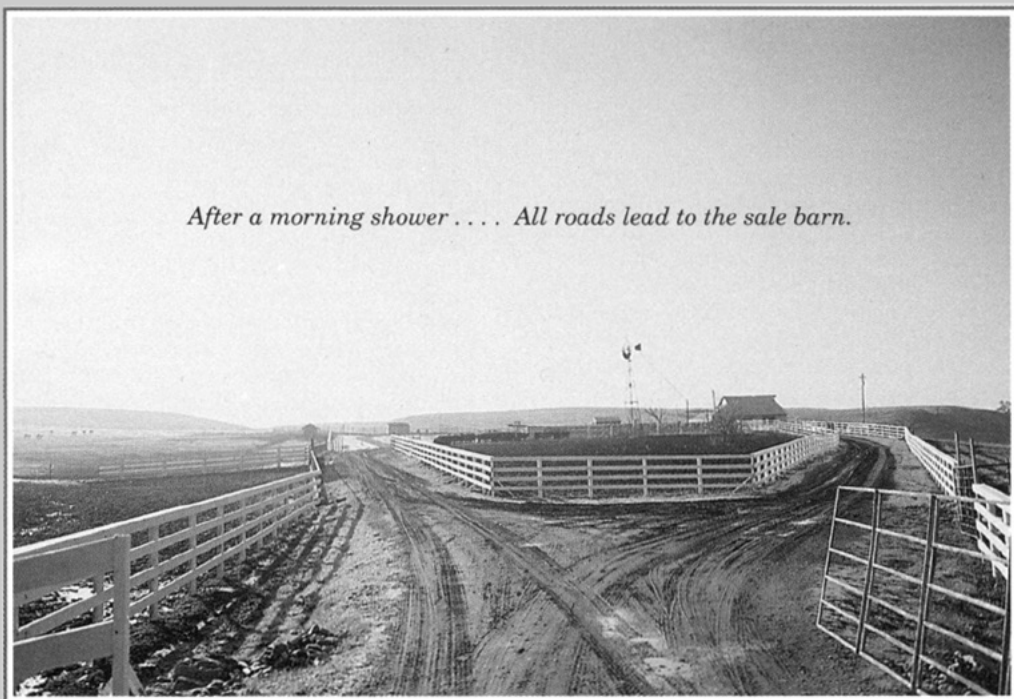


Concar Country

By Barbara LaBarbara
Sacramento, California

After a morning shower . . . All roads lead to the sale barn.



A

s I headed south on 99 leaving the rush of California's capital city, the traffic slowed. An hour later I made an east turn onto Highway 26 and met the brightness of the morning sun.

I squinted and glanced at the labor shacks setting here and there in quiet almond groves and saw a goat grazing with some horses in a pasture surrounded by a whitewashed fence. An old, yellow house like my grandmother's stood waiting for the kids to come for a Sunday dinner of fried chicken. Modest houses began to trim the highway marking the town of Linden. As soon as they appeared, they were gone.

Turning south I crossed a creek bed, then veered toward the sun again and headed east onto a tiny, two-lane road shaded by giant oaks. In one short hour my world was transformed from a city of the Eighties to the tranquil countryside of the Fifties.

Another five minutes and I was brought back to reality and found myself saying, "Hello," to



John Hamilton, manager of Concar Ranch. That is where I found the cattle for the Nineties.

Hamilton must have had a feeling much the same when he graduated from college in the Sixties and took his first steps in the cattle business.

He traveled to Colorado to see an old Hereford rancher. This wasn't just any rancher. This one was unique. He didn't raise cattle that were show oriented; he was concentrating on performance.

What Hamilton found was the most uniform, best set of Hereford cows around.

"How did you know to ignore the trends and work on performance and structure?" asked the greenhorn from California. The retort still echoes through the thoughts of a now 'seasoned' Hamilton. "Why," declared the quaint old cowboy, "that's the only kind of cattle that can survive in this country."

