

# The Bentonville Connection

...a local call

**I**f one were to flatten the Angus landscape, the terrain would still retain its individual character. There'd remain those distinctive features. The forces and movements shaping the breed into such variety today would still emerge.

Every Angus community is a cross-section of desires and influences, of dreams and hidden agendas, and some gigantic leveling wouldn't change the motives compelling people to enter the business. The breed has enjoyed contributions from people of means, those who've struggled, others who've dabbled, and those for whom not being in the Angus business would seem as unnatural as not living on the land.

The Bentonville Angus group depicted here presents just a little corner of breed activity in northwest Arkansas. Yet, it is representative of many close-knit Angus communities one might find in the lower 48. Some of the folks described came into the breed through youth activities. Some grew up in it. Newcomers saw opportunity to participate in the national impact of the breed; they were attracted to its showing or performance opportunities. Others enjoy the inner satisfaction Angus cattle offer.

One Bentonville observer stated: "If it wasn't for the fun, it would be high-priced torture." A position some might challenge. But it's a defensible reason nonetheless, as the breed provides recreation and ties its supporters into a way of life through outlets or experiences most wouldn't trade. Trite and often-repeated, but it is a people business.

Our profiles are brief and they attempt to pinpoint the avenues leading to basic niches where folks find they belong in the breed.

Jim and Katy Rieff, Black Oak Angus, have always been involved in a youth program through their own four children or as 4-H leaders and FFA activities. "If you think a junior cattle show's stressful, try watching your son riding broncs on the high school rodeo circuit," they say.

A serious and contemplative student, Brett Smith, Triple B Farms, exemplifies that breed of Angus producer who charts his business, living with it daily. "We're not just selling pounds of cattle, we're selling cattle to people. The whole ballgame is for the people aspect of it. And, if it wasn't for that, we wouldn't be in it. We have to keep the show life and glamour in this business too." Brett, 1987 president of the Arkansas Angus Assn., credits Dave McMahon of Belle Point Ranch at Lavaca as instrumental in encouraging him in the Angus business.

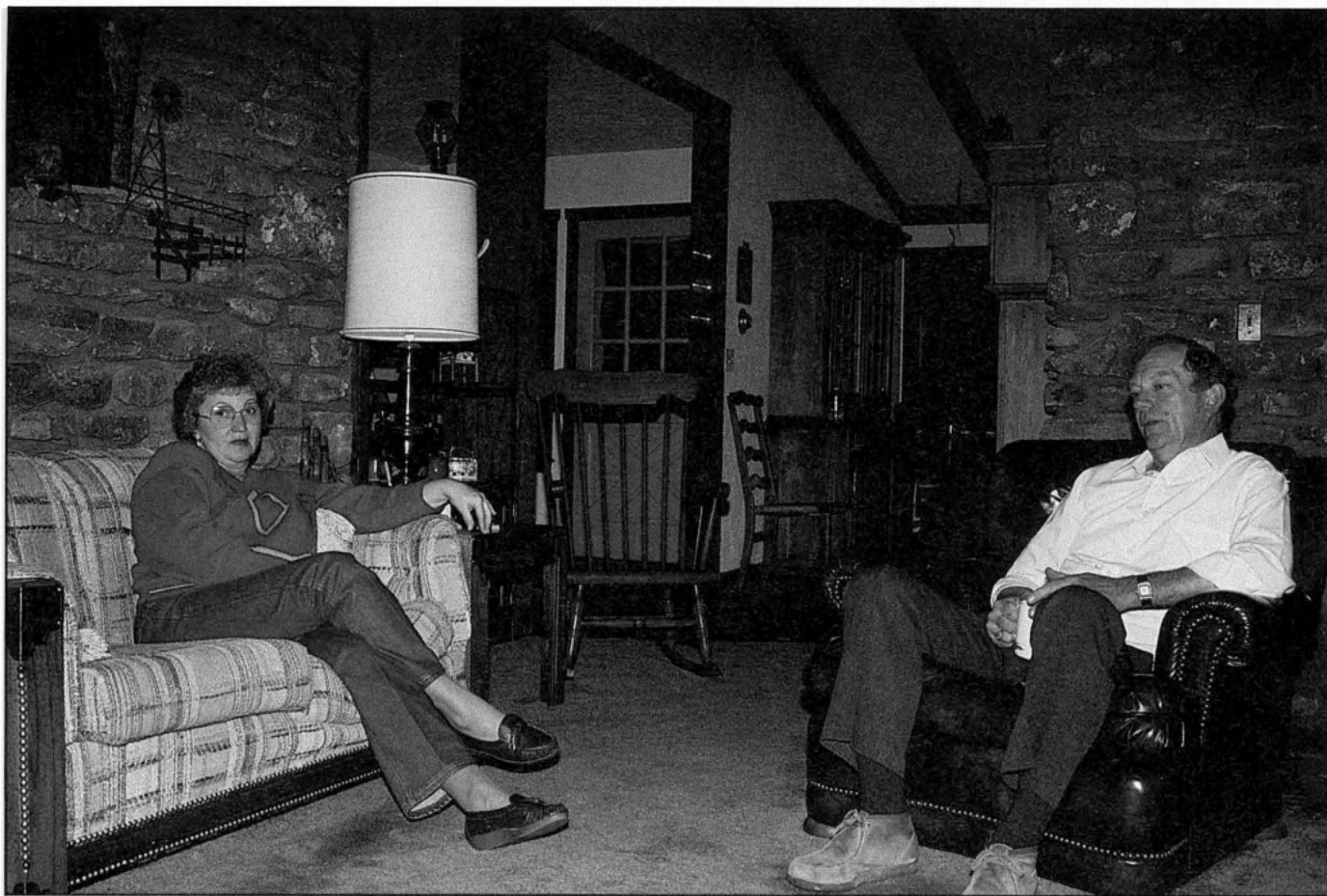
Businessman Dale Webster finds distraction enough in the family's mail order enterprise—the familiar House of Webster—but he enjoys the pleasures from a registered herd enough to keep at it since the early 1960s. "Most of what I have on my place is what I've home raised. You can't keep up quite as fast with that method." Despite a busy schedule and demands from a plant that hums all year long, he does his own A.I. "I've had a little better luck with it doing it myself. My problem is I'm usually a little late getting in on the popular runs (of bulls)."

Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Lyle emigrated to the area from West Texas. "Blew in," Floyd corrects, referring to the legendary winds of the region. His abiding interest in Angus centers on the testing programs available and specifically Oklahoma BEEF, Inc. "It's like anything—you can't make something out of nothing. I like to take a 46 or 47-inch calf over there," he says of the OBI fast track. "It takes a pretty good calf to go over there and do anything."

