

SOME THINGS ENDURE



Yes, he's driven a Ford lately

T · H · I · S L · I · F · E

Authentically restored right up to its cordova tan paint scheme with vermillion red pinstripes and wheels, this 1936 Ford

flathead V-8 boasts 85 horsepower. It was a "frame-off" restoration, that is a total recreation back to factory new condition

starting from scratch. "It runs beautiful," says Angus breeder Damon Koch. "I've had it in several parades."

Damon L. Koch
Sunny Brook Farm
Haxtun, Colorado
Auctioneer of cattle, machinery,
and antique autos

"I lived a life of speed, noise, and power—a motorcycle fan until 1962." He was driving home from a race when he met a touring group of Model A Fords heading for Tin Cup, Colo. "I thought right then—I have to have one. I joined the club that day and started to look for a Model A. I have enjoyed it!"



Plowing devotion into what they enjoy and admire, a pair of Colorado brothers find life's special zest from black cows and classic cars. Model A Fords and Angus thrive under their care.

Merl Koch and son Gary of Sunnyside Farms, Haxtun, Colo. are the stockmen primarily. His brother Damon sidelines in the auctioneering trade and the fine art of collecting. Their Sunnyside and Sunny Brook Farms are located in the northeast corner of Colorado where wheat is an important cash crop.

Kochs run a commercial cattle operation of 250 cows where Angus loyalty reaches back for three generations.

"After Dad sold out in 1948 (a record sale for commercial cattle), we saw the handwriting on the wall," says Merl Koch of their decision. "Of the 40 head that were ours, three-quarters

were registered. But we decided if we were going to stay in, we'd have to get in and show, go to the sales, and always push for better quality bulls. We decided we had enough work with the farming and that the cattle were a good sideline."

"My dad," says Damon Koch, "was one of the first in northeast Colorado to switch from Herefords to Angus." The years are pegged between 1936-38. "He was a terrific livestock man with an inborn love for a good cow herd and a good bull. We had a good instructor. We always keep the top heifers and have bought very few cows."

Merl remembers his father's insistence on high quality and re-tooling the cow factory with the top end of the heifer crop. "He selected for growth and was especially mindful of length and disposition."

One bull's influence, Applewood

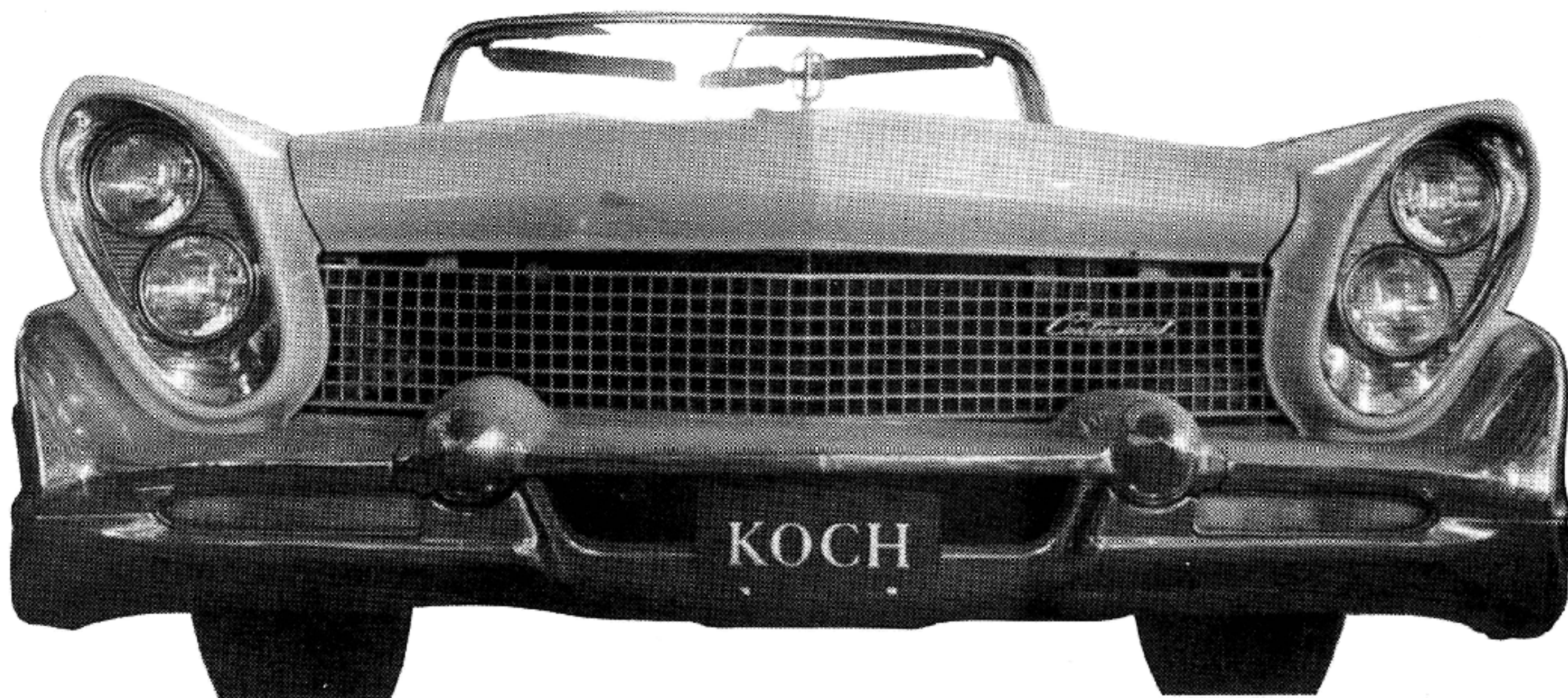
Bandolier 87 from the Ed Polka herd of Riverton, Neb., continued to be expressed through a series of heifer crops.

