

# Survival Skills

Through resourcefulness and creative management, the Daniel Family has built one of the most sought-after Angus herds in the Southeast.

BY LISA HAWKINS MOSER

When Randy Daniel graduated from college in 1973 and returned to the family Angus ranch, his father, Dan Daniel, told him “the party is over.” It was time for Randy to begin to build a ranching operation that could support himself and eventually his wife, Beth, and children, Buck and Whitney.

And thus, Partisover Ranch of Colbert, Ga., began.

Randy and his dad, who was the head of the animal science department at the University of Georgia, had big dreams for Partisover Ranch. They wanted to expand their part-time Angus operation to a self-supporting, working ranch.

“We make our total living on this ranch with no outside income and in our part of the country, that is rare,” says Randy Daniel.

Through the years, the Daniel Family has built a reputable Angus herd. In fact, Randy and Beth have twice sold nearly all of their 100-herd



Three generations live at Partisover Ranch near Colbert, Ga. Pictured from left are Dan, Nemah, Randy, Whitney, Buck and Beth Daniel.

during the last eight years.

“Our cows became more popular than we ever dreamed they would be,” Randy says.

Their Angus cattle have not always been in such high demand. In the mid-1980s, when many Angus breeders were working to increase the frame size of their herd, Randy and Beth chose to follow the advice of Randy’s father. “Dad told us we could either stop increasing the frame or ruin the herd. We just never bred the cattle any bigger,” he says.

Beth adds that the Angus cattle that were economical for them in the mid-1980s would not have been competitive in the show ring.

The Daniels credit two of their foundation families for the increased demand of their cattle. “The Burgess and Witch

cow families had everything we thought was important — documented performance, sound structure, quality udders, high volume, femininity and fertility,” says Randy.

In addition, they believe in raising moderate-framed cattle with balanced expected progeny differences (EPDs). Customer EPD priorities over the last three years have been milk and birth weight.

The client base for Partisover Angus cattle varies with the sex of the animal. Ninety percent of their Angus bulls are sold to commercial producers, while almost all the females are sold to purebred breeders.

Many of their customers are one or two bull customers. “Most of our commercial

customers have other jobs besides raising cattle,” Beth explains.

Since many Partisover bulls stay in the Southeast, the Daniels calve most of their cows in the fall and market bulls at 16 months of age.

The Daniels have noticed, however, an increasing demand for their bulls at 12 months. “There are producers in the Southeast who will not buy a bull before he is two years old, but we haven’t catered to those customers,” says Randy.

Along with their customers’ preferences, forage quality also lends to fall calving. Late winter forage is better than their July grasses. Conception rates are also better on the cows that are bred while grazing on winter wheat and rye pastures, rather than the summer’s Bermuda

grass. Fall calves are consistently heavier at weaning than their few spring calves.

“Our summer grasses are not strong enough to support growing calves,” Randy says.

In addition to the cows with natural calves at side, Randy and Beth maintain 50 to 60 recipient cows for their embryo transfer program. Through embryo transfer they are able to advance the herd’s best genetics.

Another management tool used for rapid improvement of the herd’s genetics is artificial insemination (AI). “We can make more progress by using proven AI sires than by using natural sires,” says Randy.

Consequently 95 percent of the herd is bred through AI. “From a marketing standpoint, the AI-sired cattle have a greater value than the other calves,” he adds.

Checking cows in heat at Partisover Ranch is a family affair with an added bonus plan. “The kids get \$1 per head for every female they catch before we do,” Randy says. “Beth checks heat behind all of us and if she says a cow will be in heat the day after tomorrow, I believe her.”

Heat checking is one of many tasks for which Beth is responsible. She also handles all the recordkeeping. “Beth is what keeps Partisover going,” he says.