A philosophy evolved from that relentless echo and those early steps and is at work on the Concar Ranch. "Raise quality, performance-tested bulls in numbers for commercial cattlemen and raise them under no frills, practical conditions because that is the only way a commercial cow herd can survive."

Concar Ranch has sculptured a uniform herd of registered Angus and is building on the quiet successes of the past eight years. They are doing it by using Expected Progeny Difference, performance testing, fertility testing, proven cow families as well as visual guides and all the things old cowboys who still survive already know. Concar didn't follow the "Big is Better" trend but concentrated on moderate size, reasonable birth weights, and performance.

Located east of Stockton, near Linden, Calif., the Concar Ranch consists of 3,000 acres of rolling hills.

The foundation herd of 189 cows came from Ankony in Nebraska eight years ago. Concar wanted to buy a breeding program and buying them from one outfit, bred alike, was the only way to accomplish such a feat. Concar has only existed for eight years; however, the breeding program has been time-tested for many years.

Today, the ranch carries 450 cows. Seventy-five percent of the cows are registered Angus. Brangus make up the other 25 percent. Except for performance record keeping, the herd is run similarly to a commercial operation.

The cows are fed a little extra at breeding time. The heifers are bred 30 days ahead of the



cows. At calving time the calves are given tags to match their mothers. At weaning time they win their own tag.

Concar uses an identification tagging system which not only reflects who the sire is (coded by color)—but also the year and the calf's chronological status within each calf crop, i.e. 8005 was born in 1988 and was the fifth calf to arrive.

The cows on the Concar Ranch average five years in age with an average weight of 1,200 pounds. Their length, depth, and height is consistent and was reflected as we looked at a Pathfinder cow. She looked like all the rest. She is simply a typical Concar cow.

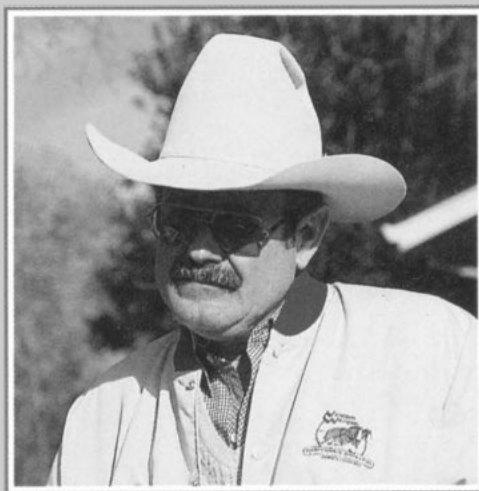
The consistency and uniform quality of the cows comes from linebreeding which started with the original herd. Basically, there were three bloodlines: Ankonian Dynamo, 60E, and Emulation #31.

"Since the Dynamo daughters were linebred, we used Saratoga (the ranch's main herd sire) as a total outcross. We spread him through, then came back and bred his daughters to Cornhusker and Emulation31," Hamilton explained. "I like linebreeding. It does things for your genetics you can build on."

If a cow has Emulation 31 and 60E, Hamilton will breed her to Cornhusker to bring Dynamo back in. He stacks bloodlines and then comes back in with a total outcross.

"Not only does linebreeding and using one sire heavily contribute to consistency in conformation, it has a dramatic effect on performance," says Hamilton. "It's hoped Equalizer (Concar's new herd sire) will do for us what Saratoga has done. Saratoga has really performed."

Hamilton and Bob Barnes, Concar's resident manager, work together on the AI plan with Barnes doing the insemination. They AI most of the herd and average 80 percent conception on those bred artificially. The cows are AI'd through two cycles and are with the cleanup bulls through two cycles. Saratoga is bred naturally to several cows and four cleanup bulls are then used on



John Hamilton
Ranch Manager
Concar Ranch
Linden, California

the remaining cows. Concar calves in the spring, February/March, and fall, September/October.

The consistency has not been as evident in the Brangus as in the Angus herd. It has come slower because of using three-quarter bulls on Angus cows. However, in 1989 the Brangus will be on their own and the three-quarter bulls will not be bred to any Angus. A clean slate of breeding Brangus to Brangus will begin which should bring the desired uniformity.