The personnel at JAC's Ranch would agree, though JAC's arena is a bit different. Here's an up-and-comer in the breed, investing in nationally-known genetics and gaining a foothold in the rarefied world of the breed's elite show and sale circuit through an intensive A.I. and E.T. program. Owner Jack Shewmaker and ranch manager Lamar Steiger juggle nearly 1,100 head on the ranch pastures, 60 percent of which are Angus and the balance Polled Hereford. "Too many," Lamar says of the number. But, then the ranch has always had an exciting, challenging program in progress. It was once a Jersey dairy and Charolais operation.

By Jim Cotton  
Editor





A pleasant setting for relaxing or observing the Black Oak Angus herd, **Katy and Jim Rieff** at home.

**T**he Bentonville connection was formed by dozens of threads woven into the present fabric. For example, Grady Rieff and his wife Stacia represent the second generation involved in the Angus industry. Grady heads up the E.T. program at JAC's, and his interest was sparked through the 4-H, FFA, and certainly the Angus influence from his Black Oak roots at home with Jim and Katie.

According to Katie Rieff, "We bought our first Angus heifer in 1961, our first show heifer in 1965 and started showing some then." The children participated in the cattle project at various levels. One daughter now works for the state of Texas at Austin, and the other is in Tulsa, Okla., pursuing a career in merchandising. Both sons are married and working in the county, Grady for JAC's Ranch.

"The other boy, Kevin, just bought a place of his own," Jim says. "He's going to have some turkey houses, but he's also going to run some registered Angus cows too. He went to E.T. school at Big Sky Breeders in Montana and worked a year for B&L Ranch at Shawnee, Okla."

The Rieffs have observed the ups and downs of the breed, much of it geared to youthful participation. "The Angus are picking up," says Katie. "We had lost a lot of our exhibitors as they had grown out of it. But, last year we had 10 to 12 new junior exhibitors at our county fair."

Jim adds the local kids really enjoy showing. "A good part of it will never be big time showing, not even at the state fair, but they really have a lot of fun. We'll have 70-some head of steers at the Benton County Fair—it's one of the top 4-H and FFA cattle shows of any county fair in the state. The numbers of breeding stock drifted down for a while, but then we started to pick out an Angus heifer each spring for a junior to show, and that's helped a bunch." The upshot, Jim reports, was that the brother or sister of the lucky recipient sometimes became interested and they too got involved in a beef project.

"We encourage our kids to join their state breed association or junior programs and participate in those activities if they can," Katy points out. Attitude is

important to a successful junior program. As advisors, they've had to help their club members develop a healthy perspective on showing and its purpose.

"I don't know what you can do about it," says Jim of professional fitting and grooming at junior events. "It's there."

"When we went to our first big show, we came home having learned so much from the experience we could share with our kids. And, we advised them they were going to see some professionals fitting and helping show. We told them to expect it, but to just go out and have fun and learn from the experience."

Their show years behind them, the Rieff children contributed to the upgrading of the herd through their training and enthusiasm for A.I. and E.T. It's likely some day that Black Oak will attempt an E.T.



program through such homegrown expertise. Even Dad went back to school.

"I went to A.I. school and we have bred everything A.I. since 1975. We found out a number of years ago we couldn't afford a bull as good as we wanted to use. Even if we had the money, it wouldn't have been practical as we've never kept but 20-25 cows.

"It (A.I.) still amazes me. I didn't realize you could change cattle as much as you can until we started artificial inseminating to a sure-enough top bull. A.I. will make a better cattleman out of you than just running them out in the pasture," Jim believes. "We like the Pine Drive Big Sky females a lot."

Jim's trade is meat cutting. He heads up that division for the local IGA Supermarkets and his experience in those operations influence his attitude toward cattle. "I look at cattle in a little different way that others might. I kind of know what you have to have under that hide to make a profit.

"Some of the fads we've bred into cattle were obviously wrong back when we started showing cattle. Heifers had a leg under each corner and too much backfat. It's easy for breeders to lose sight of the requirement that the carcass fit the box and satisfy my customers.

"We've always trimmed to a quarter inch," he replies when asked. "We were there when these other stores started making quite a deal over that.

"I fought long and hard against giving up carcass beef," he admits, speaking as a craftsman proud of his trade. "I really



The heifer with the shaved head is by Premier Valedictorian. The other, by Pine Drive Big Sky.

like to cut good Choice quality carcass beef. I'd been in the business so long and knew a number of people out there in the packing houses across the country. They knew what I wanted, and at least I thought I got a little preferential treatment."

Certified Angus Beef? "I've toyed with the idea of going with CAB. We'd give it more thought if we had a source of supply. Our grocery warehouse would probably have to go into it to make it practical for us."

The impressions gained both as a beef merchandiser and Angus breeder have been lasting. "I've always been sold on Angus cattle so strongly as I don't think there's a breed going that's any closer to what we need. I don't know of another breed that will come off their mamas or off wheat pasture and go into a feedlot

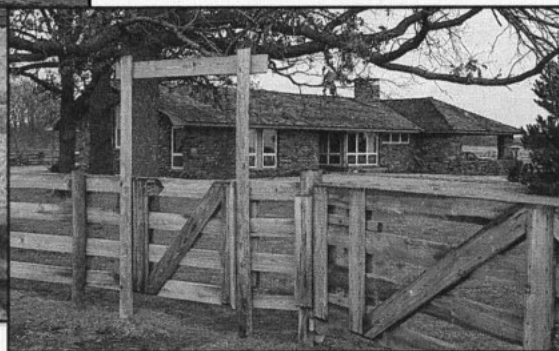
and come out with shorter feeding period."

This spring, calves are expected from B&L Stitch, Harrison, and Cobble Pond Rookie. "Probably the best calf we've ever had is a Harrison heifer. They seem to grow exceptionally well from our experience thus far. I have a Premier Valedictorian calf out of a Pine Drive Big Sky daughter I like really well. We used the Fairfield Hi Guy bull for a while and got lots of frame. The Harrison calf we like so well is out of a Dr. Spock cow so she's double-bred."

The Rieffs operate in the domain of fescue as is typical of the region. Their pastures include some bermudagrass with a little clover and orchardgrass mixed in. "We use very little supplement, just a balanced mineral. We do creep feed the



"Trapper", lower left, is the Black Oak receptionist and squirrel chaser.



calves based on a formula the boys worked up for us on what we need. We probably overfed our cows if anything."

Heifer development is a keen interest and perpetuating the influence of what Jim calls big ol' framey cows. They were Eileenmere-bred. Too big for their time.

"They were bought locally from Ray Campbell here at Bentonville. He had the biggest Angus bull that I'd ever seen at that time.

"Two of those heifers grew into cows that weighed over 1,400 pounds. Several of their direct descendents are still here. We developed most of the herd from those three original heifers. We found out some time ago that the heifers we bought were not as good as the heifers we raised, unless we were willing to spend a ton of money on them.