**Cattle merchandising** is a responsibility that both Randy and Beth share. Partisover cattle are sold primarily through private treaty or consignment sales. And all cattle sold by the Daniels come with a warranty “We guarantee almost everything to our customers. If you are going to build a customer base, especially with bulls, you have to,” says Randy,

Their desire to continually satisfy bull customers’ needs led Randy and Beth to introduce a new breed to Partisover Ranch in 1985. “We sold Angus bulls to the same commercial customers for years. We decided rather than send them somewhere else to buy another breed of cattle, we should offer our customers

another breed,” says Randy. Most of these producers wanted to select a Continental breed to complement their British-based herd.

Before jumping in, the Daniels asked Angus breeders who also raised Gelbvieh cattle for advice. “The focus of the two herds is the same,” Randy says. “We breed cattle that we like and hope our customers will appreciate that?”

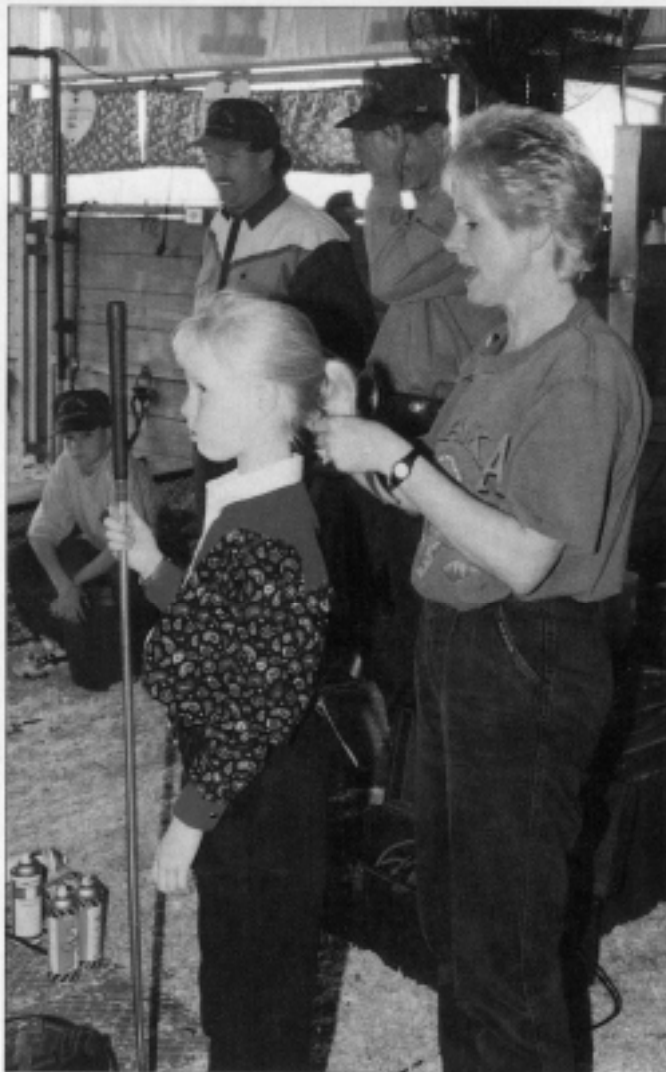
To help promote their Gelbvieh cattle, the Daniels started exhibiting bulls and heifers at shows. “One reason we were successful with the Gelbvieh show cattle was because we bought them with ‘Angus eyes,’” says Randy. “The Gelbvieh cattle we bought and bred were more refined through their head and neck, and more desirable in their udder structure than some of the other cattle available.”

While phenotypically buying Gelbvieh cattle with an Angus perspective was beneficial, Randy says he had to adjust his EPD thinking. “We started buying Gelbvieh cattle with Angus EPDs and it didn’t take us long to figure out that a cow with a 10-pound milk EPD was too much for us.”

In retrospect, Randy and Beth believe the decision to provide two breeds of bulls for their customers was the right one to make; however, it has presented some management challenges for them.

“The toughest part is to group the cattle so they are attractive for people to look at them. The first year we had Gelbvieh cattle we kept them separated from the Angus. The Gelbvieh calves had phenomenal weaning weights and the Angus producers believed we treated the cattle differently,” says Randy.

