

John Rouse, owner of One Bar Eleven Ranch near Saratoga, Wyo., is a man of many experiences, talents and accomplishments. Among them is a top-notch herd of Angus cattle.

One Bar Eleven Ranch

Its Owner, Its Angus

by Cecil Hellbusch

In doing this story author Cecil E. Hellbusch (retired livestock man now living near Aurora, Colo.) had a chance to renew an old friendship with Angus breeder John Rouse. Rouse has been breeding Angus since his retirement from an oil company in 1953. Rouse's early cattle selection methods were ahead of their time and now, in his eighties, he continues to keep abreast of advances in the industry.

This treatise is about the One Bar Eleven Ranch located south and east of Saratoga, Wyo., and the Angus cattle that roam it's pastures. There are three interesting items about this ranch—it's owner John Rouse, the Angus cattle and the ranch property. All three are interesting and all three have contributed to the development of the livestock industry in Wyoming and the West.

The ranch lies in Saratoga Valley where some 600 black Angus cows graze with their calves. Spread out over a large area of permanent pastures with One Bar Eleven headquarters in the background, the cows and calves seem to welcome visitors.

John Rouse the Man

John Rouse seems to have inexhaustible energy. He has passed the octogenary age in his life, and during that lifetime has developed one of the west's top Angus herds by using imagination and new and modern business methods as well as the advice and counsel of animal scientists at several western state universities.

There has been much harping in recent years by livestock scientists, consultants, ranch managers, economists and the like urging livestock producers, breeders and ranchers to treat their industry as a business rather than a way of life. John Rouse is a pioneer in using business methods to operate and improve his Angus herd. He can be used as a model in this respect.

Rouse is a man who has had two successful careers in his life. His second is not over. Born in Denver, Colo., he graduated from East High School and went on to earn a mechanical engineering degree from Brown University, Providence, R.I. He accepted a job with Standard Oil of New Jersey in 1913 and in 1921 was sent to Casper, Wyo., to manage the Rocky Mountain division. He eventually was transferred to Chicago and retired from the company in 1953. His 40 years with the oil companies were profitable, but he was not ready to settle down, grow tulips, whittle on a stick or do some useless work just to occupy his time.

He had always had a love for cattle and a strong desire to own a ranch; so when Andy Anderson (friend and owner of A Bar A Ranch in Saratoga Valley) wanted to sell his Angus cattle, Rouse bought them. The Anderson land was contracted to run the cattle on. In 1955, Rouse bought his present ranch from a Memphis, Tenn., newspaper man. This was the beginning of an operation that

has grown, prospered and developed a top herd of Angus cattle.

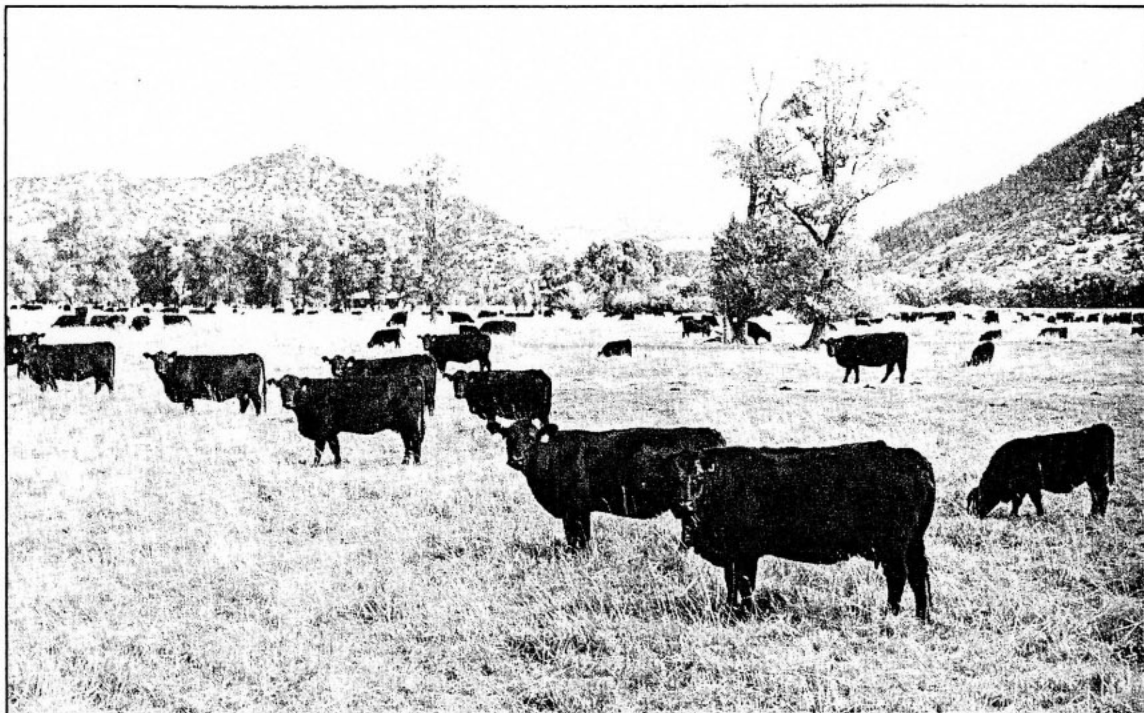
John Rouse has seen more breeds of cattle throughout the world than most people have heard of. He has written four books from his travels around the world (which began in 1961). By 1970, Rouse had published three volumes of "World Cattle" and in 1975 came out with "Criollo, Spanish Cattle in the Americas."