"We have a little problem with fescue," he continues. "I have one cow out here that I bought and she's never adapted to the fescue. She still raises a good calf but she doesn't shed off like the others. In fact, I usually have to clip her. With the cows we've raised, it doesn't seem to bother them as much." Jim tries to "bush hog" the pastures more often than normal. The practice knocks the seed stalk down and allows the cattle to work more on the leaves. He finds spraying with Embark retards the seed stalk and seems to "hold promise."

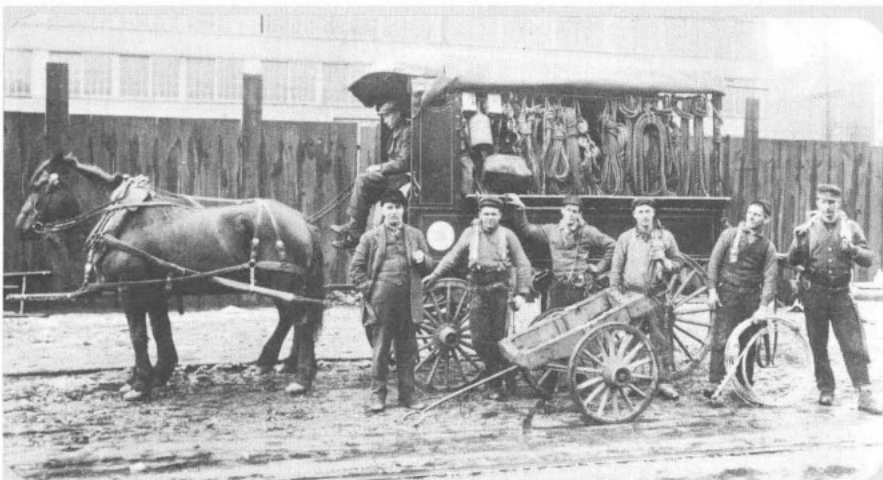
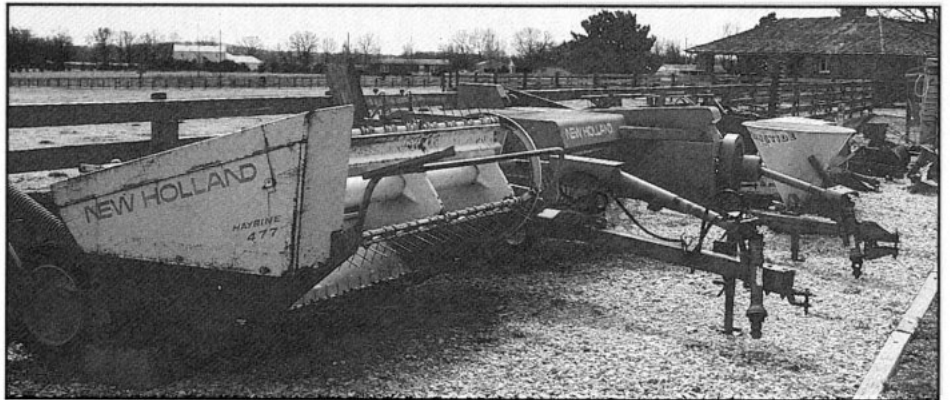
Fescue is a fact of life in northwest Arkansas as it is in many similar climates. "It's so dominant that I doubt it's practical to try to do away with it," Jim concludes.



*A daughter of Dr. Spock with a Harrison calf at side.*



*Number 12 is a veteran cow of Eileenmere lineage also raising a Harrison daughter.*



**F**eeding also receives major emphasis at Brett and Patti Smith's Triple B Farm. Brett's E.T. program is unquestionably ambitious, and he finds visitors expect the cattle at Triple B to look the part by carrying a little more bloom than a commercial herd's.

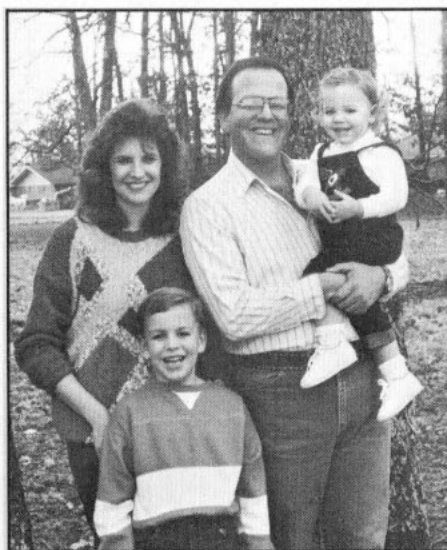
Dry cows are on a five-pound ground corn and milo mix while the nursing cows are fed a 16 percent dairy feed composed of cracked corn and pellets providing other major and minor nutrients. Spring calves are creep fed with whole oats while their fall-dropped mates receive oats plus some corn and protein.

Heifer calves are fed twice a day for their first year with a mixture of crimped

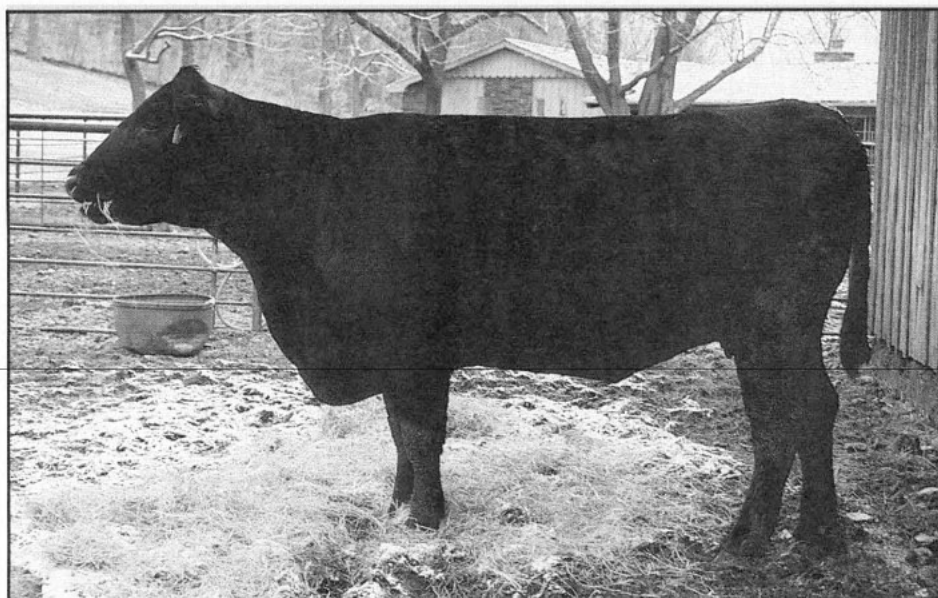
oats, steam cracked corn, alfalfa pellets, calf manna, minerals, and beet pulp. Herdsire prospects are also on this ration. Commercial bulls are fed bermudagrass hay free choice and the 16 percent dairy feed for growth without fattening.