Concar did some inbreeding with the Angus. They bred Saratoga back to some of his daughters. According to Hamilton, the effort produced some "fabulous" calves. The inbreeding was done mainly to detect if there were problems in Saratoga's bloodline. None were present. In 1987, he was bred to fifty Red Brahman in Florida in search of red genes. Hamilton reports that, "Those calves are all black."

A unique segment of Concar is its bull test station. Not too many breeders, registered or commercial, have their own test station. Concar has one because ranch personnel are performance oriented. They need to know how their cattle are doing compared to their contemporaries. The information gathered from the test is used for selection and provides their buyers with performance information. "Selecting out" cattle with poor performance records is as important as selecting for repeat matings on those that perform well.

The bull test has been used for seven years. The bulls are fed with self-feeding grain feeders. Feed bunks for hay are close at hand, but the water is on top of a hill a quarter of a mile away. This arrangement forces the bulls to get the exercise needed to build stamina and muscle, as well as strong legs and feet. They are tested under much the same conditions as those under which the commercial producer will use them.

Two hundred yearling calves are put on test with the top 100 being chosen for Concar's annual sale (which will be held September 23, 1989). The sale consists of yearlings as well as 18-month-old

bulls. Nearly all the bulls are sold off the ranch either through the sale or at private treaty. Females are sold through consignment sales or private treaty.

Until Saratoga was introduced into the herd, the average daily gain was two and half pounds. With him, the gain shot up to three and a half to four pounds a day.

Hamilton thought something might have gone wrong with Concar's test so he entered two Saratoga sons in the Cal Poly University bull test. Concar's bulls were performing correctly

and a Saratoga son topped the 1988 Cal Poly sale. Even though he didn't win the test, as Hamilton puts it, "How big a check you get shows how well you did."

"The commercial breeder is the ranch staff's targeted market. They have kept in mind his need to sell pounds of beef. They know his success depends on efficient gains and total pounds sold."

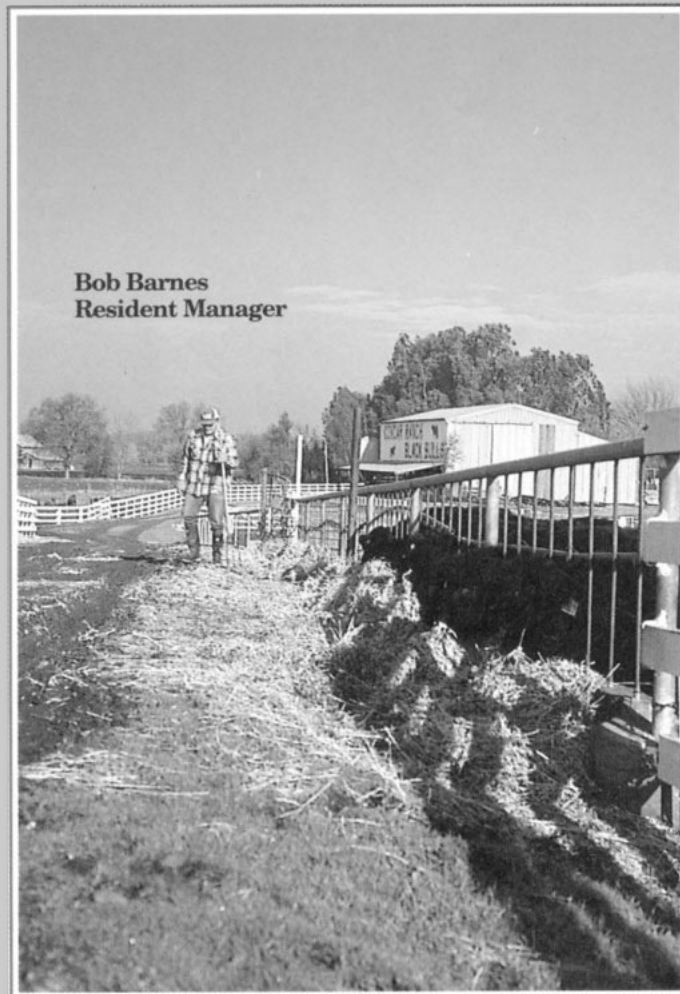
Concar has vowed to get the best genetics possible to that commercial breeder. They are doing it through a selection process using EPD's, structural soundness, in-herd ratios, fertility testing, and visual appraisals. According to Hamilton, you have to use it all. "EPD is one of many tools, it is not meant to be the whole picture." One problem he sees with EPD's is that many people may think it is the total answer in the selection process and breed only according to the numbers.