His wife Roma says, "I traveled every step of the way with him and we had several experiences I wouldn't want to repeat, but at the time it didn't seem so hair-raising. We

operated on by using only acupuncture needles as anesthetic.

One Bar Eleven Range Land

There are 5,400 acres of deeded land in the ranch with 2,000 acres leased from the BLM and the state of Wyoming. Fifteen hundred acres are irrigated pastures and meadows in the valley, grassed with native grasses and some alfalfa. The majestic North Platte river flows for six miles through the ranch providing about one-half the water needed to irrigate the meadows. Rouse has the oldest water rights on Brush Creek (which



Approximately 100 cows are culled each year on the basis of their performance. Each cow's herd history is stored on computer records.

used about every kind of conveyance you can mention and in Nepal we chartered a helicopter."

Roma took most of the pictures which illustrate various breeds in his published books. She also typed manuscripts "from John's scribbblings and notes." Because of their completeness and accuracy, his books on cattle breeds of the world have been used as school texts.

"The Foreign Agriculture Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. embassies helped arrange our itineraries in various countries and other contacts we needed. The cattlemen in most countries were cooperative and this made our work easier," says Roma.

John says they made every conceivable approach to get into China to see cattle there but were not successful. Ralph W. Phillips, head of the Foreign Agriculture Service at that time, let John use his works on Chinese cattle (material he gathered just before World War II). John toured China in 1978, but was unable to see many cattle (they are beasts of burden in China). He did see a horse being

also flows through the ranch) and one of the oldest on the North Platte.

The ranch is located in a sparse rainfall area, getting only about 11 to 12 inches of rainfall per year. John says there has been very little snow in the valley the last 15 years. So little, in fact, they have been able to feed hay on their pastures all winter long. There has been, however, plenty of snow in the mountains to feed rivers and streams.

The higher range to the south of the valley had been over-grazed for years before Rouse bought it. It is now covered with sage brush. All the area is susceptible to cultivation and is seeded in crested wheat grass which provides excellent dryland pasture in late spring.

Eighteen hundred tons of hay are put up during the summer to carry cattle through the winter. Heifers are fed generously, both hay and grain, throughout the winter.

The Angus Cattle

When Rouse bought the A Bar A herd of Angus in 1953, they were an established herd with a reputation for quality. In 1956, commercial Angus steers from One Bar

Eleven were named reserve grand champion feeder calves at Chicago's International Livestock Show. In 1957, he showed the reserve champion feeder pen at Denver's National Western and the grand champion load of feeder calves at the Kansas City American Royal.

It was about this time when smaller type Angus began winning. Not wanting to breed smaller cattle, Rouse quit showing. However, with his foresight and keen mind, Rouse figured there was room for improvement in his Angus. His success is evident in the herd today.