Brett is enthused with a chelated mineral he's discovered, prepared by Blue Bonnet Feeds in Ardmore, Okla. "We had 20 coming two-year-old heifers on this chelated mineral called Tech-Master for 60 days prior to breeding. On the first heat, we bred everything and got a 94 percent conception. So, we put it in front of everything now, and we've improved our percentage by 15-20 percent.

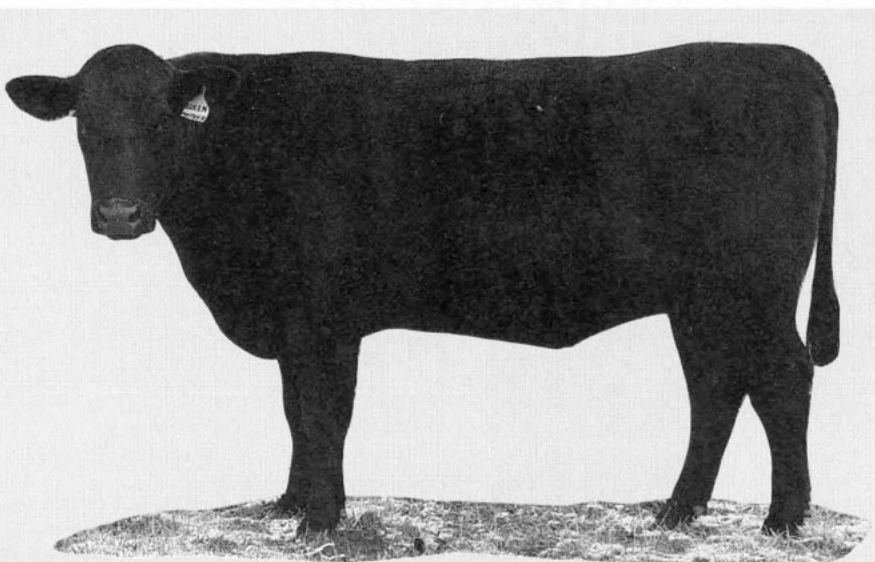
"We started using it on our donor cows and where they had been producing four



At Triple B Farms: Brett Smith and Patti, son Ryan and daughter Nicole.



Dee Bar H Ann is one of the main standard-bearers for Triple B.



The Queen Mother cow by Dr. Spock.

or five embryos, they started kicking out 10 to 17 embryos. JAC's Ranch is now feeding it to their donor cows."

It's important to take care of these cows as several offer some herd or breed-moving genetics. Through the McMahon's sale at Belle Point Ranch, Brett was able to merchandise an embryo that eventually became the rising young bull, B&L Stitch, a Harrison son out of a Pine Drive Big Sky dam named Miss Precious Lucy. Stitch was the 1987 National Western Spring Bull Calf Champion. Another celebrated Triple B resident is number 213, Dee Bar H Ann, also a Pine Drive Big Sky daughter and the dam of Class Act. Class Act has lived up to her name as grand champion of the 1987 Western National and the '87 All-American Futurity, and she became the leading Show Heifer of the Year, 1987. "Ann" will be flushed to a Perryville Esso son out of a Scotch Cap daughter.

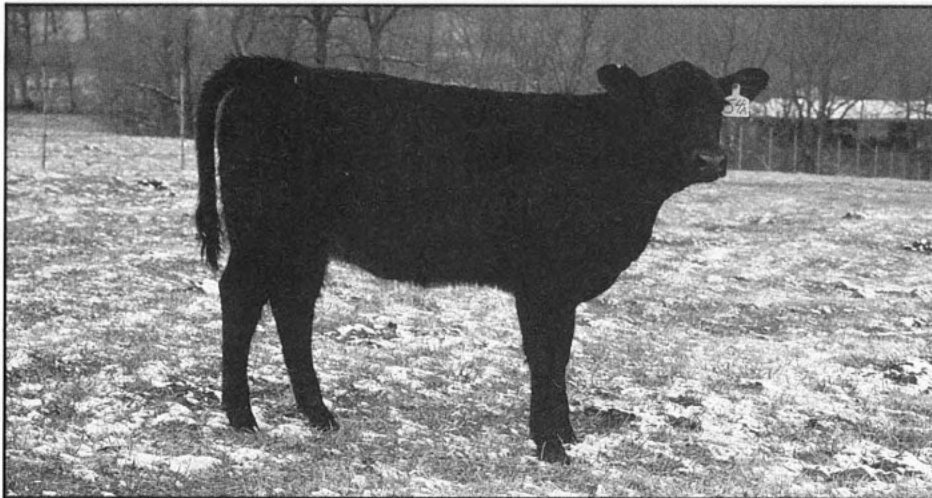
Triple B added Cinderella WK, the Reserve Junior Heifer Calf Champion at the 1988 Western National Angus Futurity from Whitestone-Krebs of Nebraska, to its donor lineup and she is now in transplant. A donor cow named Queen Mother represents the Dr. Spock line. She is currently bred to calve to Waldeck Shocker.

Brett's sensitive to industry interest and concern with milk and the positive or negative EPD that surrounds this increasingly visible measurement. "I'm concerned more about negative milk right now than ever before because I can see people are looking for more sires with yearling weights plus milk in the pedigree.

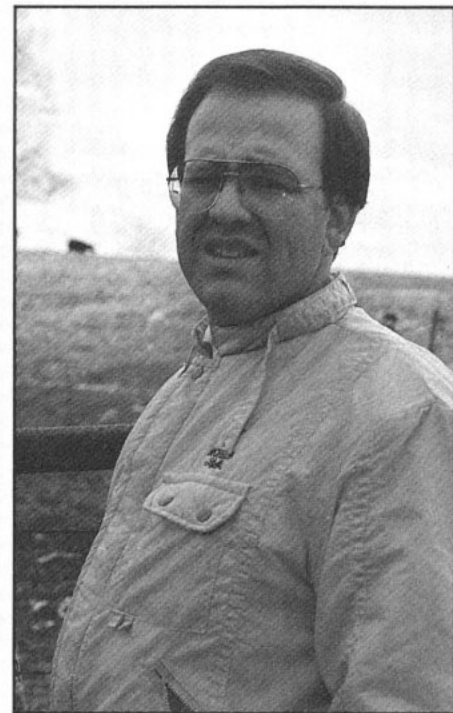
"We want to sell an animal that will perform well and do them a good job," he continues. "So, we're looking more to-



