



Three generations of the Snider and Lewis Angus Family, Carlisle, Ark., include Charlene Lewis (left) with her mother Thelma Snider, Harold Lewis (right rear) and Harold and Charlene's children Chuck and Dixie.

Southern Pride

For 32 years the Snider and Lewis Family has exemplified family Angus operations. Their contributions, and contributions of Southern families like them, have long been the backbone of the Angus business.

There is only one way to describe the Snider and Lewis Angus Farm near Carlisle, Ark. It's a family operation.

Three generations are actively involved with a fourth one coming on. Over the years the family has had a major impact on the Arkansas Angus business and the Arkansas Angus Association, and been a strong supporter of and contributor to the National Junior Angus Association and its programs. And, as if family fun and recreation aren't enough, the herd has long supplied quality, performance tested Angus breeding stock to breeders and young exhibitors in Arkansas and several surrounding states.

The family consists of 94-year-old Thelma Snider, her daughter and son-in-law Charlene and Harold Lewis and their two children Chuck, 28 and Dixie, 18. Chuck lives and works in a neighboring community and he and his wife Robin have a baby daughter Scarlett, the fourth generation.

In the beginning there was also Charles R. Snider, Thelma's late husband. The Sniders ran the family farm just outside the rice and soybean farming community of Carlisle.

STORY & PHOTOS BY KEITH EVANS

Harold and Charlene met in college, were married in 1959, and settled in Charlene's hometown. The Sniders had always been in the cattle business, but in 1962 Harold and Charlene decided that they would like to raise registered Angus. They bought a few weaning age heifers and the Snider and Lewis Angus Farm herd was born.

The Sniders looked after the animals. Charlene managed the breeding and selection programs. Harold ran the drugstore (and still does) and every chance he could, worked on the farm. With no telephone in the barns, the farm and the cattle offered a chance for him to "get away" for a while. The small town, like many small towns, couldn't keep a resident doctor for long, so the pharmacist became the resident health care professional, and subject to telephone calls 24 hours a day.

A milestone in herd development came in 1973 when they purchased "Canadian Trooper" (Bardolene Lad Fairalta 2U) in the Hackamore Ranch Angus dispersion sale at Holly Springs, Miss. Owner Luther Matthews had built up a large group of Canadian-bred cattle. Trooper was one of those large, well muscled bulls that were popular at the time. The bull weighed 2,200 pounds and stood 55.5 inches tall.

An interest in the bull was sold to Odes Perry at England, Ark., and they got into the semen sales business. Demand was good at \$15 per vial and \$20 per certificate. They also used artificial insemination (AI) in their herd for the first time. "Trooper had the muscle and meat that people wanted then," Harold says.

Trooper nicked with their cow herd. "Many of the cows in our herd today go back to him," Charlene says. The popularity of the Trooper cattle brought steady growth in the herd and interest from buyers. By about 1977 the herd had grown to 125 cows and for two years, in 1977 and 1978, the Snider and Lewis production sale was held at the farm.

Then changes set the herd in a new direction. Charles Snider's health prevented him from caring for such a large herd. They were forced to reduce its size. In addition, Chuck turned nine years old in 1974 and started showing heifers as a 4-H Club project.

"We started going to shows and fairs," Charlene says, "and Chuck fell in love with it. He would have stayed at the fair until it closed if we would have let him. He loved fitting cattle and the competition."

As a result their herd became more show oriented. "We couldn't afford to buy show cattle, so we raised them. This meant we used the popular bulls at that time, including some large ones," she says.

However, the Lewises didn't forsake perfor-



mance. They worked with University of Arkansas Extension beef cattle specialists who helped weigh their cattle. They also enrolled in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program, and began processing records with the American Angus Association.

Just as Chuck's junior show career was winding down in 1985, Dixie, the second Lewis child, turned nine years old and started in 4-H Club work. Small and more shy than Chuck, she wasn't as excited about showing as her brother. But she loved Angus cattle and was determined to be a successful exhibitor and breeder.

