

"this angus life"

When Honoring a Legacy

Fat is facade. Reality is fun. Prove it yourself first. Utility rather than perfection.

Those are some of the pegs where cattleman Dave Hinckley might hang his hat. He wears two, as both a commercial producer and seed stock supplier. Navigating between the two realms helps him appreciate the concerns of one and the obligations of the other.

"Unless the purebred producer knows what his calves are doing for the commercial man, he doesn't have much indication of what direction he's going." This, the essence and approach of Dave Hinckley, Utah Angus breeder.

Dave admits he tires of trying to be bone-cutting, penny-pinching efficient all the time. "There's no leeway. Either you do it or you're out to lunch. On the other hand, it's a business where the more realistic you can be, the more fun it is because it's not a facade. Dave is more or less death on facades.

He likes to test. "What my commercial calves do is a pretty good indication of what my bull buyer's calves do because we're

The Great Salt Lake threatens Dave Hinckley's operation today as this is being written. A super-abundant snowpack of three years' succession and unseasonable spring rains have pushed the coastlines beyond records or memory, inundating range and pasturelands, and wreaking a hardship on area farmers and ranchers.

Dave describes two shrinking parcels: one, a 1,200-acre pasture is now reduced to 300 acres. The other is a 17-section range; it's been flooded to where only 3,000 usable acres remain.

The other unique feature of the Hinckley Ranch is its proximity to the Salt Lake City airport. Fumes from jet aircraft taxiing to or from the terminal waft into his feedlot. Northbound takeoffs interrupt conversation, and dozens of departures and arrivals daily remind him he deals in both 20th century technology and homespun animal husbandry. "There are times we live in mortal fear," he says of the situation. Only once was the National Guard called out to form a human fence around the perimeter. . . .



**Dave Hinckley
Hinckley Bros. Angus
Bountiful, Utah**

using the same kind of bulls. The sad thing about my commercial operation is that the best bulls go down the road. I get left with the medium to bottom end."

Those bottom end bulls end up modified for heat detection plus they also provide another population to test.

"It's kind of interesting to see how the poorest bulls grow out. Of the 106 bulls we're talking about, 14 weighed under 500 pounds, 24 weighed over 600. The heaviest bull weighed 770. That's from open range and the poorest summer we've had up there in nine years.

"Now, where the commercial cows range, it was the best we've had in 13 years. Really, it's astounding the difference in just a 200-mile spread—another example

of the way weather can affect an area and individuals."

Salt Lake winters have been the stuff of legends during the past two years, and the winter feeding demands have worked some unusual hardships on stockmen of the area.

"I hadn't fed a cow for 10 years until these last two years. We normally put up hay here to run it through the calves, you see. I'd just as soon see the ski resorts have a dust bowl a year or two, so I can survive and pay my feed bill."

A little of what Mother Nature can dish out can be convincing. Consequently, cattlemen are tuned in to what represents efficiency to them. Gain tests, particularly if linked to feed efficiency, have meaning. Hinckley's herd was one of a select group chosen by the

With the grandkids ...



Susan and Juli, Randy's wife, putting up jam last summer. Jake and Luke sampled.



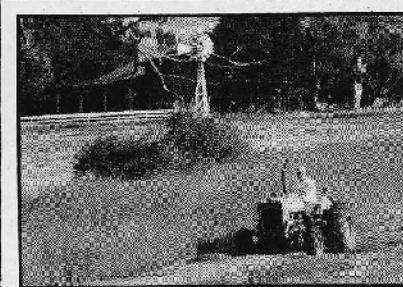
Jack explaining the mysteries of pine nuts in pine cones.



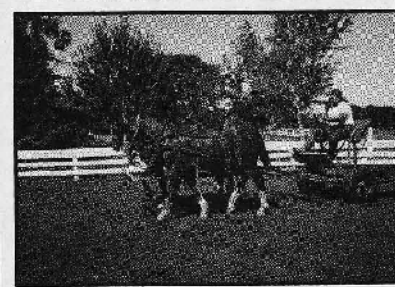
From jam to concrete, Jake and Luke exhibit a regular spirit of helpfulness.



Jacob and Lucas on "Smokey." The man in the background may appear vaguely familiar: then USDA Secretary of Agriculture John Block visiting Dunipace in the summer of 1985.



With his experience and apparent interest in all modes, Jack may be grooming himself to become someone's Secretary of Transportation.



"I'm really glad to see the Association moving in that direction with the steer registry. We were kept alive by selling 4-H heifers to youngsters who wanted to compete. Our cattle haven't always won, but they've been reasonably good and well-received."

