

If you've got to go with it if you think it's right . . . And if you want to be successful, you have to enjoy it, love it."

Relatively simple philosophies, perhaps, but they summarize much of Gary Brost's outlook on the cattle business—the Angus business to be specific.

"I think you have to go with the best you've got and see what the future is going to bring," he will add. "You need the best to be competitive today and to be able to sell cattle to other breeders."

Brost's is an ambitious attitude and it has him aiming high in Angus circles. An aggressive A.I. program and an expanding embryo transfer program are the key in this small but successful Angus operation near Oxford, Ind.

Brost Angus Farm is a family undertaking—in the truest sense of the word. Gary and his wife Linda have been partners in their farm since they were married. All five of their children (Chuck, 20; Glenda, 19; Nick, 18; Michael, 17; and Nancy, 14) have worked their way

up through 4-H and junior Angus ranks, developing small herds along the way. (All cattle are managed as a single unit, though.)

Only during the past few years have Brosts made a serious effort in the show ring. Their farm prefix, though, is familiar to winners on state, regional and national levels. The exposure—a family-wide effort—has helped promote the Brost Angus product. And Gary is particularly proud that a relatively small, family-oriented operation can compete on a national level.

Often it seems large quantities of money, cattle and/or other resources are required before a breeder makes a sizable splash in Angus show circles. Gary feels his family's record proves differently.

Registered angle started with kids

Gary's initial experience in the beef cattle business came through his grandfather, a Hereford breeder. Gary's parents, however, operated a dairy near

Oxford (just a few miles from the current Brost headquarters) and that's the business he entered on his own. Gary and Linda took over the family's herd and milked Holsteins for three or four years.

Brosts have always raised crops, too, and Gary continues—with the help of his sons—to farm some 1,000 to 1,200 acres of corn and soybeans.

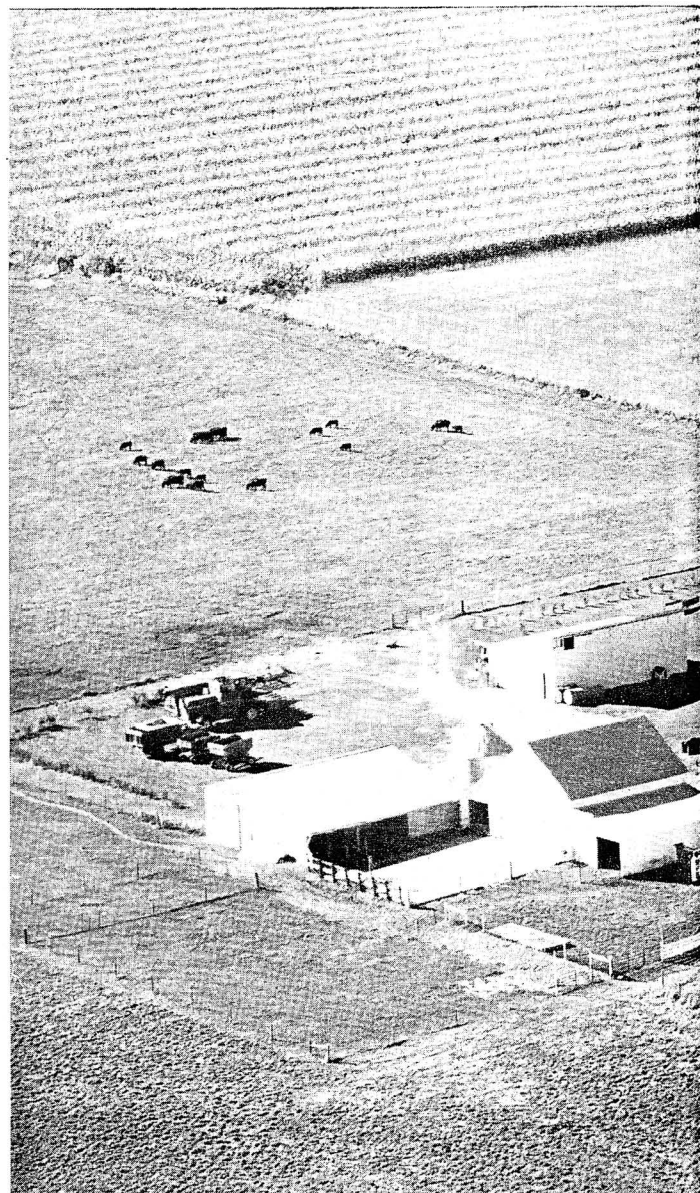
Gary and Linda shifted to the beef business with commercial cattle. The first registered stock arrived at Brost Angus about 15 years ago when each of the four older children received a heifer for Easter.