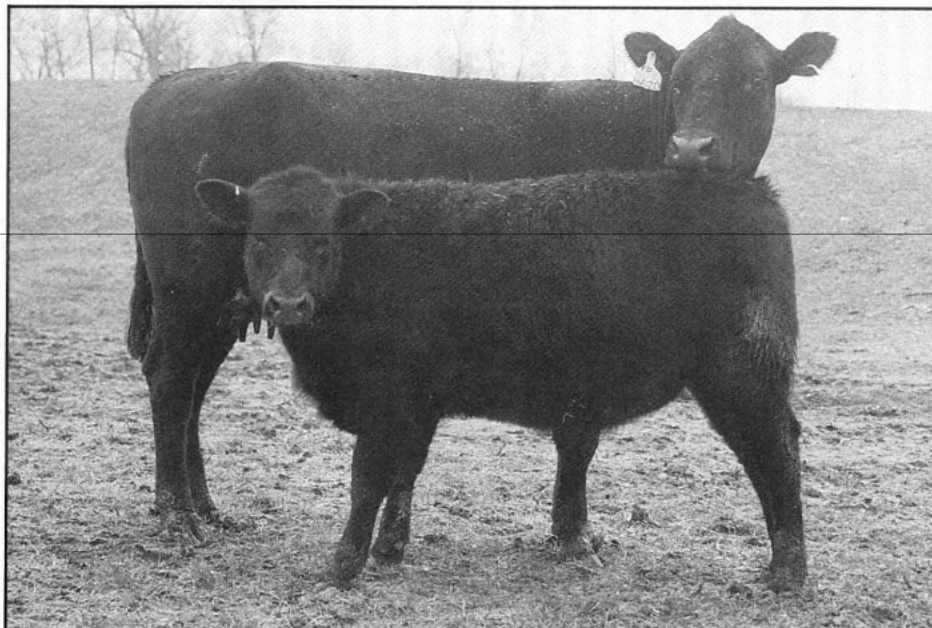
He's not pretty, but he's proved one of the most valuable members of the team over his remarkable lifespan of eight years. Apparently his effectiveness as a gomer bull and his longevity are expressions of gratitude for being spared the knife or the trip to town. "He just hangs in there with them. And, he doesn't go through any fences. He was the worst bull we had but he's paid out to be one of the best."



"I bought this heifer at the Four-State Sale last Wednesday. She's an AAR New Trend daughter. She's not the show ring type, but I figure about three years from now, she might be pretty popular."



"I wake up every morning and go to bed every night with them."



"Here's a two-year-old Pine Drive Big Sky daughter suckling her first calf, a Harrison heifer. She's rebred."

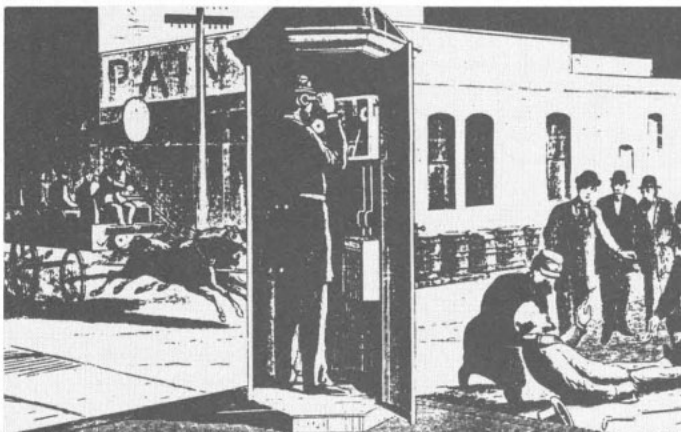
wards the milk end of it. This past week, for the first time, I ordered the computer printout on our cows and their EPD.

"We bought a cow last fall with an EPD of plus 18 for milk. We were tickled to find one like that. She came from Windy Acres Angus in Nebraska. She's a Perryville Esso daughter out of a 36J cow. Not only is she high in milk, but she's also high in yearling weight. We're starting to lean that way."

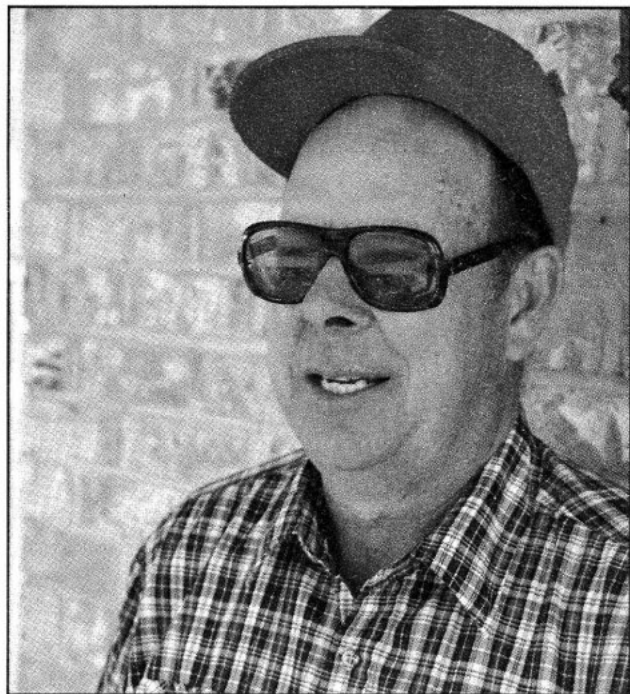
He's high on the Harrison influence in his herd and thinks the bull will prove to be surprising in the milk production category. We have two Harrison daughters with their first calves, and if all Harrison daughters milk as well as these two, Harrison will be well-accepted on maternal traits."

Though Brett is not a veteran on the Angus scene, he has been observing for a couple decades. He started his animal science schooling at the University of Arkansas in 1976 concurrent with Triple B's venture into a registered Angus operation. Triple B was actually founded in 1961 by L.L. Baxter of Fayetteville, Ark., and named in honor of his three grandsons—Baxter, Brett, and Bart. Brett has continued the name and moved the farm from its Farmington, Ark., location to its present site south of Bentonville.

On board today are some 30 mature cows, 25 coming two-year-olds, and a recipient herd that numbers in the neighborhood of 60 head. Recips are selected from various breeds and combinations but must exhibit soundness and good udders.



