



ZAF Administrator 131 was raised at Zehr Angus Farm. This past Denver reserve champion has been used widely in A.I. programs and most recently some of his offspring won the get-of-sire class at the World Angus Forum.

Z EHR ANGUS FARM

From the Corn Belt Comes Great Calves

by Lori Riffel

The state of Illinois brags a lot about being the home of President Lincoln, is proud of its windy city Chicago and the fact that some of the most abundant corn and soybean crops are harvested from its land.

But Illinois is bragging even more these days about the great Angus calves that are arising from the same farms that produce corn and soybeans.

Flanagan, Ill., is such a place that has gained notoriety in Angus circles and its star route has been enhanced by ZAF Administrator 131, a true-to-earth, home-bred product of Paul Zehr's Angus Farm.

Administrator walked on the scene in 1982 as a yearling and for the next two show seasons earned a spectacular list of winnings culminating with the reserve grand championship at the 1984 National Western Stock Show.

Junior oriented

The Zehr herd was founded on junior projects and the oldest son Dave purchased his first cows in 1971. In 1977, the middle son Jon, purchased a heifer calf in the Millikan and Phillips sale in Palmyra, Mo.

The figure of \$3,550 was a pretty tall-looking price for a young boy to give for a heifer calf, but when Jon and MSF Miss Black Revolution won their class at the 1977 National Junior Angus Show, he was feeling a whole lot better about his investment.

In fact, every year Miss Black Revolution (a Byergos Black Revolution 36 daughter) proved to Jon that he indeed had made a wise investment. The first three years she had heifer calves and each one followed in her footsteps and won a class at National Junior Angus Shows. A feat not matched by many.

Miss Black Revolution was bred artificially every year like all the other females at Zehr Angus and her matings to Empire Maverick, Eileenmere Masterpiece JAO and LEMAR Eileenmere Lad 549 had favorably clicked. For her fourth calf she was bred to Sir Wms Warrant and on April 22, 1981, produced her first bull.

Special feelings came with the birth of that bull calf—feelings of unique destiny—it comes with every great calf and it came with Administrator.

"The most gratifying part of it is breeding that calf rather than buying it," says Paul. "Because if you've got enough money and you are lucky, you can buy a winner. But to breed a winner means so much more."

With the natural production of four winners on the national level, Miss Black Revolution had definitely proven herself. She became, undisputedly, the first donor cow from the Zehr herd.

E.T. philosophies

Paul has his own opinions about what does and does not make a donor cow. Basing his standards upon the blending of talents his first embryo transplant cow had, just any female won't get that chance. And it's harder to justify an E.T. program in a small herd (Zehrs have 25 cows).

"You're putting all your eggs in one basket, so to speak, because you don't have enough donor cows to select from," says Paul. "We're only selecting from one or two cows."

Zehrs flushed Miss Black Revolution twice, providing them with 14 offspring of natural and embryo calves. She then was sold in the 1984 Quest for the Best sale to Backgate Angus, Dallas, Texas.

It is this strong influence of her blood in the Zehr

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*The Paul Zehr family.
Back row, from left: Paul,
Vicky and Dave. Front
row, from left: Jon,
Wilma, Matthew and Eric.*



herd that limits their own use of Administrator.

"Our problem is that our whole cow herd is related to Administrator's dam. The herd was built around that cow and "36," says Paul. With a larger herd he says it's bound to be less of a problem because their foundation base is likely to include more than one cow family.

Crops come first

It is Illinois and it is the home of some very fertile farm ground. So it's not surprising that at certain times of the year the Zehr cows are ignored. Those times come at planting time in the spring, then fertilizing and cultivating, and finally harvesting in the fall. So calving needs to occur before planting and weaning will wait until after the corn and soybeans are in.

"Crops are still what takes our time," says Paul. He adds that if their herd was any larger than it is they wouldn't have the time to spend with all of them as they do now.

Zehrs begin calving in January and like to finish up no later than May.

"We can get by with the stretch because we don't have the numbers to watch," says Paul.

The herd totals no more than 25 head and half that number comprises the pasture land. The fertile farm land is hardly ever sacrificed for grass, but when it is, it doesn't take much to maintain a few cows.

The cows are all artificially bred and a natural service sire has never held a position at Zehr Angus.

"We've had excellent luck. We'll breed each cow twice," says Paul. "We breed when they are standing and 12 hours later."

Good for the family

Paul is glad his sons wanted to get into the cattle business.

"We've had real good success down through the years with the cows," says Paul. Dave raised the bull ZAF Magnitude, that was champion at the 1979 Denver bull sale and sold for \$30,000.

"See, the thing is—we've been real fortunate with the three boys. Dave had that bull that got him off the ground; Jon comes along with Administrator and Eric sold a cow-calf pair to Harmon Angus Ranch, Lavina, Mont. It got them off the ground and in the Angus business in a very good way," he adds.

Currently, Dave is engaged in farming with Paul; Jon teaches school and Eric is a freshman at Illinois State University. Zehrs farm 700 acres of corn and soybeans and put up alfalfa and orchard grass hay. With the present economy clouding the farm sector, land prices have become depressed and a crop to pasture land switch might be in the opting.

"It's changed some now and with the drop in the price of farm land, we could justify running cows on more acreage," says Paul. "Just a few years ago this land here was selling for \$3,000 to \$4,000 an acre."

Outlets for calves

Zehrs actively participate in state association shows and sales and among them the Illinois Angus Futurity and the Illinois Spotlight. For the past two years Zehrs have held a joint production sale with Dameron Angus at Lexington, Ill.



Administrator's maternal sister, ZAF Miss Maverick.

"We are pretty similar in our breeding and in the bulls we use," says Paul.

Besides being close in proximity, the complement of their breeding programs eliminates any feeling of two separate sale offerings.

Bull calves have a tough time in Illinois. If you're not an Administrator, Rising Star, Wrangler, Pistolero or just face it, a great calf, you're probably going to make a pretty good steer or go straight to the sale barn.

"In our country, the emphasis is on steers," says Paul. "There's a demand for steers and a lot of potential buyers. Whereas, you have very few potential buyers for bull calves."

Administrator was easily placed at the very top of his class from birth to weaning to yearling to a mature herd sire. Zehrs are proud that the offspring of Administrator are bringing home ribbons for their owners. Administrator brags of siring the 1985 National Western champion pen of three bulls; some high placing females in the Denver "hill" show, Reno and the National Junior Angus Show. Most recently, Prospect Farms, Arva, Ont., put together the winning get-of-sire group at the World Angus Forum with Administrator progeny.

Weaver Angus Farm, Peoria, Ill., has played a key part in Administrator's unveiling to the Angus world. Steve Weaver took an instant liking to the bull as a yearling, wasted no time in securing an interest and added him to the squad of the 1982 and '83 WAF show teams.

And at Flanagan

The Zehr family still feels young at the cattle business but they also are very pleased with what they have accomplished in a short time. The boys were all active in the Illinois Junior Assn. and active in showing. Dave won the National Junior Showmanship Contest in 1975 and in the last 10 years they've only missed one National Junior Show. The show winnings haven't been too shabby either. Between the three of them, they've had a reserve intermediate champion and five class winners.

"We don't intend to get any bigger but intend to expand our E.T. program with several cows," says Paul. "If the situation is right we would like to buy a cow or calf for that program."

But with a satisfied look he adds, "I wouldn't change much, not anything from what we're doing now."