Another marketing tool Concar used was a survey a Fresno State College student prepared while working for

Bob monitors the bull test candidates closely.

them during his summer vacation. It was simple and basically asked, "What do you base buying your bulls on?" It was sent to Concar's clients as well as other commercial producers and there was a good return. What those breeders wanted was "performance". Concar has worked hard to meet that challenge. The biggest problem Concar encountered in its efforts to become established was, like any new breeder, recognition. It was the new kid on the block, no one knew of it, and it made the marketing end tough. Since Concar hadn't participated in the show ring, recognition came a little slower.

One of the advertisements Concar found was a controversial ad showing a bull breaking through the fence. The



ad stated "When a Concar bull gets out, your neighbors will thank you." Even though Hamilton received some criticism for it, he smiled as he thought of one fellow who came to the ranch and bought fifteen bulls. When asked how he heard about Concar, the fellow pulled out the controversial ad.

Successes Concar has enjoyed from its program include the top-selling heifer at California Angus

using the bull in more herds. In addition, a bull's popularity in different areas is important in marketing semen and offspring.

According to Hamilton, the most important detail in forming a partnership is to pick the right people. You have to make certain everyone is capable of carrying their own weight and make sure you agree on numbers and quality of cattle you breed. Your goals and beliefs have to be the same. People have to be honest, data has to be accurate, and exposure needs to be diverse. It could create dissension if the partners could not agree on the way a bull should be used.

Hamilton contends, "You don't always need a lawyer but you can't just shake hands on a deal either." Many of the partnerships Concar is involved with were drawn up on piece of paper simply stating the agreements of the parties. It is important to have it in writing so there is no question as to what was agreed upon for the future.

"Partnerships with people like Keith Russell of 3 Bar Ranch, who know the registered and purebred business shave been a big benefit to me, because I'm basically a commercial man," says Hamilton. "Keith always has time to discuss different aspects of the business and knows the value of good cows."

Hamilton's advice to others who want to get into the cattle business is to design your breeding program for your market, be it commercial or registered. Then put all of your energies into it and be the best in the industry you can be.

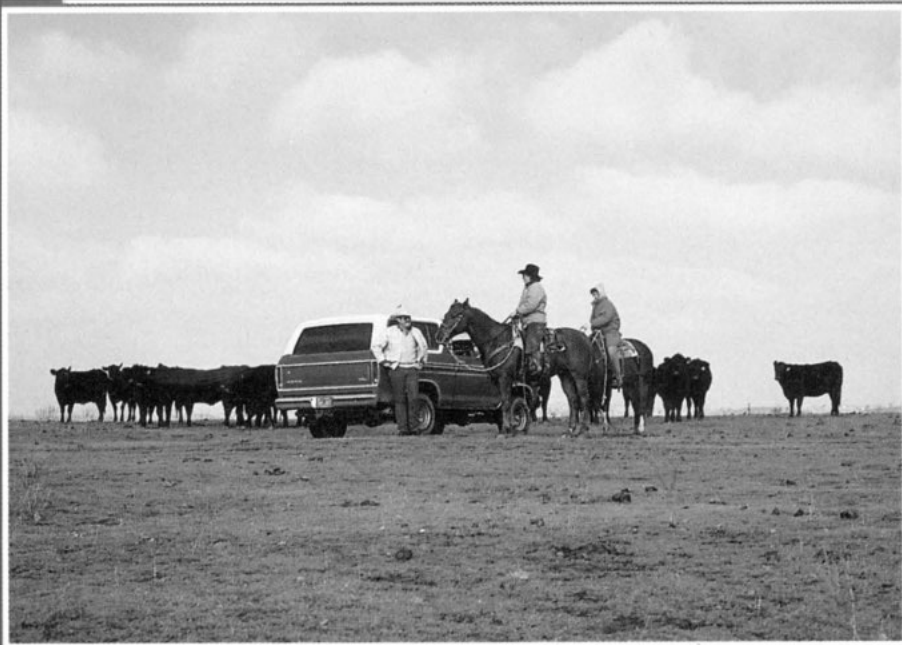
Hamilton graduated from Modesto Junior College with an A.A. in animal husbandry, then traveled to Fort Collins, Colo. to attend Colorado State University. His B.S. degree from there is in animal science. He has several additional hours in animal reproduction and nutrition at the graduate level.

