



Family ties to Angus cattle provide strong leadership in the beef industry.

Story & photos by **Corinne Blender**

"FOR BEEF" is proudly displayed on the license plate of a car in the driveway of a little Angus farm nestled between the rolling hills and cornfields of central Illinois.

It signifies the way many cattle producers perceive themselves. They are proud of what they produce and interested in what is happening in their industry. And they want nothing more than to see their children grow up with these same values.

Cimeron and Rachel Frost, Tallula, Ill., are living testimonies to this mind-set.

Story begins with Angus

"Our lives have just revolved around Angus cattle forever. That's how Cimeron and I met," Rachel says.

She grew up not far from the countryside her five children, her husband and she now call home. It was here that the family tradition began, and fitting and showing Angus cattle would pave the way for Rachel's future.

Some say the northern suburbs of Chicago are a far cry from Angus cattle and country living. But for Cimeron, it was the land of opportunity, giving him his first experiences with Angus cattle.

His father was a building contractor and built sheds for Angus farms in the area. A father's desire for his son to experience country living and a connection to Angus

breeders were the keys that unlocked the door.

Cimeron was soon hooked. "The Angus people kind of took me in," he says.

After his discharge from military service, Cimeron wanted to continue working with the people and the cattle he learned to love. He found his way to Oklahoma, where he continued fitting for UT Farms, Tuttle.

It was not long before two paths would cross.

"I was doing tails in college, back when they were big," Rachel says. "Cimeron needed someone to do tails for his cattle, and a mutual friend told him he knew just the person for him."

For the next two or three years, they would see each other at

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► Whether it is working together as a family or helping another, the Frost family is willing and ready. Pictured are (back row, from left) Cimeron, Rachel, Chelsea, Tony, (front row, from left) Erin, Gretchen and Nathan.

shows, and their separate paths would merge into one. Cimeron and Rachel would start a family and an Angus operation of their own.

Every step of the way

The Frosts' herd has shrunk over the years, with jobs and other interests limiting their time. They currently manage 25-30 cows.

"We felt it was really important to keep cows, at least for the kids, and to be able to have that to hold on to," Rachel says. "I just couldn't imagine raising kids anywhere else."

It didn't take long for the Frost children to share their parents' love for Angus cattle.

"My first word was *cow*. That's all I've known is black cows," Erin remembers of

her earlier days, when her parents would take her to shows. Erin, 22, a sociology major, is finishing her last semester at Illinois State University, Normal.

Cimeron says he knew his children would learn responsibility by being involved with and showing Angus cattle.

"Tony started doing what I call *bucket chores*," Cimeron says. "That's what got him interested and kept him interested the whole time he lived here."

None of the Frost children have been exempt from the morning chore list.

"When Tony left, the other guys had to start doing it. It got to the point where Chelsea and Gretchen were doing chores this winter in their pajamas under their Carhartts," Cimeron laughs.

Tony, 20, followed his father's footsteps to Oklahoma, where he continues fitting and showing cattle for the Rolling R3 Ranch. He is a junior at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, majoring in animal science.

Cimeron has needed his children's help as his responsibilities in the cattle industry have grown. For six years he has been working for the Illinois Beef Association (IBA) as the director of industry programs.

"It's kind of been a standard procedure since I started working for the beef association," Cimeron says. "I'd take care of the cows, and the kids always took care of the calves and everything around the barn."

Cimeron says he sees more than just the purebred side of the beef industry with his position in the IBA. By staying in tune with all aspects of the industry, he has been a resource

for the Illinois Angus Association as well.

"Cimeron, with his position with the Illinois Beef Association, has been an excellent 'go to' person for me and a very valuable asset for the Illinois Angus Association," Jerry Cassady, American Angus Association regional manager, says.

The workforce is still lined up. Chelsea, 17, who reigns as the Illinois Angus queen, is a senior in high school. The twins, Nathan and Gretchen, are 12 years old and are in the seventh grade.

The Frost children did not pick up on fitting and showing by mistake.

"It just comes naturally. Mom and Dad were pretty good at it, and they were good teachers," Tony says.

Rachel practices her teaching skills every day with seventh- and eighth-grade students. Every step of the way, Cimeron and Rachel have helped teach their own children and many others.

"Our philosophy has always been that, if our kids are going to be involved in something, we are going to be right there with them," Rachel says. "We aren't the kind of parents to drop our kids off to play a ball game or go to a swim meet or cattle show and go back home and come back the next day to pick them up."

Cimeron and Rachel devote many hours to their children's numerous interests. "Diverse" best describes his family, Cimeron says.

Even with Erin and Tony at college, the three younger children compile a lengthy list of activities. From football to track, swimming to music, and 4-H to FFA, the Frost children tackle a range of interests.