# TELEPHONE



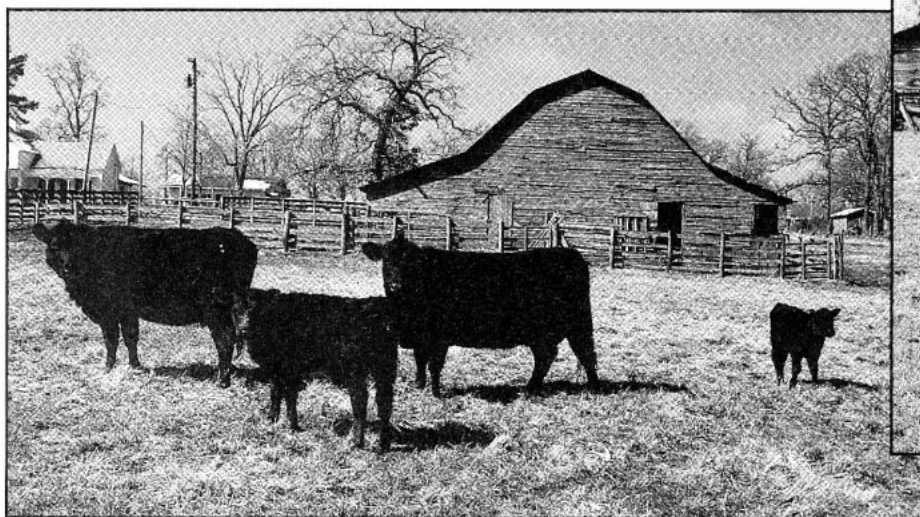
Floyd Lyles, a transplanted Texan focuses on performance when developing his Angus herd and marketing plan.

**B**ulls, however, are familiar and marketable items for Floyd Lyles. One gathers he finds competing in a performance test a zestful experience. He likes to prove what he's put together and enjoys the approval of others. He's found the exposure from testing bulls at OBI (Oklahoma BEEF, Inc.) beneficial and rewarding, even revealing.

Like the show ring, testing must adjust to changing expectations and market demands. Recently, Floyd has added some PS Power Play daughters to his cow factory in light of renewed interest in maternal strengths. He also purchased a Premier Independence daughter at last year's Heart of the Ozarks Sale conducted at Harmony Hills, Lebanon, Mo. She's bred to Piper Wyandot P600, most recently junior champion bull at the Western National Angus Futurity.

A.I. is the mode. He typically breeds A.I. one time "unless it's a particular cow we want bred a certain way." Then, there'll be two attempts. He's achieved a 75 to 80 percent conception rate. A neighbor in the dairy business handles the mechanics. Floyd does the detection.

"I try to keep everything here at home where I can watch them. The most important thing is to be around close and try to watch them carefully," he states.



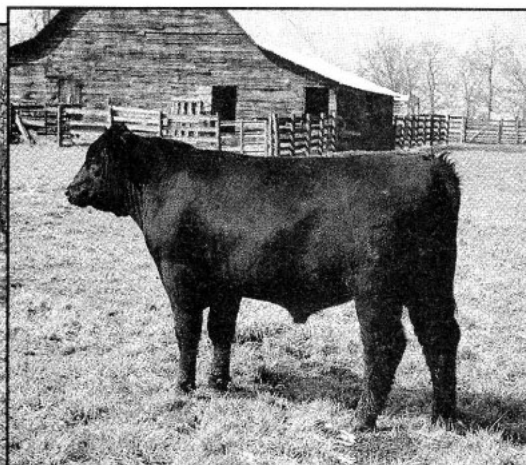
The daughter, number 9, is a Kadence Shoshone 520 daughter and out of the Emulation 31-bred cow. Calf is by Floyd's resident herdsire, FL Nitro Baros 483. "This is the mother of the last bull I sold out at OBI to Dr. Woodfin at Paris, Texas."

The older cow, number 8, is an Emulation 31 daughter and will be eight years old in June. Her High Voltage daughter at side is her seventh calf.

Floyd says: "If she ran with a bull, I wouldn't be surprised if she calved every 10 months. She's an easy-fleshing old bug-

gar. She'll stay fat even when you wean off a 6-700 pound weaner. The other heifers will milk down, but she won't. This mother-daughter pair are really fertile. The daughter will be bulling within 18 to 25 days after she's calved."

The daughter, number 125, is a Kadence Shoshone 520 daughter and out of the Emulation 31-bred cow. Calf is by Floyd's resident herdsire, FL Nitro Baros 483. "This is the mother of the last bull I sold out at OBI to Dr. Woodfin at Paris, Texas."



"Bull was a year old on the fifth day of February." He's a Schearbrook Shoshone son out of a Rosebank Connection ("10") daughter. His performance at OBI was 4.54 ADG at 112 days with a final station index of 106.5. Hip height taped out to 52.5. He was slated to sell in the April, 1988, sale at the Stillwater, Okla., site. "He's a good-natured calf," Floyd notes. "Disposition is important on these small operations."



The Lyles cowherd is mostly Emulous breeding. Cow number 95 is a Early Sunset Emulous 60E daughter. Floyd has also injected some Crackerjack and 4S Ponderosa influence.



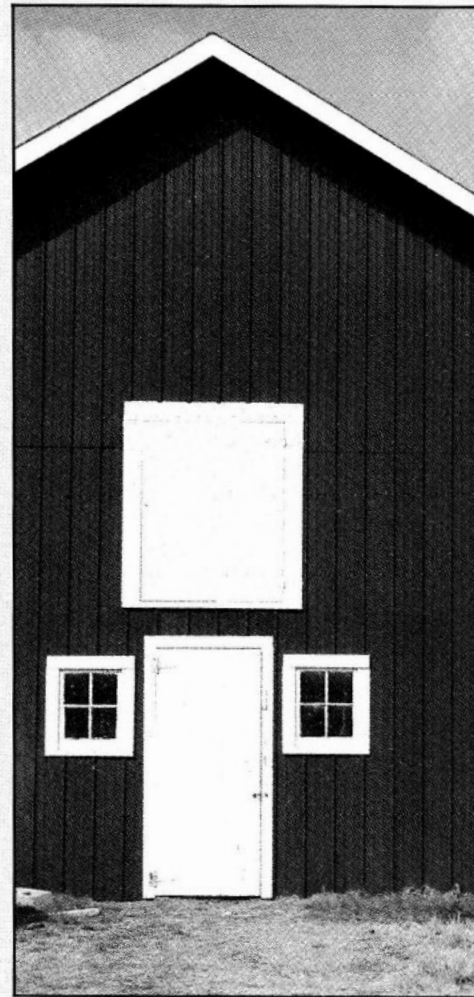
The number 81 cow is a Ken Caryl Mr. Angus 8017 daughter out of a Marshall-bred cow. Her calf is by 4S Ponderosa.

typical of the area, two calving periods are practiced. "I prefer March and April calves for test. The January and February calves are at a disadvantage through the winter months as well." The Bentonville area is a border climate, almost too grim in winter with its chilling wet fronts and ice storms to encourage fall calving.

Floyd tries to send two or three entries to OBI if he feels he can be competitive.

For him, Pine Drive Big Sky calves have become a standard by which other sires are measured. Both the maternal qualities and the growth and gainability to perform at the test have impressed him.