From there it was on to Premier Angus, private consulting,

and ranch management positions until he designed where he wanted to go with his own farm management business. He is president of INTERSTATE F.A.R.M. INC. in Modesto, Calif. It is through this organization he manages Concar Ranch.

While Hamilton brings a knowledge of cattle and marketing to the ranch, he says, "The biggest plus I have in managing Concar is owners who are dedicated to the ranch and its program."

The L.C. Smith family, owners of Concar, were originally from Northern California. L.C. Smith was in highway construction all his life and helped build highways throughout the San Francisco Bay area. However, his love was agriculture. He raised horses and cattle, played polo and was on the board of directors of the Cow Palace and was



Days, five Pathfinder cows, and the second highest registrations in California. The result Hamilton appreciates the most is having respected commercial cattlemen buying Concar bulls and having repeat buyers who purchase in quantity.

Partnerships are helping Concar in their marketing efforts, as well as in trapping genetics for the future.

Saratoga is two-thirds owned by Concar with 3 Bar Ranch owning one-third.

Equalizer has six partners: Concar, Sitz, Gartner-Denowh, Knudsen, 3 Bar Ranch, and Double Bar Farm. Concar shares ownership with Cal Poly and Duane Martin in two other partnerships: one on a Saratoga son and one on a Regius son. The latest partnerships include Bill Roche, Concar and 3 Bar Ranch on Wexwind Celtic, a promising young herd sire and four partners, Concar, 3 Bar Ranch, Robert Neumeyer, and Sydenstricker Farms, on SAF Extra Proud.

Advantages of a partnership include the obvious—pool your money and buy better quality. You obtain better data and more exposure by

High quality calf reflects the attention to genetic selection and prediction.



Chatting with Chris Morelli, day worker.

president of that organization. His horses were well-known, and his favorite team was used on Wells Fargo Bank checks and billboards.

When Mr. Smith died, his ranches in Susanville were sold. The family, being ag-oriented, wanted back into the cattle business. When the time was right and the plans for a purebred herd were in place, the family's persistence gave birth to Concar Ranch at Linden.

It was just eight short months from the inception of the purebred cattle ranch idea until it was a working operation. John Hamilton, who had a broad ag background by that time, was working for the ag management department of a bank and was involved with the creation of Concar Ranch. (The name Concar comes from the Smith's two daughters, Constance and Carolyn.)

The ag management department was closed when the bank was sold at which time Hamilton left the bank and started his own ag management business. The Smith family chose to use his services and he was named manager of Concar.

Today, Mrs. Smith as chairman of the board is actively involved in the operation of the ranch. She also administers the annual budget which governs the ranch and makes the major decisions. Her goal is to preserve the ranch in Linden for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Bob Barnes, and his wife, Fern, live on the ranch and oversee the day-to-day operation. Hamilton says, "Concar could not get along without Bob and Fern. Bob is a good cattleman. He is consistent and reliable, just like the cattle he runs."