The present day herd numbers some 600 mature cows and 200 2-year-old heifers. They are large framed, reasonably big cows with well formed udders and teats showing excellent milking ability. They are cows with good height, length and muscling. It is obvious there is no semblance of the early day small cattle in his herd.

The cow herd is a closed one; there has never been outside females added to the herd. New blood has been added by artificially inseminating to bulls from prominent herds. Replacement heifers have been selected from these matings.

Rouse estimates 75 percent of his present cow herd is from A.I. matings. With this strong foundation cow herd it is not surprising today's calves have such good weaning weights and gaining ability. The extra work it takes to detect cows in heat, identify cows and calves and keep accurate records has been worth it. During the first heat period they are able to get a conception rate of 60 to 75 percent and during the second heat period clean-up bulls are used.

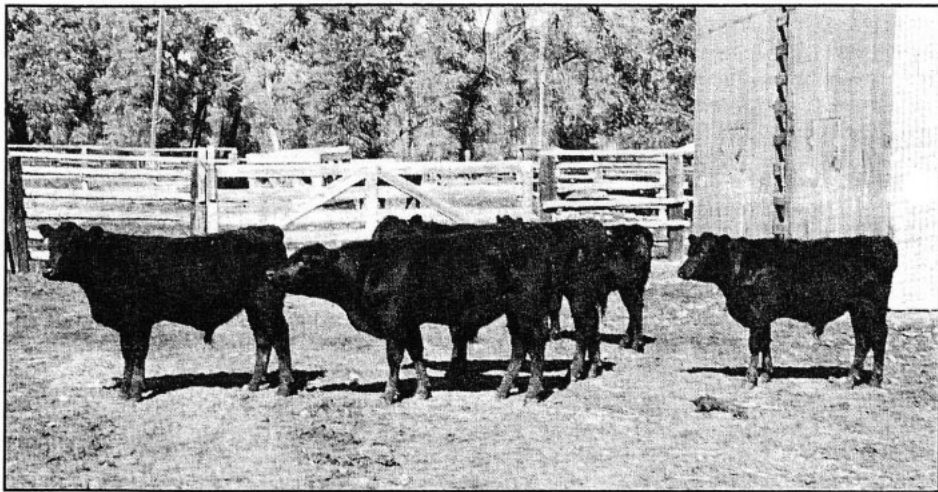
When Rouse began his A.I. program in 1959, he went into the Armour Beef Cattle Improvement Program and used three bulls owned by the Wye Plantation Angus herd in Maryland.

After several years of using Wye semen and later semen from Oklahoma State University bulls, in 1967 Rouse used semen from the famous Wye Plantation bull, Conan of Wye. This bull produced many outstanding Angus for One Bar Eleven. Many cows in today's herd trace back to 242, a son of Conan of Wye bred by Rouse. The 242 bull had a 205-day adjusted weight of 587 pounds; a 365-day adjusted weight of 1,047 pounds and a daily gain of 4 pounds per day on a 120-day feeding trial. Fifty-one of his calves had an average weaning weight of 510 pounds.

Since 1970, he has tried various other bulls but their progeny did not always measure up to the production of One Bar Eleven breeding. This year, however, Rouse tried semen from two Wye Plantation bulls, Lundell and Lucan, and from Schearbrook Shoshone, hoping they will produce some outstanding progeny.

Rouse does not collect semen at the ranch; bulls are hauled to Colorado State University where semen is collected and stored. Experienced inseminators are hired during breeding season.

Management practices include breeding



These young Angus bulls will start test this fall. Rouse calves are proven performers in feeding trials.

cows so first calf heifers will calve between March 15 and April 20, with mature cows calving between April 1 and May 20. A large area of fenced land covered with cottonwood trees and near the headquarters is where the cows calve. Separate areas are fenced for first calf heifers, for 3- and 4-year-old cows and for mature cows. Plenty of baled native hay is stacked nearby for feeding during calving.

All calves are individually weighed Oct. 1 with calves from 2-year-old heifers being weaned. At this time the top 100 bull calves are also weaned. The remaining bull calves are castrated and, together with the heifer calves, turned back with the cows for another month if the weather permits. After all calves are weaned, heifers and steers are fed separately during winter months.