"I've had better luck all the way around out of Pine Drive Big Sky. Pine Drive and Cobble Pond New Yorker had done pretty well at OBI."



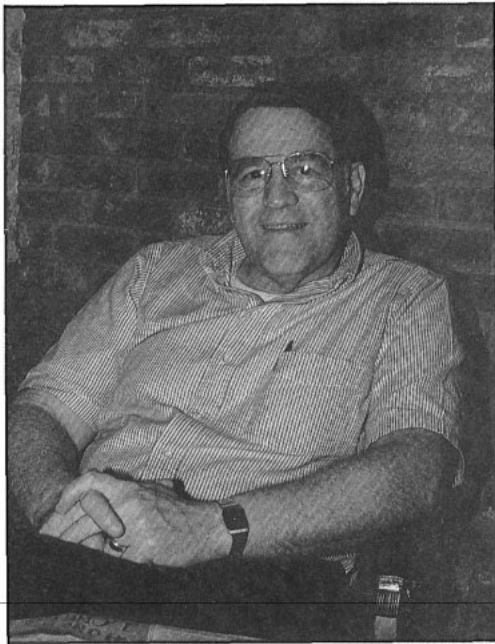
**D**ale Webster finds his market mostly in the commercial bull trade as well. His is a home-raised herd until two or three years ago and developed largely from his A.I. effort. His oldest cows carry 15 years of age and they were A.I. bred from Biffiles Emulous lines. Despite a busy schedule, he continues to A.I.

"I've had a little better luck doing it myself. I've liked Pine Drive Big Sky and Cobble Pond New Yorker. I'm not sure where I'll go from there. I have several Mr. Angus (Ken Caryl Mr. Angus) daughters and I have to consider that."

Dale added some new cow lines from a trio bought at JAC's Ranch plus some other purchases which will move the herd into some new directions. "For a long time, I liked the longer, taller type but I wasn't familiar enough to know how to proceed. You might need to pick up a few here or there to advance a generation or two," he says when discussing the virtues of new genetics versus a home-raised program.

*(Dale and his father Roy are principals in the regionally famous House of Webster, a firm packing old-fashioned fruit preserves, home-cured bacon, biscuit and pancake mixes, and commeal into gift boxes shipped all over the nation. Some of the assortments are named "Landmark", "Frosty*

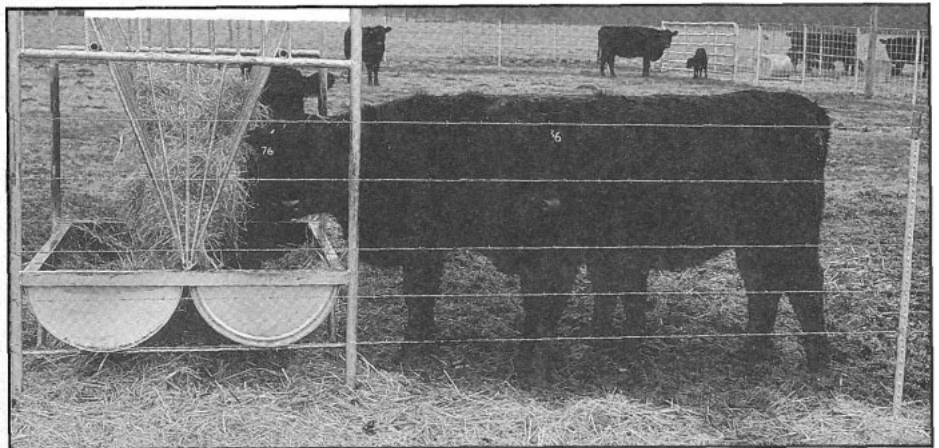




**Dale Webster:** "Northwest Arkansas has about as many cattle as you'd find anywhere in the state. That's not official of course, but we're used to cows as there was quite a bit of dairying carried on here for a number of years."



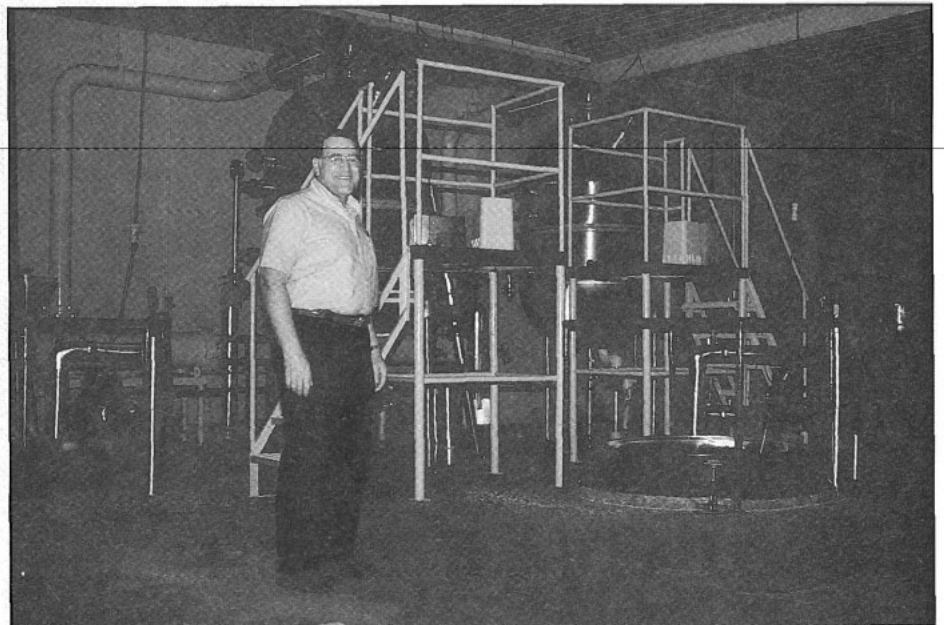
Dale and his company typically talk in terms of 40,000 pounds of strawberries, for example. Some of the jams and jelles are picked from the wild—huckleberries, himalayan berries, elderberries, wild blackberries, muscadines, and scuppernongs.



Morning", "Hungry Farmer's Breakfast", "Country Cupboard", "Grandma's Pantry", and "County Fair" with versions thereof. Several of the boxes include china or ceramic dishes, cast iron skillets, or "Hickory Creek Cheddar cheese", or "Nut Fudgies". A line of fruit cakes, hams, and sausage is also available.

To take the motif of nostalgia one gigantic step further, the firm also builds a line of electric ranges and ovens patterned after the cast iron kitchen range of decades and generations ago. A coffee mill grinder is incorporated into the design and serves as the oven's timer. There's even a microwave model. Electric cast iron skillets and bean pots carry the theme and appeal to those who like to cook from scratch.

