

Wisconsin Style

by Julie Grimes Albertson

The pounding of horses' hooves is all you hear as the riders head out into Devils Hole to bring in the herd. Twenty minutes later the first cows begin coming over the ridge through the thick tree line.

The horses coax the herd up the next hill and into a corral with only one independent bovine needing a little extra chasing. Now the job of separating and vaccinating the cows and calves is left to the experienced cowboys and cowgirls.

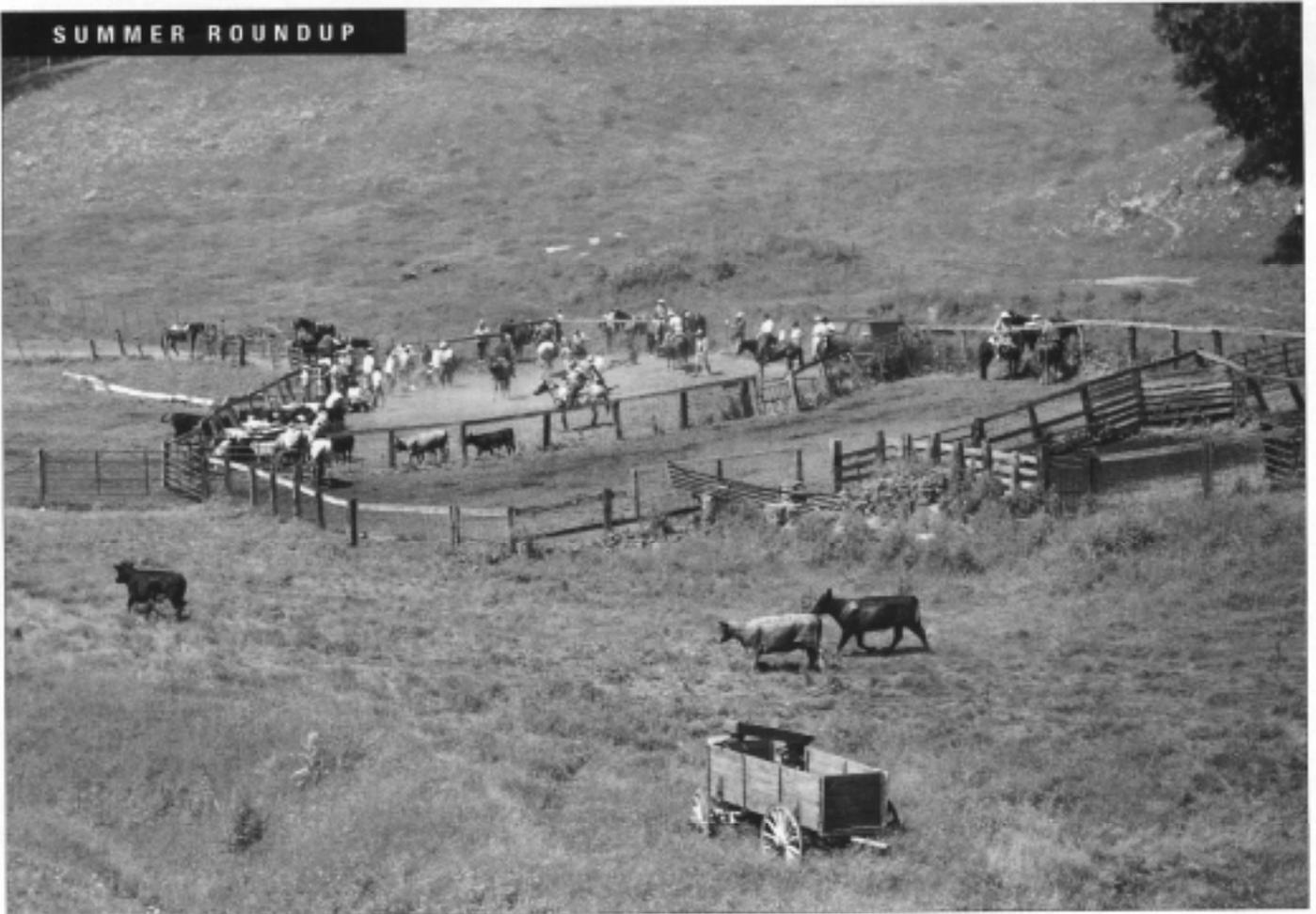
Although Wisconsin is an unlikely spot for a western-style roundup, it's an annual affair in June on the 3,000 acre Devil's Hole Ranch near Norwalk.

