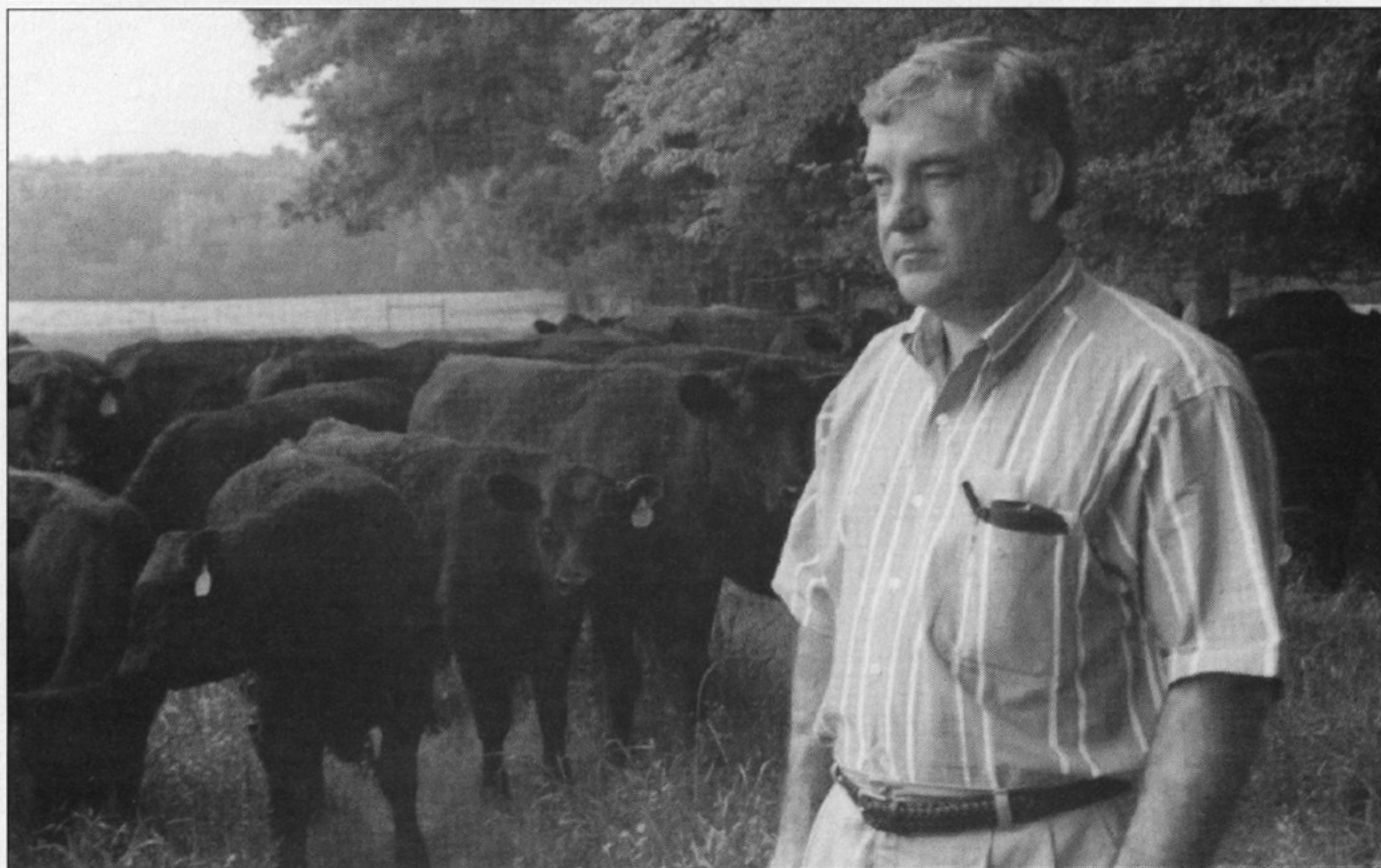


NO PAMPERING HERE



TPC Angus herd owner Theo Costas. A Jackson businessman, Costas takes an active part in herd management and marketing.

*Only problem-free,
performance-bred
Angus cattle will do
for Theo Costas
and his growing list
of customers.*

Hotter than a firecracker on the 4th of July . . . That's how many breeders in The South are describing demand for Angus cattle.