Barnes likes to keep two hired men but says, "Good hired help is hard to come by." In addition to the hired men, Chris Morelli does day work for the ranch. She rides the pastures checking the cows at least three times a week. She watches for problems and does the doctoring when it's needed. During calving seasons, she is kept particularly busy.

In addition to the native dryland pastures for Filaree and abundant seed grasses, there are 380

acres of irrigated hay fields. In a water conservation effort, a recycling system has been installed to irrigate those fields. After each irrigation, the water is pumped from the bottom of the field to the top and the cycle is repeated.

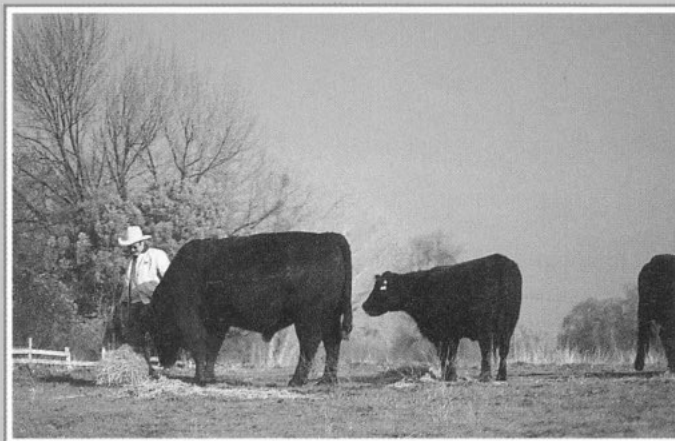
Another time and money saver is the bump gates that have been installed throughout the ranch. Barnes said, "They not only eliminate the irritation of opening and closing gates, they save gas and time."

L.C. Smith had a philosophy which Mrs. Smith and the family agrees

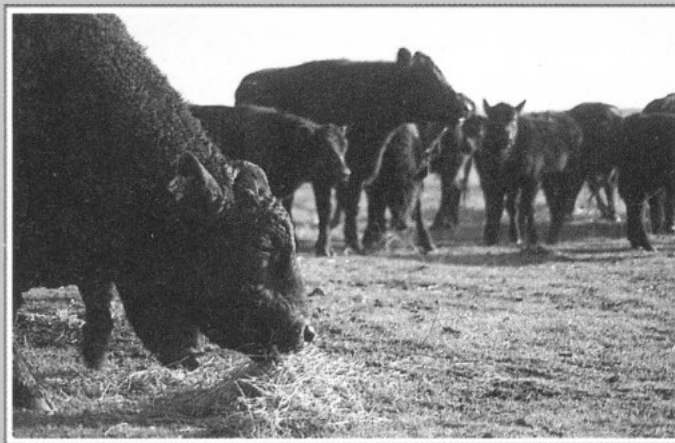
with—"Invest in the young people because when we are gone, that is who will be taking over." Concar supports juniors in many ways. They donate proceeds from specific cow sales such as the one in Plymouth for California Angus Days, and they've donated cash for special junior projects. Several Saratoga steer calves have been given to juniors to show.

The Smith family enjoys seeing young people take pride and learn responsibility in caring for their animals.

An L.C. Smith Memorial Scholarship will be given for the first time in 1989 in conjunction with the winner of the get-of-sire at Cal Poly's annual bull test sale. Students who work at the bull test are eligible to win. The university will establish the



The bull Skarship Saratoga has carried the herd forward.



comprehensive criteria for the scholarship.

"Besides the good people in the Angus business, seeing young people in the junior associations go on and become productive adults is most rewarding," says Hamilton. "The most gratifying thing for me has been seeing all our plans come together and work. I don't know if we have attained success yet but we are sure building toward it."

"We've been a well-kept secret," he continued. "As we went along, we didn't make a lot of noise or brag about things we couldn't accomplish. Now we know we can produce the kind of seedstock that will have an impact on the beef business."

In Concar Country, the echo and memory of a quaint old cowboy is ringing true.

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