Dixie recalls that at her first show it was cold and misting rain. "The judge looked so serious," she says. "At the same time I was trying to remember everything I was supposed to do. The heifer was so much bigger than I was, that it was confusing." There were three other heifers in her class and Dixie remembers characteristically, that she stood fourth — not last but fourth. And she was pleased. Eight years later at the National Junior Angus Show in Wichita, Kan., she stood fourth in a large class that produced the grand champion of the bred-and-owned show.

Dixie's biggest day in the show ring, however, was in 1989 at the South Central Regional Preview Show in Shreveport, La. She took five head to the show, four of which she had bred and raised. One of them, S&I Matlock, was grand champion bred-and-owned bull. She also showed the intermediate champion bred-and-owned female. Later that day, as she was cleaning up the stalls and getting ready to head for home, she heard her name called over the public address system. When she reported to the show ring she discovered she had earned Premier Breeder of the show.

Efficiency is stressed in the Snider and Lewis Angus herd. Cows are expected to wean 50 percent of their body weight in calf. In 1993 the bull calves averaged 614 pounds at weaning. These 1991 calves at the farm near Carlisle, Ark., will likely do better than that.



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An honors student at Carlisle High School, Dixie plans to attend college locally and continue to breed cattle. She has 20 cows of her own. Even though she'll major in drama she wants to continue to be an Angus breeder.

The show ring record amassed by the two Lewis children has not only been a family avocation, it has been good business. People who saw their cattle at shows or read about their winnings in local newspapers and livestock publications, called to buy heifers for their children. Other cattle producers would stop by for bulls to use on their commercial cows.

The last two years Charlene has sold all the bull calves at a premium price to another breeder who develops and markets them. "I don't particularly like bull development," Charlene says. "We are not set up to do it properly." For years however, they sold bulls, a good many bulls and she had a good market as far away as Illinois.

Harold and Charlene don't plan to exhibit cattle once Dixie stops showing heifers. Thus will close another era in the Snider and Lewis herd. Still, new opportu-

nities are just around the corner. Cattle production, which went into decline in central Arkansas a number of years ago, is on the increase again. As a result, Harold and Charlene are looking to help fill this growing demand.

"Local cattle producers today want to buy bulls with the right kind of performance records," Charlene says. "This wasn't true even five years ago."

Two things they put a lot of emphasis on are milk and low birth weights. Most cattle are sold at the farm. Often people telephone, and Charlene sends them the performance information. Then they stop by and select the animals they like best.

People buy for all kinds of reasons. Recently the photographer at the Arkansas State Fair contacted them. He had an acreage and wanted Angus cows that he could pet. He called the right place. In the pasture Charlene can walk up to and scratch the back of virtually every cow in the herd. The photographer is now happy with his pet Angus.

The Snider-Lewis herd this year is composed of 48 breeding age females, including the cows owned by Chuck and Dixie. Most calve in the fall. Fall calves wean off an average of 50 pounds heavier than spring calves because of their central

Arkansas summer heat and the large number of insects, which are the result of the rice growing business. The bull calves in 1993 averaged 614 pounds at weaning.

Efficiency is important to cattle production in this area of the country, they believe. They want cows that wean at least 50 percent of their body weight in calf. They are using bulls like Traveler 6807 with the following expected progeny differences (EPDs): Birth +.5; Weaning +31 and Yearling +73. Milk is something they are not too concerned about. They feel they have enough if not too much milk in their cows. Another bull they really like is Ginger Hill Duster. His EPDs are: Birth +4.4; Weaning +27 and Yearling +73. They also have calves by TC Stockman, Century Touch Stone 1312 and R&J Innovator.

In 1992 the Lewises were named Angus Family of the Year by the Arkansas Angus Association. Harold was president in 1973, and Charlene was the first woman president. She served in 1992-93.

On serving as Arkansas president Charlene says: "I liked the job, especially being in touch with other people in the Angus business, trying to solve problems, helping pull people together and helping to improve communications."