The young Brosts were not yet involved in 4-H, but the heifers served as money-making projects and the start of their own herds. Each has since pursued an active interest in showing Angus and Nancy followed suit, too. A history of their wins covers many county and state awards, and is highlighted by five class winners on a national junior Angus level.

Brost Angus Farm

Aggressive A.I. and E.T. Programs Make This Family Operation Tick

by Nancy Ann Sayre

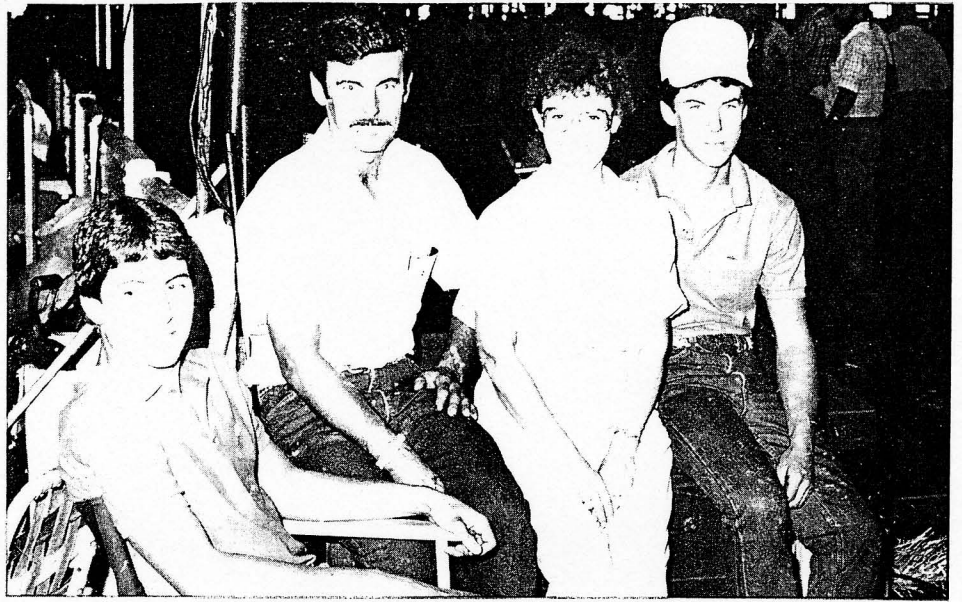


Showmanship recognition is plentiful in this household, as well, and last year the family was selected to "illustrate" the American Angus Assn.'s how-to slide presentation on showmanship.