"Angus steers do well," Susan agrees, "and Angus cows crossed with anything do well."

Perhaps it could be said the years have ticked off for Dunipace and the Parnells with a sort of rhythmic chant, in a cadence not unlike that of an auctioneer. There's been enough to fill a couple decades at least. What has gone on? The Headquarter House restaurant, Jack's venture into the realms of state government, grandkids here and on the way. And while this historic gold rush country of Sacramento and surrounding area has been good to the family, nothing's come automatically. It all had to be mined.

Those roads were long and lonely for an auctioneer, that's a "known." To Susan fell the chore of raising the family and helping Dunipace through its day-to-day rigors. The rewards she and Jack enjoy today have been well-earned, an inspiration for others starting out. Cattle have been such a part of the pace and life of Dunipace, they've played almost a founding role. In the background at times, and a minor part of the whole enterprise, still they were there, always there. To do without for even four hours simply left too great a void.

When Jack Parnell reflected on the future of agriculture and its meaning for his family, he said:

"There will be a time when this thing will be excellent again. There always seems to be a renewal of the spirit of the fiber it takes to stay in this business.

"We're encouraging our family to stay in it, to stay close to the earth."

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Moorman Feed Company for some feed and efficiency trials. Hinckley lots gained from 3.56 to 3.9 pounds a day. During another commercial test, Hinckley calves averaged 3.94 pounds per day—satisfying proof that his Angus-on-Angus and other British-based cows don't sacrifice notable gains.

The cattle graded, too. One lot was compared to another of continental crosses. After 117 days on feed, Dave's Angus-sired steers graded 72 percent Choice in contrast to 38 percent for the competition. The price spread at that time made the difference even more attractive as Choice claimed a 12 cent premium over Good.

This year all the calves went to feedlots in Colorado and Kansas specializing in feeding Certified Angus Beef. Nearly 900 head went out with the steers weighing 724 pounds, heifer mates, 697. Out of 1,300 calves wintered this year,

50-pound plus EPD advantage for yearling weight. So keen is Dave on the bull, he's tried to perpetuate a high level of "Shoshone" influence in the herd—nearly 70 percent he estimates.

"It's phenomenal. He can carry the ball on both the heifers and the bulls.

"I'm on to another bull I'm excited about and he's been dead since 1964. I'll know more when I get some daughters in production. That's Father of Wye.

"He may be one of the greatest maternal bulls that the Wye Plantation's ever produced. We'll wait and see about temperament."

Again, Dave likes to prove things, to himself first, then his neighbors. This year, he's not using A.I. on the heifers, preferring instead to see if the son of the A.I. bull can do the job. "If the son can do it, then there's potential."

The original Hinckley cows



"Last year was the first year we didn't feed to finish. We just ran out of money, simple as that. There's the kind I like—I like to see some width across and over the top."



"I'd rather feed cows on Sunday than go to church. This allowed others of the family to do what they wanted that day. This herd of cows has been instrumental in raising 15 children on this ranch, of which I'm only one. I told every one of my cousins, brothers, and sisters, I was ready to walk away from leasing this place if any one of them had an objection to it.

"The reason I'm here is through the agreement of these members of the family."



"It's still a man's facilities that determine what he can do. Not many of us have optimum situations—we do out of necessity quite often. These corrals were old when I first started taking notice of things; they date back to the turn-of-the-century. We've made a special effort to keep them up."

Dave experienced a death loss of only seven head.

Schearbrook Shoshone bloodlines were prominent in these tests, and this breeding continues to rank as among Dave's favorites. He counts the straws on hand. "I've got enough to last me another seven years," he says. He relies on this bull to provide his herd with both maternal strengths and a

carried a strong dose of Wanada breeding from the old Sunshine family line. Shoshone breeding has a history of success on the Wanada cows. There's much Dave likes about the line.

"They were a kind of funny-looking cow—poor in the withers, but excellent udders, good length, good elevation, super temperament. The Shoshone

breeding, whether from the old bull or his sons, seemed to straighten out their backs while keeping the udders."

A local vet does the pelvic measurements. Dave likes to have his heifers in good muscle tone and has observed the plane of the hip from the hooks to the pins as more influential on calving ease than the pelvic opening.

"I've calved Schearbrook Shoshone from heifers and he's supposed to be a bit hard on heifers. It seems to test out."

Other selection practices:

- Temperament . . . "On those heifers I have to help nurse, I can probably put 80 percent of them in a small pen, never have to use the chute. That's temperament."
- Indexes . . . "We breed heifers out of every cow that indexes over 95. We normally find our best producing cows are not our highest indexers initially."