One or two pens of top bull calves will be sent this fall to the test station at Hesperous, Colo. The rest will be on test at the ranch. Also, four sire groups of six calves each will be on test at the ranch. These 24 calves will be fed individually to obtain feed efficiency records. Bulls scoring highest in this test will be used in the herd. Some sires may be eliminated from the breeding herd as a result of the test.

Leave it to John Rouse to find the latest method of individually feeding bulls on test. He discovered animal scientists at Clay Center, Neb., where using a method of individual feeding developed in Scotland by the Calan Manufacturing Co. Calves are fed individually in feed stanchions with locks opened by the bulls. Bulls wear a ball around their necks that is electronically tuned to the same frequency as the lock, and will open only that lock. This is so bulls cannot eat each other's feed. To operate the lock on their stanchion bulls have to raise their heads to slide their necks between the two stanchion boards and bang the ball against the lock. This opens the door so they can eat. John says in the three years they have been using this unique method about one bull in 10 or 12 fail to master the system.

The record One Bar Eleven bull calves have made in feed tests highlights why many commercial cattlemen in the Rocky Moun-

tain area are buying One Bar Eleven bull calves. Results of feeding trials at the CSU Bull Test Station at Hesperous illustrate what Rouse cattle have accomplished. In 1981, Rouse had the top pen over all breeds. Those bulls gained 3.56 lb. per day and ratioed 110. In 1980, he had the two highest gaining Angus bulls. The top bull (with a ratio of 128) topped the bull sale and the other bull (with a 127 ratio) was the second top-selling bull of the day at \$4,000. Rouse calves had claimed similar results in 1979, 1978 and 1976 (including a test station record for highest ratio and best feed conversion).

The gain ability bred into One Bar Eleven steers is reflected in feedlot results. Feeders like the steers and the same buyers come back year after year. Victor Bauer, a Corn Belt feeder, has been buying Rouse calves by telephone the last several years, weighed at the ranch without a shrink. This is a great testimonial.

Rouse has entered two pens of steers the last three years in the Great Western Beef Expo held in Sterling, Colo. Here again, his Angus have come out with flying colors. In 1982, he had the top Angus pen with an average daily gain of 3.67 pounds. This followed his top Angus pens of 1980 and 1981. All three years, the pens were sired by One Bar Eleven-bred bulls.

Rouse has been keeping performance records on his cattle from the time he bought them. Since 1958 records on the One Bar Eleven cow herd have been kept in a computer at Colorado State University. Dr. H.H. Stonaker, head of the CSU animal science department at that time, convinced Rouse this was the way to go. Before turning over his records to CSU, Rouse plotted weaning weights and other data on a curve. Those animals scoring above the median were kept in the herd and those below the median were shipped off to the auction market.

Dr. Stonaker now lives on a farm of east Ft. Collins, Colo., and in the following comments he highlights some of his work with John Rouse. Stonaker says, "Working closely over the years with a person of brilliant intellect and indefatigable energy is an awe-

some experience—not always easy—but intriguingly engaging. Into my office in animal science at CSU back in 1958 came this retired, stately cattleman, John E. Rouse, from the One Bar Eleven Ranch of Saratoga, Wyo. I don't know who suggested that he visit me, but not much time was taken up with pleasantries or generalities.

"Under his arm were a number of large, maplike rolls of painstakingly drawn charts with hundreds of points representing individual calf weaning weights and trend lines. On one chart was diagrams representing weights associated with age and sex of his Angus calves. On others were calf weights associated with cow age. Further, he had drawn free hand best fitting regression lines to the data and was examining the deviations of individual calves from the average of other animals of that age, sex and age of dam. That

determining bulls to use in his A.I. program and by natural service. When culling, records are relied on almost completely; thus, he can cull them from his office. Among the many factors included are mothering ability and poor calving records.

Dr. Stonaker also had this to say about Rouse, "John gives me credit for suggesting in the middle 60s that he should be getting more benefit from the vast amount of information accumulated on his cow herds and the many renowned performance tested bulls used through A.I. Thus, he began saving back about 30 to 90 bull calves yearly from the best producing cows. The best of these—excelling in performance tests at the home ranch and in other bull testing stations—were used in the herd. Progeny tests revealed that some of these equaled or even surpassed the breed's best progeny-tested sires.