This good bull and the reliable, durable Angus cow must have planted indelible impressions upon the Koch boys for Damon says: "We are cow people—we love Angus cattle! If they lost money every year, we would still have them because our cow herd is part of our family."

The Koch herd is strongly Angus with an eighth Chianina and Gelbvieh and Maine Anjou influence. "There'll always be a need for the Angus base in any crossbred calf," Merl says of his experience. The family believes the time may be right to strengthen the straight Angus portion of the herd even more. "We've got enough size."

"Blacks keep—and have kept us—out of the red!" Merl adds. "We were milking a lot of cows," he says of the

By Jim Cotton
Editor



"Lincoln Continental—two door—two seated convertible, 1958—the longest, biggest, most massive car ever produced in the United States. I weighed that car once—forgot, but it's way heavier than my 98 Oldsmobile. It drives like a boat out on the water. It has a 460 cubic inch engine and a very high cruising speed."

Damon Koch...

"I also raise black-wooled sheep. If you're going to be one, you might as well raise 'em."



"It's more thrilling to restore a car or truck back to its original condition than buying a finished car and drive off." This is a five-window coupe with a rumble seat latched only from the inside and suicide doors (opening to the front). "I've always liked the looks of the front end on these. It was restored by a man in Salina, Kan. He said it was the best one he'd ever started with. It runs beautiful—I just love it.

"You can get all the tires you want. There are several places where you can buy obsolete and antique tires."

Engine work? "I have everything done. I'm no mechanic. There are several special shops that work on restoring engines."



Merl Koch at the wheel of a 1957 Thunderbird one-seater coupe. Damon recalls this purchase:

"I heard about this little crippled man with this perfect 1957 T-bird. The collectors said he'd price it but then he'd back out and wouldn't sell. So I thought maybe everyone's trying to talk him down—if I like it, I'd better buy it.

"When I found the car, it sat on a carpeted floor. You could have eaten your dinner off the work bench.

"He took me for a ride, and before he put it back in the garage, he went around the tires with an icepick to take the rocks out of the tread.

"And, I said, 'I'm gonna buy your car.' "

"And it got kinda still and quiet. So, he said, 'Come on in the house. How many children have you got, now?'

"Like I said, I'm a bachelor. I don't have any children."

" 'Do you have any references?' "

"Well, it's Saturday, but I could reach the banker at home—"

" 'No, no. I mean character references.' "

"So, I gave him three references and he called them all and asked if I had all these Model A's and if I put on V-8 wheels and if I chromed them all up, or if I kept them all original.

"And they said, no, he does everything Henry Ford's way.

"He hung up and said: 'Mom, I think this is our man. . . . I've had a jillion chances to sell that car but I won't sell it to anyone with kids who'd stand on the seats or



fingerprint the windows. I just can't do it.' "

Before he left that afternoon, Damon also paid \$2,000 for the couple's Model A Roadster.