"It's kind of organized confusion around here most days. But I think most families are, when you have five, six or seven different people in here with different interests and different ways," Cimeron says.

On common ground

Behind a set of clippers in the barn or out in the showring, when the Frost family attends a cattle show, it is common ground for all.

"They enjoy different aspects. Tony is happy being back in the barn, and the girls like to show. Nathan likes to do what he can," Rachel says.

Even though the Frost cow herd might be small by some standards, they are still competitive. Their heifers have won classes

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— Rachel Frost



►Cimeron and Rachel both feel it is important to keep cows on their farm so their children have the opportunity to learn from them.



►A solid support system is important to the Frost family. Whether they are supporting their own family members or those who just seem to be a part of the family, it has become a way of life for them. Cimeron and Chelsea share a moment with Tony before he competes in the final round of the 2001 National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest.



► Tony followed his father's footsteps to Oklahoma, where he fits and shows Angus cattle while attending Oklahoma State University, Stillwater. A Frost family member usually can be found behind the scenes of a show helping in many ways.

at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), as well as division and reserve champion at the state fair.

They also have shown a grand champion heifer at the Illinois Spotlight and won grand champion heifer two years in a row at the Lamoine Valley Show, an event sponsored by a local Angus association.

But winning isn't everything.

"We have a saying around here that sometimes you just build character when you go to a show, called *standing last*. Sometimes we have big character-building days," Rachel says.

Even if the Frosts don't have the grand champion heifer at the show on a particular day, they still can walk away as winners.

"It's being able to know that you might not have had the best heifer, but maybe you can be the best showman there. You have pride in knowing that you can show," Nathan says.

The family will admit they are competitive. However, that doesn't get in the way of helping each other.

"Tony had been beaten by his sister Chelsea several times in a row one year," Cimeron says of a family showmanship rivalry that started brewing one summer. "He told a group of friends that the only reason she won was because he taught her all that she knew.

"A friend of ours told him that, after she beat him about the fourth time in a row, 'you might have taught her too much.'"

More than a family affair

Cimeron and Rachel don't stop at helping their own children. Both say they try to help wherever they can. And that doesn't seem to be a problem for them.

"I just enjoy working with the youth and seeing the kids' hard work, whether they are

mine or someone else's," Cimeron says.

"There's so many people who don't appreciate the time, energy and dedication it takes to get calves to the shows."

Whether the family has their own cattle at a show or not, you'll find a Frost volunteering behind the scenes to help wherever needed.

"Every state has those key families who seem to step up and volunteer their time and efforts at every opportunity. We are fortunate here in Illinois to have several of these giving families to call on for assistance," Cassady says. "The Frost family has been no exception."

Chelsea can be found behind a microphone announcing the show, or Tony may be in the barns clipping. Gretchen and Nathan will help others lead calves from the tie-outs or to check-in. No matter what needs to be done or which family needs help, they all join in. Everyone is family to them.

"We've kind of grown up with them. Their parents are friends with our parents, and so we all kind of look out for each other and take care of each other at the shows," Erin says.

Cimeron agrees with his daughter. "I think that's one of the unique respects about the Illinois group. It's a very close-knit group, both the parents and the kids. I think that's why Illinois has been able to accomplish a lot of the things that it has."

All members of the family downplay their efforts in helping put on a show. From grilling meat to organizing 10,000 homemade cookies to feed hungry tummies, they'll help in every way.

"The entire family has provided the Illinois Angus Association with an immeasurable level of guidance, leadership and what I call 'out of the spotlight' labor. I



► Chelsea serves as the 2001 Illinois Angus queen. With this title, she has taken on many responsibilities, such as announcing the Illinois Preview Show.

have never heard any of them request any recognition of any kind for their efforts," Cassady says.

Cimeron says it's simple logic. "If you are there, you might as well be doing something."

Their strong leadership mentality is evident when the kids list offices and leadership roles they have held.

"Not only have they been there with volunteer labor, but more importantly they have provided leadership to the younger membership by example," Cassady adds.

"The younger kids, especially, really look up to the officers and directors. . . . They really admire you, and that's one of the things we try to do is to get them involved that way," Chelsea says.

Of the lessons to be learned, Rachel is glad that has been one.

"It just comes naturally to continue helping other kids. I think it has taught our kids cooperation and how to work with other people," Rachel says. "That's really important in life today."

One thing is clearly evident about the Frost family. They have made numerous friends along the way.

"There are friends that you know will just be there for you no matter what, and we try to do the same for them," Rachel explains. "I truly couldn't imagine us doing anything else. The people who we are involved with and are so close to — they're just like family." 