

Family activities



A Family Ring

Showring competitions bring families together for business and pleasure, often spawning some friendly sibling rivalries.

BY SHELIA STANNARD

Some children inherit their mother's blue eyes or their dad's brown, curly hair. Others take on a grandfather's smile or the jovial laugh of an uncle.

For some Angus producers, more than physical traits are inherited. A love for competition in the showring is a common attribute passed through the generations that ties families together.

Born into the business

Chad Ward says he was born into the cattle business.

"Ever since I can remember I have been around Angus cattle," says Chad, who now owns and operates Westward Angus with his wife, Mindy, near Eldorado, Ohio. Chad remembers going to open shows with his dad, Jim, and his uncle, Jack Ward, the two people he identifies as having the greatest influence in his life. As soon as Chad was old enough, he took over the halter and began his involvement in junior Angus activities.

Jack remembers taking Chad to his first national junior Angus show in Springfield, Mo., in 1988. Jack says he is glad to help interest his nieces and nephews and now his sons, Cameron and Carter, in the Angus business and to involve them in Angus activities.

"My older brothers and sisters set up a good foundation for us younger kids when I was growing up," says Jack, who now runs Maple Lane Angus at Lagrange, Ind. "I benefited greatly from the groundwork that my brothers and parents laid, and I hope I've established that same groundwork for my nieces and nephews."

Although Chad enjoys the spirit of competition, he learned at an early age that winning isn't the only thing — a family mind-set passed from generation to generation. Jack attributes this attitude to the way his parents, Richard and Sue, raised him and his siblings.

"We were taught to be competitive and considerate in the showring," he says. "It was our family's perspective, [whether] we won or lost, to either be thankful for our success or to congratulate those who beat us. Then we were to thank the judge of the show for considering our animal."

"My Uncle Jack always told me a lot of people get worked up if they don't win. But he also told me that it was one judge's opinion for that day and that there would be other judges on other days," Chad says. "He taught me to be calm and relaxed in the showring and [to] present yourself in a professional manner with the focus on the animal and not yourself."

Competing together

Today, the Ward families, including Chad, Mindy, Jack, Mary Ann and Jim, travel to some shows together and help each other when needed. The Wards also are part of a syndicate, Forever Ready Associates, who own part of Maple Lane Forever Ready 850, the bull that topped the intermediate bull division this year in Denver.

"This is a family thing," Chad says. "We'd just as soon get beat by them (Jack, Mary Ann and Jim) as someone else."

Jack agrees. "Our family has never been in competition against one another. This is a family affair and, even though we are older and are doing different things, it's just as much of a thrill watching our nephews or nieces when they do well."

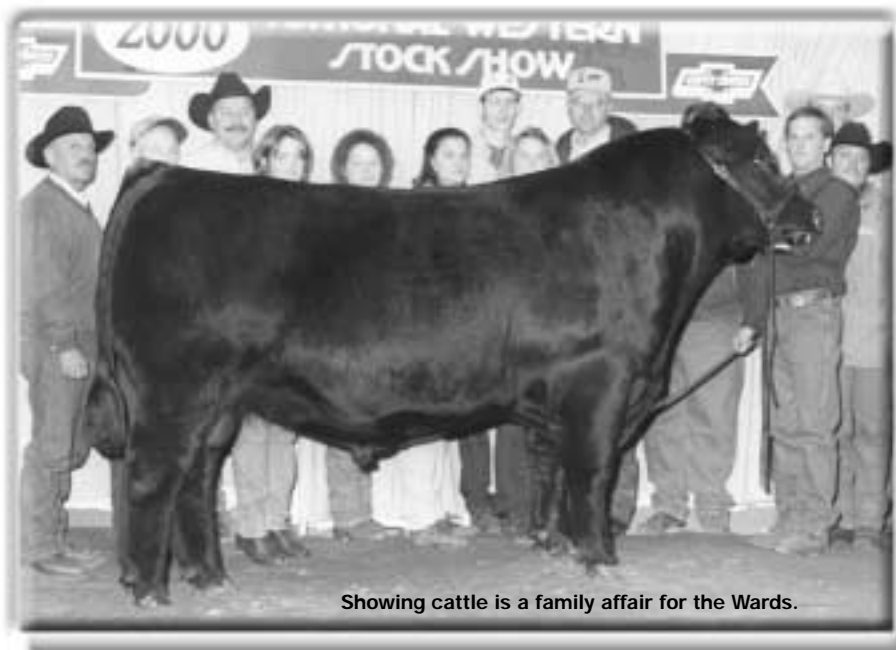
Chad and Mindy look forward to passing the Ward family values to the next generation. They are expecting their first child in December and hope to pass on positive traits, such as strength of family and responsibility they have learned while raising Angus cattle.