" 'Buy that roadster, too,' " he told me. " 'I'll make you an offer you can't turn down. Then Mom and I are through with our hobbies. We're both too crippled up with arthritis.' " "This was 15 years ago. Today it's valued at \$18-20,000."



Satisfaction: "Restoring something back to its original condition in my lifetime that was made in Henry Ford's lifetime and saving it from the iron pile. I try to do everything the way Henry Ford made it. Originality is very important to the value of a car.

"Parts are hard to find if you restore back to original. Lots of parts are reproductions, but you can't beat the original if you can find them. The more original a car is, the more value you have when you're done." Damon now has 45 restored Model A's and early V-8 Ford cars, pickups, and trucks. "The last one I restored took me two years and five months. I've got parts from about every state in that car. I worked at night a lot."

"I'm looking now for a grill for a 1935 truck and can't find a good one.

"All the new cars look about alike to me. . . . Each car company used to have a style and class you could tell at a glance or even identify by hearing the motor run. The beauty, style, and class of an automobile has been destroyed by aerodynamics, plastic bodies, and small motors."

family switch to Angus, "and we wanted to quit all that milking—"

"Yeah, and every Saturday morning, we'd clean the chicken house. That's the reason you'll never see a chicken on these farms."

Appreciation, then, for the black cow relieving the drudgery of milking in a stanchion barn morning and night. Beef cows may have made the chicken house tolerable even, and one gains the notion the brothers were

grateful for Dad Koch making the transition.

He also left a legacy of stockmen thumb rules Merl still finds helpful as he plans his selection program. "Dad used to say every extra inch of length is worth an extra fifty pounds. It's just a little guideline.

"And, we've found straight mineral oil to be an effective means of fly control. When the bulls are quiet, we can easily slip up and brush on a

treatment. It'll last a week and does a good job, better job than some of the other things we've tried."

On these dryland pastures, the Kochs stock at 30-40 head per bull because the acreage is small, 160 acres typically. "If we were in big range country, we couldn't do that."

Merl thinks future sire selection for the Koch herd will trend toward meat bulls with less emphasis on extremes. Replacement and sire performance are



Another parade favorite, this also a 1936 Ford ton and a half with the 85-hp flathead V-8. Angus posters were supplied by the

Association. The engine runs as smooth as smoke and nearly as quiet.

From the November, 1949, Western Aberdeen-Angus Assn. news—

Perhaps the most sensational sale of commercial cows in Aberdeen-Angus history was held at Haxtun, Colorado on November 4, 1949. This was a dispersion sale of the Sunnyside Angus Farm of Louis A. Koch. Although this had been maintained as a small herd with quality being stressed, the prices paid show only too well the value that commercial cattlemen from Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska are willing to pay for really good individuals. The sale saw an average of \$353 paid for 36 head of cows and \$237 for 17 calves. Top 10 cows averaged \$429. The calves, all dropped this year, brought an average of \$263 for the top 10. These 10 were made up of four bull calves and heifers. It is believed that these averages set a record for prices paid on commercial cattle, all breeds included. L.C. "Jim" Hoover was the auctioneer.



Ford Roadster pickup once served a registered Angus outfit. Trucks, Damon says, do not typically command the prices asked for cars although their value is increasing as collectors specialize in this facet.



Damon's collection of antique tractors has a very personal meaning:

"I'll never forget, it came back to me just as if it happened yesterday. It was back in the 1930s when we didn't have any money.

"Dad decided to get a Minneapolis KTA. We got home from school, and the dealer hadn't delivered it yet. So we had to go to milking, and we'd take turns running to the door to see if it was on its way. Finally, we saw some dust coming.

"It was the first rubber-tired tractor we ever had. They backed that truck into the ditch and Dad got up there and gave the crank a flip and it started up.

"Merl and I rode on the fenders, Dad drove it up into the yard, and I'll

never forget—it's just like it happened yesterday. . . .

"My mother came out of the house with a dishtowel in her hands and she broke down and cried.

"'We'll never get it paid for,' she said.