Since then, the two breeds of cattle have been grouped together and managed the same. “We get a lot more meaningful information by running the cow herd together rather than separately,” says Randy. “The only time those cattle get



Beth Daniel puts last-minute touches on daughter Whitney before she takes her heifer into the show ring.



Randy Daniel congratulates his daughter, Whitney, on exhibiting the champion heifer at the state show in Perry, Ga.

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separated by breed is when we have a group of people coming to visit or a sale is coming up and we need to display the cattle.'

**And when visitors** come to Partisover Ranch, Beth and Randy's mother, Nemah, join together to extend their Southern hospitality. "We try to take care of our visitors. If they are here at mealtime, we feed them and if there are other things going on, we make time to see them. I learned that from Randy's mom," Beth says.

One person who has experienced their hospitality is former Miss American Angus Christy Bell of Monroe, Ga. Although she has known the Daniels all her life, she became close with them about five years ago when she kept some of her show heifers at Partisover Ranch.

"Beth and Randy interact with young people as well as they do with older people, and the kids love them just as much as they love kids," says Christy.

According to Randy it's not uncommon for his wife to invite three to four kids to join them at the ranch after school and stay for dinner.

"Beth gathers in kids like some people gather stray dogs," says Randy.

Christy sees the Daniels as true role models. "They encourage you to learn by doing. They will tell you how to do something and stand beside you and watch you do it. I think that makes the best kind of teacher," she says.

Another protege of Randy and Beth's is Frank Jackson, cattle manager of JAC's Ranch, Bentonville, Ark. Frank's family lived near Partisover Ranch and he and his brother, Sam, spent many summers working there.

"Randy gave me a lot of hands-on experience in the cattle business — from building fence to helping with the cattle matings," says Frank



Angus and Gelbvieh cattle are grouped together at Partisover Ranch. The Daniels are in the process of rebuilding their Angus herd.

His experiences with the Daniels lead Frank to follow a career in the cattle business. He also credits Randy with the contacts that brought him to JAC's Ranch.

"When you work with so many young people, you will find a few who really like the cattle business and stay in it. That is rewarding," says Randy.

Working with youth continues to be a high priority for Randy and Beth as their children, Buck, 13, and Whitney, 11, become more involved in the cattle operation.

"The top priority for us is the kids. As long as they like working with the cattle, we will do whatever it takes to maintain their interest," says Randy.

Both Beth and Randy participated in the youth livestock programs while growing up and say it was one of the most important things they did. Today Randy influences the lives of youth nationwide by judging cattle shows, a passion passed on from his father.

"It's especially important to me that a junior's showing experience is a positive one," he says.

He also believes it's important for cattle producers to judge the shows. "We need people judging our shows who depend on this business as their livelihood," says Randy.

Many of Randy's philosophies on judging shows and raising livestock he credits to his father. On a more personal level, Randy explains his motivation for judging by saying, "I like judging because I get my way paid to travel and meet lots of people I wouldn't otherwise meet. And it's especially important in this business, because no matter how good the cattle are without those contacts we wouldn't have a prayer."

Along with judging cattle shows, Randy travels selling and renting livestock equipment. He started in the equipment business in the late 1970s as a way to generate extra income.

"The equipment business grew from a sideline job to become a major portion of our income," says Randy. "Dad calls the equipment business my 'nurse cow' because it adds to our cash flow."

Also providing income to the ranch in the spring is the sale of club calves. All the club calves are born to commercial and registered Angus cows.

"Some of the Angus cows are bred to club-calf sires to calve in September. If they don't settle, we turn out the Angus bull and we have a registered Angus calf," explains Beth.

Meeting the demands of registered, commercial and club-calf customers is a challenge the Daniels have met, thanks to quality Angus genetics. "An Angus cow gives us so many options. She may not always be perfect, but it's a long way from her to what is in second place," Randy says.

The old saying "good things happen to those who wait," is coming true at Partisover Ranch. But Randy and Beth Daniel have done more than just wait, they've worked hard to attain success through diversification and plan on continuing to build a breeding program that will be in demand well into the 21st century

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