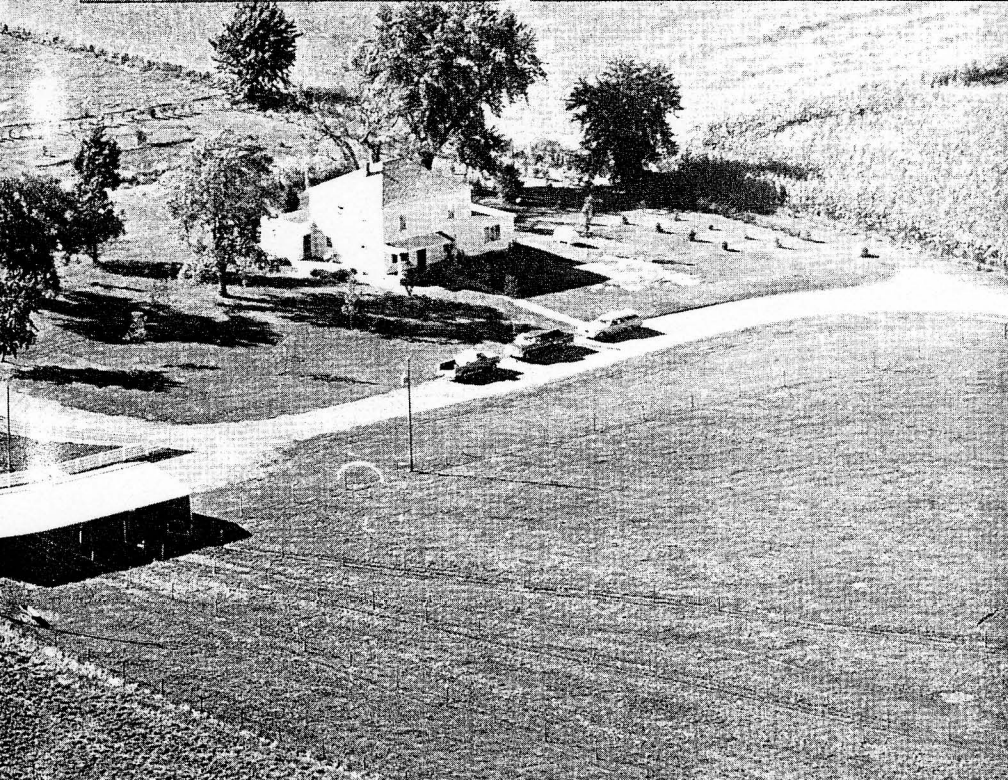
Livestock judging has been another branch of this younger generation's interest in Angus and Brosts were well represented this month in Louisville judging contests. Mike and Nick are both representing their state as members of the high 4-H team; Nick took top individual honors in the state competition. Chuck planned to head for the North American as a member of Purdue University's team (he is an animal science major there; Glenda is a sophomore in retail merchandising; and Nick started this year in agricultural management).

Building on maternal strengths

Early in his registered Angus career, Gary set his sights on large-framed cat-



Brost Angus is a family enterprise and Gary is quite proud that a small, family-oriented operation can compete on a national level. He and his wife Linda (above, center), and all five children are familiar faces at Indiana Angus events. Nick (left) and Mike are pictured above; from left, below, are Nancy, Chuck and Glenda.



tle. Such direction was due, at least in part, to advice from Ira Boggs, then at nearby Able Farms. On Boggs' recommendation, Gary searched out some big, growthy Eileenmere-bred cows in southern Illinois. They formed a strong herd base and, incidentally, sold later to Sir William Angus in New York when Boggs worked there.

Other groups of mature cows were sold during Brost Angus' first decade, but a concerted effort was made to keep all heifers as replacements.

A.I. has been the extra punch to the Brost breeding program right from the start.

"We've always A.I.'d," says Gary. "Except for one or two years that I had a herd bull, we've continued to A.I. everything since we've been in this business."

And he means every single female in the herd. There are no cleanup bulls,



"You've got to go with the best you have," says Brost, "and that means the heifers, here." Brosts have flushed several of their top heifers for the past few years, coupling embryo transfer work with an intensive A.I. program to make maximum use of available genetics.

and no excuses. Even so, breeding seasons remain fairly tight.

"Originally we hired a guy to do the breeding, but since Linda and Chuck went to A.I. school, we do all the work ourselves."

Such an approach has given Brosts access to the best Angus genetics they could find. What have they looked for?

"I'm really strong on maternal traits," emphasizes Gary. "I like cows that breed back quickly—we've moved cows up 20 days in their A.I. dates. They've got to breed back easy . . . it's got to be that way when we A.I. everything."

"The next thing is milk," he adds. "The boys have learned to judge through 4-H and all, but I never did. I look at them and if I like them, I like them. If I don't, I don't."

"I try to mate each cow for specific reasons," he says in reference to his breeding program. Generally, he has selected popular, show-winning bulls with pedigrees acceptable to him. "Whether it's length of neck, leg structure or angle of the rump, I try to correct problems. I look at each cow and try to find two or three bulls that I can use in different ways for different problems."

"That's really what we've tried to do and it's been quite successful. Pine Drive Big Sky really hit a lick in this herd. He's improved a lot of things and we used him pretty much across the board."

A few families are the core

Part of Pine Drive Big Sky's compatibility across the herd Gary attributes to the fact that his herd is closely related, centering around three or four top cow families.