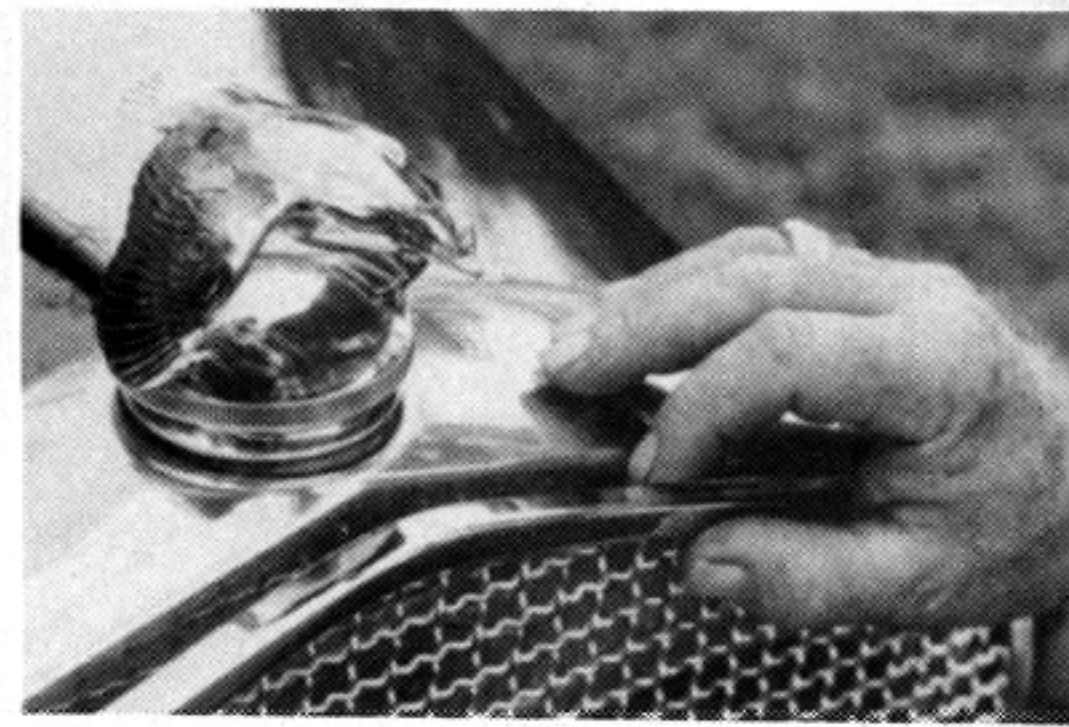
"It cost \$636. Dad traded the John Deere in and gave a note for the balance."

Damon spied an identical tractor at a Kansas thrashing bee and tried to buy it. He was turned down but was successful the second year he attended the event.

"I jumped out of the stands and asked the man if he'd sell it this year, and he said yes, he would. He said his son got married and he needed to buy furniture."



Damon and brother Merl Koch easing a 1940 Ford Opera Coupe back under shelter. The car provided a big trunk with a pair of jump seats behind the driver and front seat passenger. Royal Maroon paint is original.