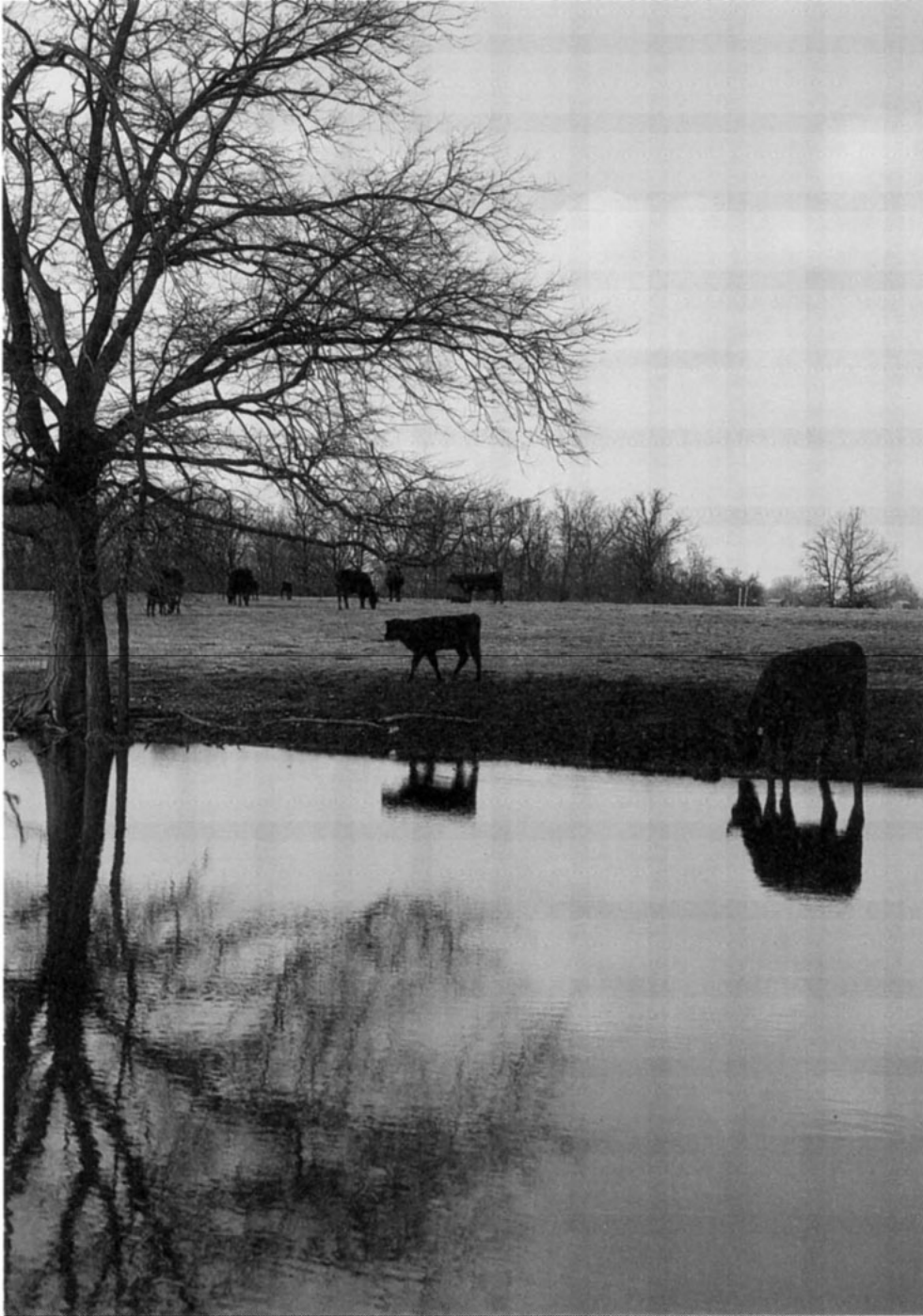
And finally, in honor of his inheritance, Roy Webster has assembled and produced "A Country Memoir" entitled **Under a Buttermilk Moon** which are memories of an Ozark boyhood. All this is housed in a log cabin store-display at the House of Webster south of Bentonville and just north of Rogers, Ark.



The heart of the jam and jellie operation is just like at home only on a large scale. The House of Webster covers nearly 90,000 square feet, employs 50, and grows to 100

or so during October and November when the gift package demand begins to mount. "We'll pack an average of 7,000 packages a day at the peak," says Dale.

# Gallery



JAC's Ranch Manager Lamar Steiger was raised on the place. The Steiger family moved to Bentonville from Hulett, Wyo., where they were raising cattle mainly along with a small band of sheep. One too many severe and devastating winters prompted the elder Steiger to seek a more moderate climate and to try a new enterprise.

The family's dairy herd and Charolais operation became well-known during the ensuing years. Mr. Jack Shewmaker's offer to buy the farm and another opportunity to sell the Jersey herd coincided; the foundation was laid for JAC's Ranch.



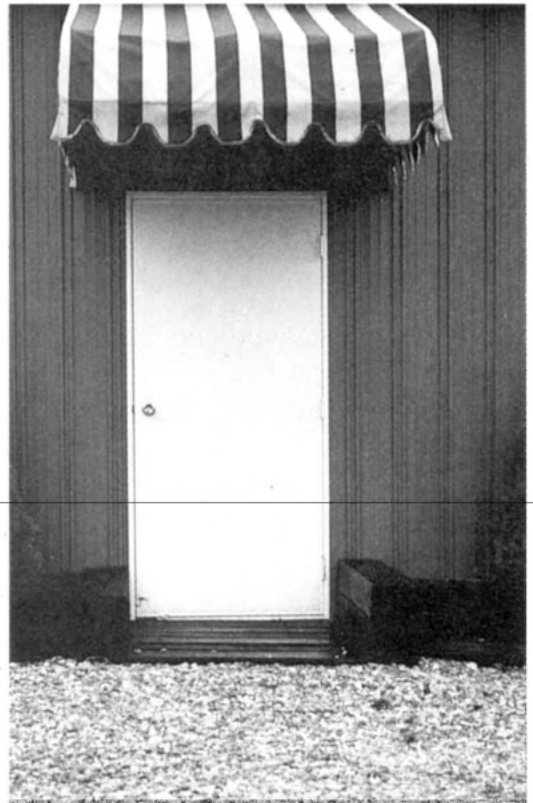
In a nutshell, the JAC's Ranch approach, program, and achievements.



Silage is produced because, as Lamar says, "when you live in a fescue area, you have to do something." The firm will make sudangrass silage, some



*Blue and white color schemes make a good first impression.*



*oatlage, haylage, and they will attempt corn silage this year though the Bentonville area is not traditionally a corn area.*



*JAC's Margarita 6112 is a Gunston Margarita and Waldeck Shocker offspring.*