Bulls are individually fed at the ranch to obtain feed efficiency records. The best performance tested bulls are kept for use in the herd.

was a formidable task when dealing with 500 or more calves annually. He ranked calves in six categories and, correspondingly, dams based on their lifetime production. Sires used in A.I. also were ranked on the adjusted data.

"What did I think? Was he on the right track? What could I say; he had it all put together on his own. All I could offer was the possibility of getting the data on punch cards so results could be computerized and thus relieve some of the labor of tedious chart making. John liked the idea and for many years we worked together annually with the help of graduate students and the computing center compiling vast amounts of production information on the One Bar Eleven Angus herd."

Having his records on the computer has been a big help to Rouse in his selection and culling process. Since he has a record on every cow in the herd (and those no longer in the herd), he can be very discriminating when selecting replacement heifers and in

John made the keen observation that if a progeny test included as many as 30 offspring it was an unusual sire that would exceed the average by as much as 5 percent."

He culls about 100 cows each year replacing them with yearling heifers. There are some 20 pieces of computer information on each cow which pin points her herd history.

Rouse has purchased a computer which is housed in his office. He will eventually have all his records at his finger tips. However, the CSU computer will be used for some time yet to ensure valuable information is not lost during the transition to Rouse's computer. He had to enlarge his office to handle the computer but it has plenty of company as it is surrounded by a copier, mementos from around the world, pictures on the walls of the cattle and the ranch. John also has a desk that abounds with material from all over the world, a busy telephone and many steel file cases bulging with materials with which John would not want to part.

Rouse keeps on top of new developments in the livestock industry in an effort to increase the bottom line. Sometimes he is ahead of the parade in testing new ideas. Bull feeding is an example. There is a great deal of interest in feeding bulls at this time, but Rouse was thinking about it in 1963. At that time he furnished Angus bulls and steers for a comparison experiment conducted by the animal science department at the University of Wyoming and the Denver Division of Safeway Stores Inc. The University of Wyoming published a bulletin in 1964 giving details and results of this experiment.

In the experiment, 38 half brothers were put on feed in a feedlot located east of Denver. Bulls were 16 months of age at slaughter and the steers were a few months younger. The steers graded USDA choice and the majority of the bulls fell into the good grade.

Carcasses were cut into retail cuts by Safeway Stores Inc. Both steer and bull cuts were placed in meat counters of five stores side by side with consumer questionnaires inside each package. Cuts were coded so consumers did not know which they were buying. Consumers were asked to rate the cuts for taste, tenderness, fatness and if they would buy the beef again. Analysis of the cards returned (many were) showed consumers rated the front quarter and rump beef of the bulls equal to the steercuts but preferred loin cuts from steer carcasses over bulls. A majority of consumers said they would buy bull beef again.

Rouse had this to say about the experiment, "As long as beef from bull carcasses is called bullock beef consumers will shy away from buying it. Another suitable name must be given to bull beef and I believe consumers will accept it."

Jack Moon was hired by Rouse 24 years ago to work on the One Bar Eleven. The two men are very compatible and Jack is now the manager. Jack has raised a family of one son and two daughters during that time. Son Mike now also works full time on the ranch. One other full time man is employed and college students are hired during the haying season in the summer. Dick and Freda Arment have been in charge of the Rouse household the last two years. This allows Roma time to sneak off to her favorite fishing hole on the Platte. She says October is the best month for fishing and is very proud of the nearly 4-lb. rainbow she caught a few Octobers ago. She had it mounted and displays it on a wall in their sun room.

Three black miniature Poodles announce the arrival of visitors and friends who visit John and Roma, with Danny claiming to be John's favorite. At least he is always in the front seat of the 4-wheeler every time John leaves for the corrals or to inspect the Angus cattle.

It was interesting and educational to spend time with this retired oil company executive—now a cowman—and listen to him talk about the tools and methods he has used to develop one of the nation's top herds of Angus beef cattle.