Theo Costas, who operates TPC Angus near Canton, Miss., is one breed patriot who has been sparked by this growing demand. In fact, he is already positioning his herd to take advantage of it.

"We are trying to breed cattle that work well in this part of the country," Theo says. "Our customers are commercial producers and they have special needs. Especially cattle that grade and are adapted to tolerate the heat and humidity."

After trying various breeds of cattle in the past, Costa's customers today are looking to Angus to help them solve specific problems.

"Carcass will become increasingly important to our customers," Costas says. As a result, he is using bulls with positive carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs). He is also testing bulls for carcass

merit. In fact, TPC already has customers such as Florida commercial cattleman Ralph Pelacz, who only use Angus bulls with positive marbling EPDs.

Costas, a Jackson, Miss., businessman, began his registered Angus business like many other members of the American Angus Association. He started as a commercial beef cattle producer and eventually bought some top quality Angus bulls. The Angus bulls worked so well he later bought a couple of registered Angus heifers and soon started phasing in a registered operation.

Costas bought those first two registered cows in the early 1960s. A friend, Dr. Robert Watson from Jackson, put him in touch with Michigan State University Extension beef specialist Harlan Ritchie. Ritchie was going to Canada to buy Angus cattle and he bought two cows for Costas. Costas also purchased a son of Schearbrook

STORY & PHOTOS BY KEITH EVANS

Shoshone, Penn State Super Charge 138, and the nucleus of his herd was formed.

The commercial cattle were gradually phased out and only registered Angus remain. This year TPC Angus is breeding about 300 registered Angus cows. The herd is being expanded to at least 350 cows, so virtually all sound heifers with a ratio of 90 or better are given a chance.

Costas' off-farm business involves an Anheuser-Busch distributorship for Jackson and the surrounding area. His father came to the United States from Greece, and was in the food and beverage business most of his life. But the elder Costas also operated a farm where Theo grew up. The farm included a Jersey dairy herd. As a result, Theo has been associated with farming and cattle production most of his life.

Steadily in the '70s and '80s, Costas put together a sound cow herd. Early on he obtained cows from Appleland Angus Herd dispersion in Washington. He added cows from Kenneth Clark's Craigie herd through Gerald Keys' dispersion at Jackson, Miss. These cows were bred to the Penn State "138" bull. Later, he bought Rally Ivy League from Rally Farm, Millbrook, N.Y., at the National Western Angus Bull Sale in Denver.

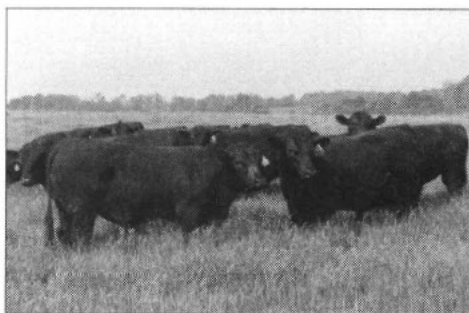
The most recent, significant group of cows were purchased from Larry Leonhardt, Cowley, Wyo. The first purchases were in 1990 and 1993, with an additional group of heifers purchased this spring. No additional females will be brought into the herd. From now on expansion will come from home-raised females.

Just up the road from TPC Angus for many years was Black Bull Cattle Co. at Benton, owned by Dave Pingrey and Harris Swayze. Costas early on purchased a few Black Bull cows and in 1993 he bought a few more in their dispersion. But the biggest addition to the TPC herd, as a direct result of the dispersion, was Pingrey.

It was soon after the dispersion, that Costas and Pingrey decided to work together. Pingrey, a highly respected Angus breeder and past president of the American Angus Association, didn't retire after his highly successful Black Bull dispersion. Instead, he became full time TPC herd advisor. He and Costas work together as a team breeding, refining and marketing the herd, along with Jim Ross the farm manager and David Brock his assistant.

Given Pingrey's background his goal for the TPC herd is not surprising. "We are developing a herd with balanced traits, including carcass, based strictly on sound performance data," Pingrey says.

P O S T C A R D



A sample of yearling bulls at TPC Angus. Bulls are sold at private treaty at the farm. Most go to commercial cow-calf producers in the area.