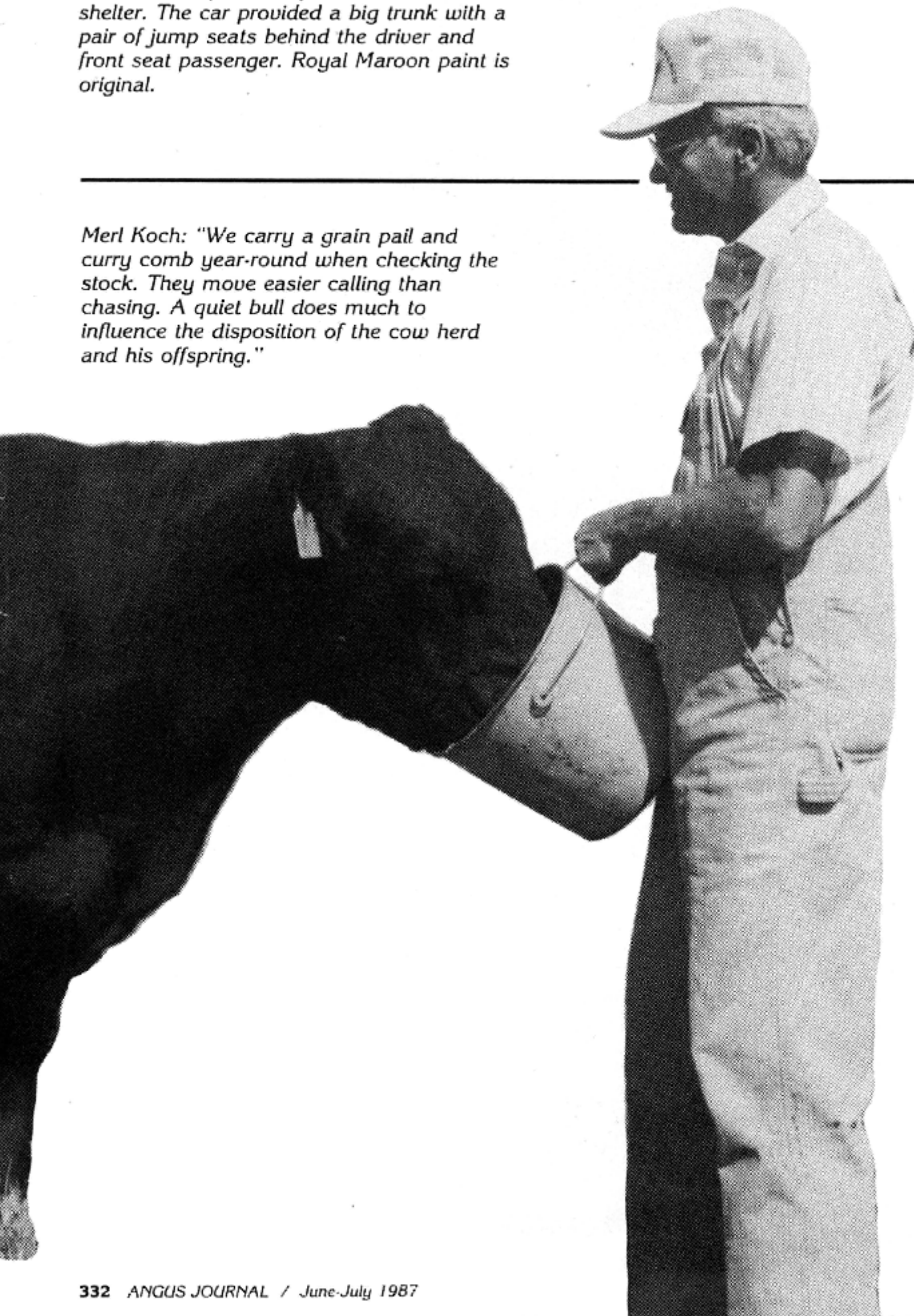
"I drove a Model A to high school and learned to love and respect it. There is no motor that sounds as nice as a Model A Ford motor when it idles with the spark retarded.

"I love the looks and the class of an early V-8 Ford. We have five Ford pickups and five Ford trucks to run our farming and ranching operations."

Quail emblem became symbolic for the Model A. Greyhounds graced the radiators of the early Ford V-8s. This roadster is protected by an optional rock shield.

"It's a 1930. I drove all night from Denver to Albuquerque over Raton Pass in this car. There's no heater so I 'bout half froze, but the car never missed a beat."

Merl Koch: "We carry a grain pail and curry comb year-round when checking the stock. They move easier calling than chasing. A quiet bull does much to influence the disposition of the cow herd and his offspring."



measured by Colorado State University record systems.

Koch will feed out the steers or go to the sale barn. The crops from the past two years have been custom-fed.

