



Angus Stakes

by Shauna Rose Hermel, editor



The ties that bind

Grandpa Coon always kept a stack of magazines by his chair. He was partial to the Western stories they threaded through the magazine, a chapter or so an issue. Louis L'Amour was his favorite author.

He must have passed that interest on to Dad, because he, too, is partial to Westerns. Besides sports, about the only thing on television that will hold his attention is a good Western. My brother and I grew up on "Gunsmoke," "Bonanza," "Little House on the Prairie" and "How the West Was Won." Like Grandpa, I enjoy reading Louis L'Amour novels.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised a couple of weekends ago to learn that my niece — just 6 years old — is a John Wayne fan. She and my brother rattled off 20-25 John Wayne movies that she'd seen.

Of course, we each have our own individual interests. Dad's not too keen on watching some of my sci-fi shows, and I can't stay interested through a baseball game, but Westerns bring our whole family to the couch. It's a common interest that ties our family together.

Our interest in Angus cattle has provided an even deeper family tie. Beyond an interest, it's been a livelihood. As with the many families featured in this issue, much of our lives — work and play — has centered around our Angus herd and Angus activities. Checking heat, processing calves, moving cows, keeping records, picking the next AI sire, showing at the county fair or the National Junior Angus Show, judging on the livestock team — all have centered around Angus.

It's not always easy working together. As Troy Smith points out in "Ranching With Family," it takes effort to maintain good working relationships. The stresses inherent to farming can strain those relationships.

I read the reports from the USDA's Economic Research Service that say the farm economy is good. But if it's so good, why are so many of today's youth pursuing jobs outside production agriculture?

Unfortunately, it isn't an easy time for the young generation to go back to the farm. Urban encroachment, government

regulations, estate taxes, consolidation and liability are creating greater uncertainties. As Janet Mayer points out (see page 139), the farm crisis is real, and it strains the ties that bind farming families.

Still, once made, those family ties are the hardest to break. Many young adults seeking new careers are looking for jobs in agribusiness. This career choice offers a way to stay tied to agriculture, seemingly without the risk and uncertainty of production agriculture. Isn't it ironic that, without a strong production sector, agribusiness won't flourish as we know it today?

Still many, including myself, are hoping to earn enough off the farm to go back into production agriculture in some capacity. And if we can manage a few acres to carry a couple show heifers for the kids someday, that'll tide us over until we can buy the farm.

The ties are elastic and hard to break. I feel them pull me back to the creek, which has been in my mother's family for generations, every time I go home. Until we were old enough to help, my brother and I hunted minnows in the creek and explored the woods for hours as Mom and Dad cleared the bottom, raked and baled hay, pulled calves, fixed fence, and built the platform for our future. We'd gather around a brush pile for a wiener roast and read stories and enjoy each other's company.

Now my brother's kids do the same. They'll soon take part in all the activities my brother and I did as youth. I may not have a connection with their school activities and their social lives, but we'll always have a connection through the farm and their Angus activities.

Those Angus activities have extended our family to include other Angus producers, association members and folks from other industry sectors who may not be blood kin but who share common interests.

For all that the American Angus Association will be recognized, its greatest legacy will be strengthening the family ties of its membership — enabling, to the extent of its power, families to work together, play together and interact with other families

who are trying to do the same.

In this issue we concentrate on the traditional family ties — the family business, family relationships and family activities. Throughout the fall, we'll expand that concept to our extended family through the Association and its activities, as well as to the cow herds we oversee, which are families in themselves.

Whether we're talking about the people we love and cherish or the cow lines that provide our income base, our families are what give us strength.

We're excited to present this "Family Ties" issue. I've complimented our field editors and freelancers for submitting some of the best writing to grace an *Angus Journal*. I hope you agree.

Drought sufferers ...

Lack of rain and little subsoil moisture are problems for cattle producers across the country. Drought conditions create management headaches in terms of water shortages, grass or hay shortages, marketing, prices and availability of stored feeds, long-term pasture management, and culling decisions.

With this in mind, and as a service to our breeders, we developed a comprehensive Web site to serve as a one-stop information resource. "Dealing with Drought: A resource for cattle producers" is designed to combine resources across the Internet onto one site—www.angusjournal.com/drought. It offers links to research, weather forecasts, news releases, articles and livestock-production information from notable sources in the United States and around the globe.

Weather-related phenomena are some of the hardest issues for magazines to effectively cover. With our press deadlines, the "weather event" could be history by the time the magazine gets to your mailbox. The Internet offers a time-effective vehicle for us to provide producers the information they need when they need it.

Don't forget ...

The new ad rates go into effect with the September 2000 issue.



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