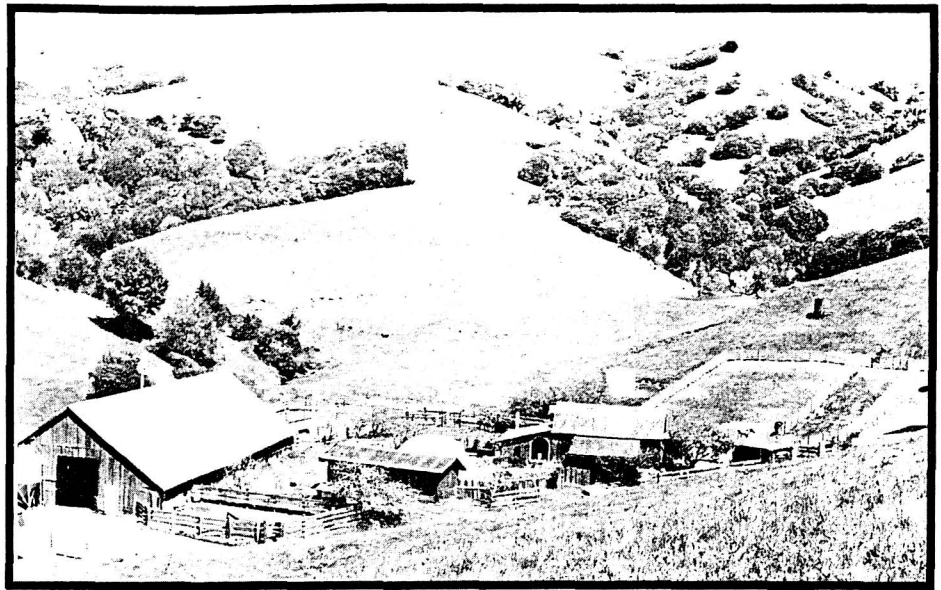


The steep hills of S/2 Angus, located just 10 miles from the Pacific Ocean, are suited for just one thing—beef production.

# S/2 ANGUS



## It's Taken Many Miles to Build A Top-quality Herd and Keep in Touch With the Angus World.

If there's something happening on this continent and it's of importance to the Angus breed, chances are Buck or Barb Stevens (or both) will be there.

In the last several years the Stevenses have logged thousands of miles attending the breed's most significant shows and sales. They've visited herds all over the country. They've enjoyed their trips, met a lot of people, had a lot of fun.

There is, though, a serious side. Their trips have been learning experiences and on the basis of that learning they've developed their own ideas about what they want in an Angus herd. And they've been putting that herd together back home at S/2 Angus, Point Reyes Station, Calif.

Just getting to S/2 is quite an experience. Although it's only about an hour north of San Francisco, it's an hour of winding roads, the last six miles of which could be considered downright adventurous—so much so, in fact, that the Stevenses trade in their car for a pickup parked at the neighbor's place at the end of the pavement.

Buck and Barb's hospitality make the trip worthwhile, though, as does seeing the developing S/2 herd.

### Pennsylvania Natives Went West

Although Buck and Barb met in California, they both grew up near Philadelphia. They were not rural people; their first years on the West Coast were spent in Sausalito in the bar and restaurant business. They lived their city-oriented lives in an apartment.

It was the decision to find a house with a few acres to accommodate a horse that led to the purchase of their ranch.

Actually, in looking for an acreage they stumbled on a place where they could keep a couple of horses in exchange for occasional ranch work. This was their first exposure to cattle and they loved it. The occasional evolved into almost daily riding, cow herd checks and maintenance. It wasn't too long before they owned S/2—996 acres of steep hill country just 10 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Improvements on the place included what might have been described as a house; it barely had the prerequisite four walls and there was no plumbing, electricity or phone service. These came later, about the time the Stevenses oldest son Luke was born. (Luke's 10 now. He has two brothers—Josh and Bradley—and today the Stevens home has all the comforts and conveniences.)

### Commercials Came First

The ranch was suited to one thing—beef cattle production—and Buck and Barb started stocking it with commercials. The breed of their choice was Angus, not because they knew a lot about them but because fences on S/2 left a lot to be desired and the neighbors all had Herefords, among which black cattle would be easy to spot.

Buck and Barb reasoned it would be helpful to know the age of their cows and when to expect them to calve, so they bought at registered Angus dispersions, selecting bottom-enders that cost little over market price.

From the beginning, S/2 was expected to pay its way and all went well until the drought in 1977 which forced liquidation of about half of the commercial herd. At that point, completely caught up in the cattle and, more importantly, wanting to raise their kids in the

country, Buck and Barb simply changed their strategy.

"We decided," Buck says, "we'd better run some good ones—and not quite so many."

So they switched to purebreds. And since they would settle for nothing less than top quality purebreds, in the last four years the development of the S/2 herd has had the total time and attention of both Buck and Barb.