TO:

*Angus Bull Customers
The South USA*

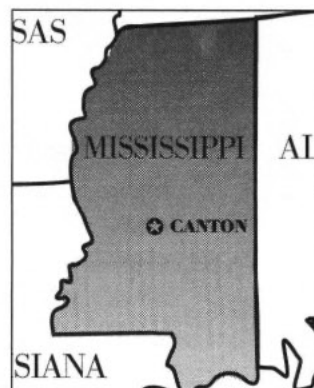
The herd has long been on the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program. Pingrey has expanded the records program to include structured sire evaluation for carcass merit. This is being done in cooperation with Pingrey's one-time partner Harris Swayze. TPC is currently testing two bulls in Swayze's commercial herd. They are Black Bull Amalgamate, a bull Theo purchased in the Black Bull Dispersion, and PAPA 7805 Intense 2913.

The program with Swayze will be on going. Arrangements have already been made to test two more bulls next year. These will be RR Chevis 3432, purchased in the Performance Breeders sale in Bozeman, Mont., this year, and PAPA Highstake 2925, a bull that came out of the same sale in 1993. The Highstake bull has the following EPDs which illustrate what the TPC management team is looking for: birth weight +1.7; weaning weight +29; milk +6; and yearling weight +46. The "Chevis" bull's figures are: birth +2.3; weaning +36; milk +12 and yearling +62.

Rally Ivy League is considered the foundation sire of the herd. His EPDs are: birth +2.8, weaning +31; milk +6; and yearling +48. He was followed primarily by KRM Venture 95 purchased from Keith Russell, Platteville, Colo., in the National Western Angus Sale. This bull still has more than 50 daughters in the herd. His EPDs are: birth +4.8, weaning +24, milk +11 and yearling +43.

Today the four bulls being tested, or slated to be tested next year, sire the bulk of the TPC calves. A few proven outside artificial insemina-

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NO PAMPERING HERE

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tion (AI) sires are also used. They are selected primarily for their high, positive carcass EPDs.

The TPC herd is managed much like a commercial cattle operation in central Mississippi. Cows must produce without pampering, Costas explains. "We want our bulls to perform up to the buyer's expectation." That they do is evidenced by the abundance of repeat buyers. The market for Angus is growing around here. People are paying more attention to calving ease and carcass quality than ever before.

Buyers like the Angus maternal and end product (marbling) traits, Costas adds. The least important trait to most buyers, say Costas and Pingrey, seems to be yearling weight. One reason for this is the adverse effect large mature size has on fertility in their area of the country.

"People are looking for problem-free cattle," Pingrey says. "Problems are not acceptable to us. We pulled only one calf this year, and that cow is now gone from the herd. What we are really interested in is total production.

"The best advice I ever got from reading the *Angus Journal* is to breed cattle on EPDs, and cull on performance," Pingrey says. "That's the way we operate here. If a cow doesn't produce she is culled regardless of her EPDs."

Currently there are two calving seasons at TPC Angus, spring and fall, however the herd is being switched to all fall calving. That's because fall weather is more favorable. Also fall calving allows them to sell full two-year-old bulls in the fall. Last fall's early bull calves weaned with an adjusted 205-day weight of 631 pounds with a 45-day spread in age. Since the cows are bred over a 90-day breeding period the calves are weighed in two contemporary groups. Calves never get creep feed.

Cows are wintered on hay and ryegrass pastures with no silage. When ryegrass is good even the heifers don't need supplemental feeding. When grazing isn't high quality enough grain is fed to keep them growing. They never get more than a pound of grain per day. Heifers are bred two weeks ahead of the cows so they will have extra time to rebreed for their second calf.

Sale bulls are wintered on ryegrass alone when grazing is lush. When grazing is short, supplemental feed is provided. It

ranges from one-half to one percent of the animals' body weight.

Before they are sold, bulls get a breeding soundness examination. This includes a semen check, and measurements for pelvic area and scrotal circumference. Starting this year, sale bulls will be scanned with ultrasound for ribeye area, back fat thickness and marbling.

Does Costas see any parallels between the beverage business and the Angus business? "Primarily I am working with two high quality products. Quality is vital to the success of any business." Also, "both busi-

nesses must be managed properly and provide consistent service. We want our product to speak for itself."

The most intriguing aspect of the registered Angus business for Costas is its highly accurate information which can be used to achieve long range goals. "The ability to test bulls, particularly for carcass traits, and then see your progress from year to year makes this an exciting business," he says. "It is also fun to look at cattle around the country, to select bulls, and then 24 months later to see just how well you did."

AJ