.

"We proved to ourselves that we could produce the kind of cattle we thought we needed for the business—the kind that would make good mother cows and were suited for this country," says Carlton. "We got to the point where the next thing was to sell these superior carcasses and to receive a premium for them, but that was tough going."



Carlton (with plaque) was presented an award for his outstanding service to the association and to the breed at the Oklahoma Angus Days. Pictured from left, are: Jack and Dorie Barrett, Billy Yarbrough, Carlton, Geneva and David McMahon.



Carlton's 200-head cow herd produces a market of 100 bulls annually. Thirty-five auctions were held at Stoneybroke from 1948 to 1972. Now, Carlton sells his bulls through volume, private treaty sales.

15 generations

A Corbin bull recently enrolled in the American Angus Assn.'s sire evaluation program is the fourteenth generation from Emulous of Sangamon. JMF Corbinaire 805 ("Grand Total") holds the average daily gain record of 5.24 lb. at the OBI test station. His progeny on test

in the feedlot and packing plants represent 15 generations of Corbin breeding.

"Since PRI started recognizing these superior sires on carcass data through the CMS program," says Carlton, "our bulls continue to excel each time over the standards or over their competition."

Corbins continue to produce 100 bulls a year from a 200-head cow herd and sell in volume numbers.

"Our bull market was created largely by offering serviceable-age bulls in sufficient numbers so the larger ranchers would be attracted to us," says Carlton.

"We follow up by getting their feeder calves sold for them if we can't buy them ourselves, and continue to stay in contact with them on the selling of their calves."

As most of Carlton's bulls go to commercial breeders, he gets a lot of cross-bred trade and people want to know what bulls will do on their cows before using them. In response, Carlton has started conducting his own on-farm test with 10 steers on feed. Along with gain and cost-of-gain, Carlton will try to predict the genetic ability of the steers'

sires with regard to yield grade and cutability.

"I've got to help show where yield grade 2s will cut out \$100 per head more over the counter than 3s and 4s of the Choice grade," says Carlton. "It's the cutability of these cattle that adds up at the retail counter, and in the past we haven't been paid for it."

He feels the CMS program is good to a point, but it falls short when there is no guaranteed premium for a higher quality product. To him it's been somewhat discouraging to put extra effort into producing this elite product, only to receive market price for it.

"But the Association has gone one step further and now has the Certified Angus Beef program," says Carlton. "If it can hold its ground and not be abused, and can continuously have superior cattle in its program, it'll finally work."

The name "Stoneybroke"

Carlton and his wife Geneva explain the name "Stoneybroke" for their ranch: The home country of Angus is Scotland and much of its land is rough and rocky, hence the name "stoney." According to Geneva, breaks (very small canyons) are called "brokes" in Scotland. Carlton adds, "and then we didn't have any money, so we just called it Stoneybroke."

The southern Oklahoma ranch is much the same—rough and rocky. The cattle have to be structurally correct and sound to travel this terrain and survive the seasonal extremes Mother Nature unleashes on this Midwestern ranch.

Carlton found just that type of cattle 15 generations ago when he bought Emulous of Sangamon for \$150. He continues to select for that type today.

The Bob Line

Carlton bred one of his top cows to Emulous 7000, the first CMS, and the natural protectiveness of this mother nearly wrote the end of the Emulous line.

"Bob was born in the highway pasture late in the summer. If you didn't find them pretty quickly there, you didn't find them alive," says Carlton. With the hot weather and humidity, screwworms had become a problem. Emulous Bob's mother had hidden him, so on the third day Carlton knew he was going to have to outsmart the cow. He did, late in the night, when she finally went to her calf. Carlton was right, Bob was covered with screwworms. After being submerged in soapy warm water, Bob was free of the worms, but not before he lost

the tips of his ears and most of his tail (thus earning his name).

"He was the one that went on with it," says Carlton. "He didn't get promoted like the others, but he's the one that was responsible and he was the first bull I was ever offered any great amount of money for."

The Bob line has contributed not only feedlot and carcass performance and superior maternal traits, but has appealed to the breeders who participate in shows as well. Emulous Bob of K Pride descendants have been popular in both performance and show ring circles. He bequeathed the genetics that would produce greats such as Emulous TN 70, Early Sunset Emulous 60E, PS Power Play, Lovana, Emulous Pride 70, Ankonian Dynamo and Sayre Patriot, to name just a few (see illustration).

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