### Patrick McHenry

The stage for that development was set even before the first purchase was made for the new herd.

It began when Stevenses decided to upgrade the bulls they were using on their commercials. They'd not been to range bull sales, Buck says, for about three years; when they went to several they came away excited about the change they saw in the Angus in such a short time.

The bulls they liked especially traced to O McHenry 208, a Great Northern son. A desire to see more of his progeny took them to the Thomas herd near Baker, Ore., and to Clayton Risings near Tipton where their favorable impressions were reinforced. They wanted a 208 son and found what turned out to be their purebred herd's first foundation sire, Patrick McHenry, in the Archie and Emma Hess herd at Aurora, Ore.

After purchasing the bull, they decided they didn't want to wait for him to produce a daughter at S/2—they wanted one to show visitors right away. Buck picked a heifer out of the Hess calf crop. He thought she was a decent sort—he just didn't realize how decent.

*Buck and Barb Stevens pulled up their city roots a few years ago and began building what is now S/2 Angus. Not only are they enjoying the cattlemen's life and raising their three boys in the world of Angus cattle, but they are developing a very competitive herd in the hills of California in the process.*

That calf was Archies Emma, the only two-times grand champion at Reno's Western National Angus Futurity. Premier Beef at Fowlerville, Mich., helped to show the popular heifer; she's been in transplant recently and also has produced her first natural calf this spring, a heifer by Ironsides. Archies Emma is a top individual, but then top individuals are the basis of the S/2 program.

### Superior Individuals

It's a young herd and those animals not raised in it were painstakingly selected by either Buck or Barb or both. There's been a plan from the beginning.

"We needed to start with what we thought were superior individuals," Buck explains. "We were looking for frame, cannonbone and some performance. And we set out to try at least three or four daughters from every major bloodline."

Outcross was the key word. "We know that linebreeding gives us tremendous performance," Buck says, "but to change our animals around in such a short time to the modern animals we have today—I think that was the result of outcrossing." And he's sold on it.

Pedigrees weren't particularly important in their selections, although they did try to stay away from the controversial ones. The cows came from all over the country.

The first females came from Jack Parnell at Auburn and from Clyde Nelson in Idaho. Ralph Clark (who as secretary of the Western States Angus Assn. had helped them make selections for their commercial herd) helped them pick 15 head from the MC dispersion in Madera, Calif., all of which are still in the herd. A trip to Canada yielded females from Oren Hart and Black Browe Cattle Co., Ltd. (both of Alberta).

### The Pattern Was Set

Neither Buck nor Barb are the type satisfied to sit back and be spectators. They have to be involved. They are activists. And their first trips and purchases set their pattern.

"We decided we needed to see what was going on in the rest of the world," Buck explains, "and knew that if we sat home and tried to breed our animals we could know one thing. We would know exactly how good our animals were at home. However, we wouldn't know how to compare them to others. We weren't ready to go to the show ring; we were just getting started. So we decided the best thing we could do was jump on an airplane whenever we thought good



cattle were being sold somewhere and go see for ourselves."

They've done just that. On one of those first trips, for example, they spent 10 days attending a series of sales in Canada. At each sale Buck and Barb picked out what they thought were very good animals (they still do this—independently—and nine times out of ten they agree on which animals are best.) Then they compared how they sold.

"We figured," Buck explains, "that would give us an idea of whether we were choosing the right kind of females. We were a little reluctant at that time to pay high prices but we knew the cattle we wanted were going to bring a little higher price and we thought maybe we were on the right track."

"From there it just blossomed into a lot of travel and a lot of observation. It comes down to the fact that, instead of having a program similar to someone else's, we were going to go out and buy individuals and then try to get a bull that would give us our program two or three years down the line."

### Ken Caryl Ironsides 0489

Buck and Barb started looking for that bull. They wanted an extreme calf. He had to have a clean sheath (area commercial bull buyers put a premium on that and they were a major part of the S/2 market). And Buck and Barb felt the industry was becoming a little more performance conscious. They added all that up, decided on their criteria and found what they wanted at Ken-Caryl Ranch in Colorado.

"Ironsides," Buck explains, "was the only extreme calf we could find with a lot of bone in his leg. We considered that and everything else. Our purchase was maybe astounding

to some, but to us he was our bull. And we were going to own him, no matter what. I think that has proven the best thing we have done. We found that we could put him on anything. We are happy with his calves and they are uniform."

Now they are looking for the next herd sire that has the potential to do as well. He will have to be an outcross and the search for an outcross sire, Buck points out, is not as simple as it sounds. The breed's genetic base, he believes, is narrowing.

That's where embryo transfer may prove especially valuable at S/2. Buck feels that by being able to buy a superior female out of a lesser-known herd (like Archies Emma), then putting her in transplant, they may be able to raise the kind of bull they need.