He culls hard. He bought the Hinckley Bros. cattle and brand in 1977, a herd that had been in existence since 1949 and thought to be the oldest herd of registered Angus in the state of Utah. Dave remembers buying 202 cows.

"In three years, I culled 248. Some of the old cows are still in there. Every year you wish you would've culled more."

What was that herd like? What made it distinctive?

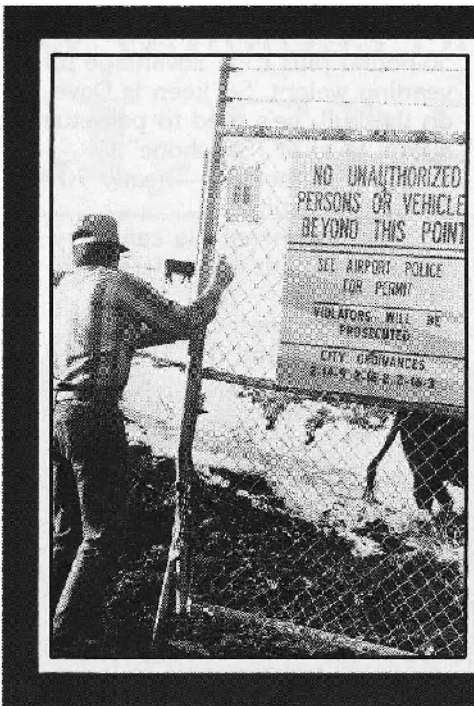
"They had one bull that built the herd; they never went the little Angus route. That bull was Black Cap Eric from Peterson Angus of Montana, 1949.

"As a youngster, I can remember sitting in the haybarn and so stinkin' mad at my dad for buying black cattle, I cried. I wanted Hereford cows. The older a young man gets, the smarter the older men become.

"There's no better mother, there are no better udders," Dave declares, especially as he candidly recalls one venture into another continental breed that went awry.

"As I said, we're very critical of temperament. I knew I wasn't really much of a cowboy. After I bought them, I knew I was a heckuva poor cowboy."

A brief sojourn with crossbred bulls in the early 1970s produced tolerable calves in the middle, but the extremes on either end simply didn't fit into the program. It was impossible to save replacement females. The experiments were successful: he learned what would not work plus he gained more insight into the commercial cattleman's challenge and dilemma. "We can't solve all our problems in one cross."



There are no miracles out there, and Dave tries to convey that as he puts on his seed stock seller cap.

"I like private treaty as you can get to know the farmer, the rancher, and understand his needs. It behooves the purebred man to keep track of what his cattle have done for his clients."

Dave makes a perennial springtime vow to keep some of his top bulls for home use.

"And every year, somebody squeezes me out of them. It's getting so I hate to sell some of these bulls except the very best bull. That bull is fun for me to sell.

"The hardest part for me is selling the low end, and apologizing and saying, 'Well, I'm not sure,' and he's saying, 'That's what I bought last time and it did a good job.' The top and bottom to me is almost like right and wrong.

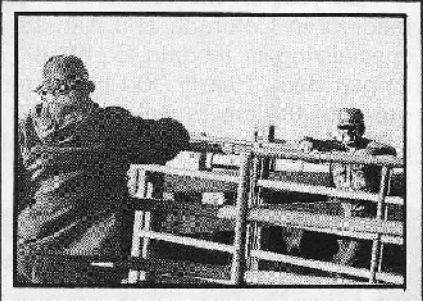
"But it's gratifying to have people look the crop over and top the bulls, take them home and find they do the job. Especially, if the customers come back and say the heifers really milk or have maternal abilities.

"If we sell 50 bulls, they're going to breed a lot of cows and so the impact is broad."

Remember utility rather than perfection?

"The utility of this thing comes

"There's about 900 cows around here. Of those, 200-250 will typically be heifers." The bulk of the Hinckley operation lies between the active runways of the Salt Lake City airport. Fences, jets, and cows create an interesting combination of circumstances for this rancher.



back to us every day in the calf she weans," Dave says. "My goal is a 600-pound calf on a 1,000-pound cow and a hundred percent calf crop. What more do you need?"

It would be nice for those steers to produce a 1,150-pound carcass at 16 months of age with a yield of 63-65 percent, he adds.

"If I survive the crisis, my goal is to run in the neighborhood of 300 purebreds, 400 commercial cows, and get into a position where I can feed out all these calves right here myself. That way I can see just what they do all the way around.

"I don't know how a guy can tell a story without knowing what the ending is. If it doesn't work at my house, can I advise others to do it?"

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