Brosts sold better than half of their herd several years ago, reducing numbers to about 50 head. Since then, they have increased the herd by placing emphasis on families of superior producers and keeping as many replacement heifers as possible rather than purchasing cattle.

And embryo transfer (E.T.) has played an important role in this recent expansion. Brosts have used the tool to concentrate the influence and strengths of their best producers. Gary regards the value of embryo transplanting in a light similar to the benefits of heavy A.I. use. Both help him to compete successfully—as a small breeder—by maximizing the use of top genetics.

"I've done more E.T. work than ever before to try to get my numbers back to where I want them," explains Gary. "And see where the results are? Two are with Premier Angus Inc. (Cloverdale), one is at Premier Beef (Howell, Mich.), another is in Colorado."

Brosts tried embryo transfer on a limited scale in 1981, then transplanted 10 to 12 eggs from top heifers for two years. This spring, 45 transplant calves will be dropped in Brost pastures.

"But besides just trying to compete," says Gary, "we're able to concentrate the cow families we have . . . Everybody's got a good cow or two, but not too many breeders have families of good cows."

One such family is exemplified, in Gary's mind, by Brost Elba 916. Her mother reached pathfinder status, and "916" herself has weaned bulls at 700 lb. and heifers over 600 lb. She also chalked up wins at the Indiana preview and state fair shows in 1980, and several daughters have claimed purple as well. She's never had a calf that couldn't be shown, according to Gary.

"She's had quite a track record," he says with reference to her progeny as well as her show wins. "We've bred her

to five different bulls and it really didn't matter—she's so strong maternally it carries through."

But "916" is one of the few mature cows Brosts have flushed. Their efforts center around heifers and Gary is confident in his direction.

Go with your best

"If you know what you have behind her, you have no fear of flushing a heifer for embryo transfer. To just go out and buy a heifer that looks great wouldn't be the answer, but we know the production behind each of our heifers. We have their mothers and their grandmothers and the performance records. You have to go with the best you have . . . and that means our heifers, here."

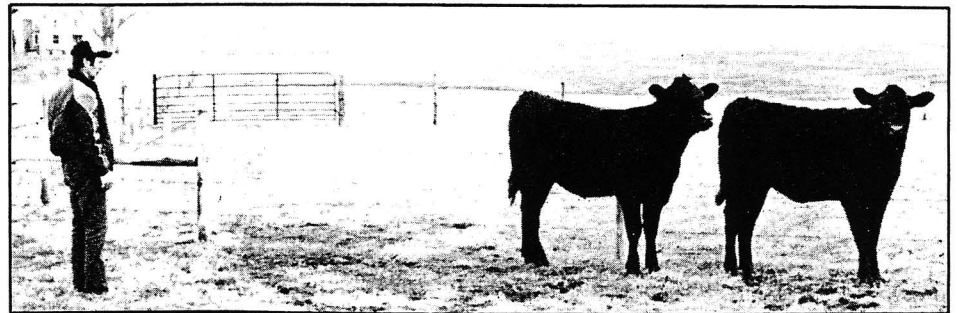
And Gary doesn't worry about narrowing his genetic base too much. "These are the top performing cows in my herd, not just show winners . . . it's been exciting these past two years to finally have my top performers win in the show, too."

In fact, Gary now is aiming for a bull to tie his cow families together more closely. "I'm trying to get a line—a bull we produce ourselves—that we can come back with and incorporate to cross two cow families back and forth. There are good things in each cow family, but if we can join two together, maybe we'll have something better."

He is hoping Brost Power Drive is that answer. Many members of the Brost herd are bred to the young sire and several heifers were flushed to him. Premier Angus owns an interest in the calf and has been showing him.

"I guess that's a lot of faith to put in a young bull," summarizes Gary, "but the cow behind him has been super and the grandmother has been super. We think he's going to breed really well and that's what we're looking for . . . If you've got it there, you might as well use it."

AJ



These two heifers were part of the 1984 Brost show team. "It's tough to come up with enough good heifers from our small herd for all five kids to show," comments Brost. They seem to have succeeded, though, chalking up five national junior show class wins and numerous state championships in the past few years.