### Being There is Good Business

Not that they won't keep looking out in the country. They will still visit herds, still attend sales. Even if they're not buying, Stevens feel that's absolutely essential to good purebred Angus business. That's how they keep in touch with the industry; that's how they promote their

own cattle; that's how they find cattle that will work in their herd. Besides, says Buck, they will probably buy a few females every year, just to keep the outcross concept going.

Promotion (and staying in touch) is also why they show a few cattle. It establishes identity, Buck believes. Then there are the three boys who own their own cows and either already are or soon will be in contention in junior shows.

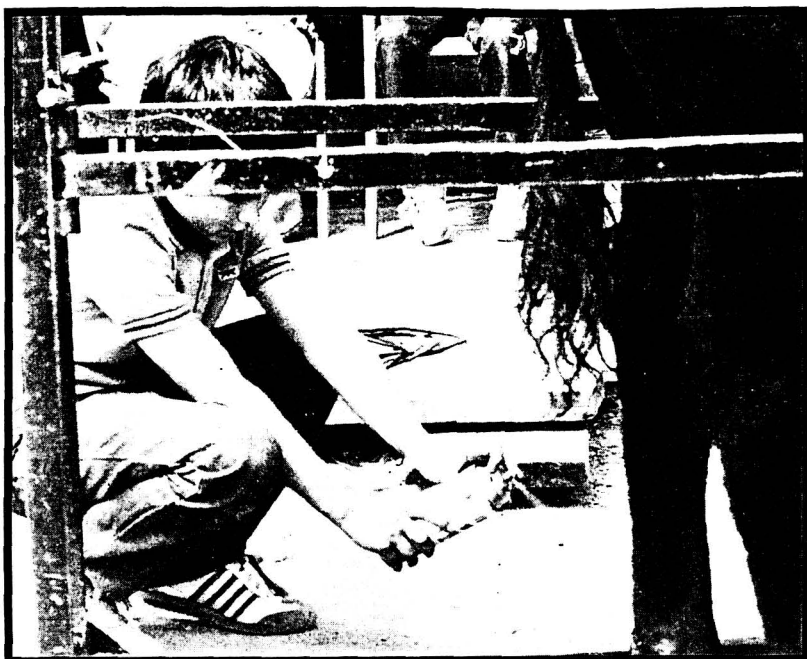
Showing is a good way to keep the kids excited about the cattle and the cattle are, in the overall scheme of things, the boys' stake in the future.

Right now though, the boys have a few years of school to finish, so the ranch has become a full-time proposition for both Buck and Barb. When they are not attending Angus-oriented events, they are out working on the ranch. They do have help—Doyce Pittsenbarger came to S/2 over a year ago by way of South Dakota State and Bon-View Farms. Mike Olearnick and his wife Sue joined the S/2 crew recently; Mike had been with Ken Caryl. Buck feels this team is quite capable of handling everything; the only reason they don't is that Buck and Barb enjoy their involvement too much to give it up.

### Special Help, Special Friends

Needless to say, Buck and Barb have met a lot of people in their travels. And they have learned from many. There are, however, at least two people they credit for being especially helpful.

One is Jim Baldridge, whom they met during that 10-day stretch of sales in Canada. He's become not only an advisor, but a good friend. Says Buck, "I think the most impor-



Luke Stevens is hard at it during this year's Western National Futurity in Reno—the Stevenses keep in close touch with happenings in the Angus world, frequenting many national shows and sales.

tant thing he has done is never try to push anything on us. He is at the end of the phone anytime I need to talk to him—with a very unbiased answer."

The other is Ralph Theis, whose home base is Harding & Harding, Geneva, Ill. Ralph, says Buck, has been a very stabling factor.

"He also is unbiased," Buck says, "and he certainly knows a good individual. He is perhaps able to see a little more in a herd than most people do."

#### It's Their Own Unique Program

Regardless of advice, Buck and Barb make it their business to make their own decisions. They select their own cattle and always have.

And in a few short years, their faces have become familiar at Angus events throughout the country. They have had a lot of fun; made a lot of friends. And all the while they've been developing their own herd at S/2. They've built a cow herd, carved out a home, mended fences, improved pastures. The place has changed a lot in the 10 years since they left the city.

Now they're ready for the next step.

Up to this point the best heifer calves have returned to the herd. The bull calves have sold primarily to dairies. (S/2 lies in a strong dairy area and the neighboring dairymen are more than happy to pay a good price for a good Angus bull.) So, until this year, merchandising has not been an immediate concern. Now, though, with the herd built to 125 head and with Ironsides calves dotting the hillsides, Stevenses are ready to take the next step. They will be offering products of their program to the public in their first production sale next September.

Facilities are being built at the ranch and the sale will be hosted there. Buck and Barb plan for this to be an annual event. Through it, they will offer cattle being developed in a long-range program.

"Ten years from now," Buck says, "I would really like for our top 20 bull calves to be the kind that could help anyone—that would be good enough to go into any herd in the U.S. That's where we'd like to be."

That's part of the plan. A