Jack's influence on Chad has spread from being at the halter of an animal to being the one to evaluate the animals in the ring. Chad followed in his uncle's footsteps to attend Black Hawk College—East Campus in Kewanee, Ill., and to judge at the collegiate level.

After junior college Chad pursued his education at Kansas State University, where he judged livestock and met his wife. Chad credits Jack for getting him interested in judging when it was time to go to college. Today Jack recommends Chad for judging jobs.



Jack Ward looks forward to helping his sons, Cameron (shown) and Carter, as they become involved in Angus activities.



Iowa traditions

Another family that has passed the love for Angus competition to the younger generations hails from eastern Iowa. Glen Swanson, Durant, Iowa, has been showing Angus cattle since he started in 4-H. His dad, who owned dairy cattle, bought Glen an Angus steer in 1946. Two years later Glen bought his first Angus heifer. He has been involved in the Angus business ever since.

"At that time you could show in 4-H until you were 21," Glen recalls. "When I was about 21, we started the Iowa Junior Angus Association, and I was one of its first officers."

Glen and his wife, Judy, passed their love for Angus cattle to their three daughters and seven grandchildren. All three of the Swansons' daughters — Julie Kuehn, Glenda Schroeder and Bonnie Duckett — showed Angus in 4-H and junior Angus activities and continue to be involved in the Angus business today.

"Our family vacations in the summer always involved going to Angus shows," says Glenda, who now lives with her family at Clarence, Iowa. "It was fun being with the other kids, especially at the national junior show."

Today Glenda, her husband, Doug, and their three children, Jason, Drew and Lauren, are actively involved with their Angus herd and compete in the showing.

"Whenever one of the grandkids is old enough, Judy and I give them the pick of our heifer crop to start their project," Glen says.

Glenda says that she is glad her kids enjoy showing cattle and being involved with junior activities. "They've accomplished much more at their age than I did when I was growing up in Iowa. They know people from other states, and that will help them in the future."

Competitive spirit

Glenda possesses a competitive spirit when it comes to showing against her sisters and parents. However, she says, it is still a family business and hobby. They try to help each other when possible.

"I want to beat my sisters," she says. "Doug and I strive to build our herd. Their herds are different from ours."

"It's kind of weird to show against them (relatives)," says 14-year-old Drew Schroeder. "They've taught you everything you know. You don't really want to beat them too bad."

"It doesn't matter if you win or lose, just as long as you improve," he adds.

His brother Jason, 16, says it's fun to show

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against his relatives, recalling competing with four or five family members in the ring at a time. "I feel good when I win, but if they stand above me, I feel just as good," he says.

Glen enjoys going to shows and competing with his family. "It is fun to go to these shows and see them trying to beat me or everyone else. I am most proud of the fact they work hard and have done well."

Lessons learned

Both Chad Ward and Jason Schroeder agree that pursuing Angus activities inside

and outside the showring has many benefits, including learning responsibility.

"I've met a lot of people," Jason says about showing. "It has taught me a lot of responsibility, especially waking up in the morning and tying up my calves before school."

Chad agrees and says it always has been his dream to raise his own cattle and to be involved with the breeding decisions. He is realizing those dreams today because, he says, he has learned that, if you want to succeed, you have to work hard.

Glen and Judy's pride for their family goes beyond their achievements in the showring. Glen mentions that they are especially proud of Glenda and her family for taking on the responsibility as chairmen for the 2000 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). Glen says his whole family has taken an active role to support the Iowa juniors in the planning of the event.

"We strive to keep our family closer together," he says. "This is one common thing we share that keeps us together."