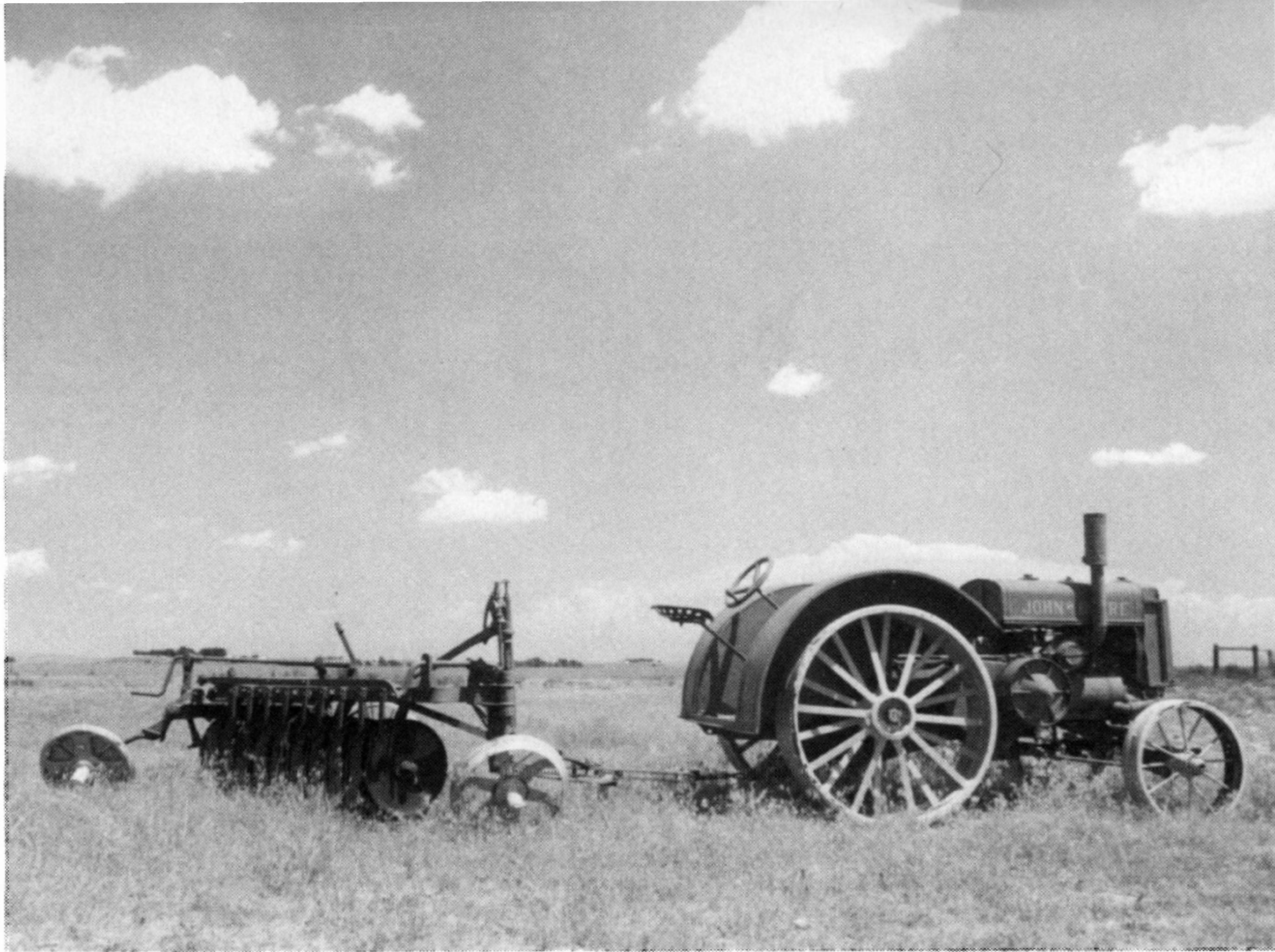
His years of merchandising impresses Damon with the built-in value of Angus and Angus crosses. "You'll go to some barns, and if the stock don't have the black eyes, black tongues, black nose, they don't want them.

"I sold cattle auctions for 22 years, five days a week in the fall and three days a week year-round. It made me feel good to raise Angus when an Angus man's cattle came in the ring. If the quality and size are uniform, they'll bring top money and he's done.

"When some other breeds come in, they sell the pretty ones, then the brockle faces, then the linebacks, then the horned, then the spots in the eye, and when the owner of that bunch goes home, his check is smaller than the Angus man's.

"I believe now we have the right kind of purebred cattle and the right kind of Angus bulls so we don't have to crossbreed to get the length and size in our cattle.

"I will always believe in Angus cattle. They have been good to us ... it's our way of life."



"One of the rewards in raising Angus cattle are the friends we've made. Cattle people are good people! If you have a love and understanding of animals and their nature, I believe

your life has more meaning to it. I could not live long if I worked inside a building with four walls and a paycheck every month. I like a challenge!

"All I ask in this life is the honor and right to do the best I can whatever it is."—Damon Koch.

Damon, addressing his brother's husbandry: "I've always said, if I were a cow, I'd want to be in my brother's herd. Only after they're fed and taken care of, is it his turn to eat."



"Any crossbred calf... needs an Angus mother"... Merl Koch.

"Dad had a love for the livestock," Merl remembers, "just like I inherited. Gary (Merl's son) seems to feel the same way. He lives on the home place, Sunnyside, and is now the manager of the unit." The Merl Kochs also have three daughters, two living in nearby Holyoke, and one in Colby, Kan. Grandkids number five presently.