"We consider it a social event. Our neighbors, friends and family all get the chance to get together," says Jeff Menn, owner of Devils Hole Ranch, about the roundup. As an added bonus, the crew works 500 cows and their calves,

Close to 60 people headed out on horseback this year to round up the cattle, which are divided into two herds. Although there were 55 more horses than was necessary, it's an event for these folks, not just a chore,

Serving as trail boss was Ken Powell, ranch manager. "Being in charge of this ranch is more than just managing the crops, cattle and machinery," says Menn. "When you're out West, you might have just a couple of neighbors. We have 20 or more. Ken manages relationships well. He puts a little bit extra into helping neighbors, the way it was in the olden days."

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Neighbors, friends and interested onlookers have been coming to Devil's Hole Ranch at the end of June for 20 years. It's a true working roundup similar to what you might find in the West.



Jeff Menn is a fourth generation cattleman and a physician. During a ranch tour Dr. Menn stopped to check on a neighbor. "We did a field call. There are house calls and then there are field calls. Since his rash was in an area I didn't think he would want to reveal, we slipped out in the field," says Menn.



Ken Powell, ranch manager, sets up the chute and portable corrals. The cows and calves are worked in June and the calves are revaccinated at the end of September.



Angus genetics have played a critical role at this ranch for 50 years. While the main herd is crossbred, Menn recently purchased a herd of Angus females and 18 of the 20 herd bulls used are purebred Angus.

"When I was a kid I had \$200 to spend on a Model A. I never got the car though because my dad talked me into spending it on four Angus heifers," Menn says,

It turned out to be a wise move, as he used the proceeds from his 20 head of Angus to help finance medical school. Now he's able to combine his love of ranching

and medicine. Menn maintains a private pediatric practice in Viroqua, works 36 hours per week in the emergency room and spends Fridays at the ranch.

"My grandfather started with 95 acres back in the teens. Today it's close to 3,000 acres including the beef operation and two dairy herds," Menn explains.

Menn's father and sister also each own a portion of Devil's Hole.

His hectic pace places most of the burden of running the ranch into the hands of his manager. "Ken makes the decisions. I believe that if you hire somebody to do the

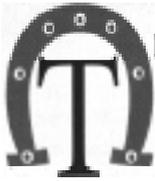
job, and then you micromanage what he's doing, it won't take long for him to get frustrated," he says.

Running a ranch of this magnitude could get a little hairy at times. However, riding out across the ridge overlooking Devils Hole Ranch would clear your head. It's undoubtedly one of the most beautiful sights east or west of the Mississippi.

Menn enjoys giving other people the chance to enjoy the ranch. The roundup is one big way of saying thank you to the neighbors and friends of Devil's Hole by sharing it with them for a day.

Round 'em up





he Menn family began this farm in 1856. Jeff Menn's great-great-grandfather also took an option on 1,000 acres in Virginia, about 40 miles outside Washington, D.C. While Jeff's grandfather went to supervise the logging before the family moved east he received a telegram. It said your father has died, come home. So he came back to the farm and bought a place down the road, married and started out with Jerseys. In the 1940s he bought his first Angus stock.



Menn maintains two dairies. The Jersey dairy shown here was the original farm owned by Jeff's grandfather.

At the end of a long, hard roundup, it's time for both horse and rider to enjoy a shady spot.

