



► **Left:** Bruce and Amie met in Denver 15 years ago and share a special love for the NWSS. Their boys, Cade (center left) and Dillon (center right), enjoy showing just as much.

years ago. "This is a pretty special place," he says of the NWSS, "but it is for a lot of people and for a lot of different reasons."

Today, Bruce and Amie's relationship continues to be built on showing and fitting Angus cattle and raising their two boys, Dillon and Cade. The couple was recognized with the Herdsman Award at the 2004 NWSS for their love of and dedication to showing Angus cattle.

"It's funny, because when you are around somebody," Amie says, clearing her throat of the warm emotions she conjures up, "as long as we've been around each other, you kind of pick up each other's slack. When you see something's not done . . . we don't even have to stand and talk about it. It's something that is done automatically because you just know."

### Opposite paths cross

The Stertzbachs started from scratch in the Angus business. Bruce got his start showing cattle for a childhood neighbor. He ended up working for Paul Hill at Northcote Farms in Virginia. Bruce continued to work for Hill at Champion Farms, Bidwell, Ohio, beginning in 1990. The operation later became Champion Hill.

Amie grew up on a dairy farm, but she had a love for the beef industry. One of five brothers and sisters, she was the only family member to show 4-H steers.

After the wedding, Amie joined Bruce at Champion Farms, where they worked together for 10 years. Today, the couple manages Angus cattle for Fairlane Farm,

Louisville, Ohio. Wayne Emerick owns the operation. Bruce and Amie also own their own Angus cattle under Stertzbach Cattle Co. and sell a few show steers in the fall.

"The way we run our operation, everybody needs to be pretty understanding, because it is a partnership. . . . Everybody just gets along, and you try to make it work," Bruce says. "There are no rules written or contracts. You just learn to sit down and talk about it and make things work."

Bruce and Amie both have

# More Than Love

The Stertzbach's love of and dedication to showing Angus cattle was rewarded with the Herdsman Award at the 2004 NWSS.

Story & photos by **Corinne Patterson**

**M**any good marriages find solid ground when a couple works together, picking up where one left off or handing over a task for the other to begin. It's that kind of harmony that Bruce and Amie Stertzbach have found in marriage and in fitting Angus cattle.

"We were tied nose to nose in Denver the year we met, and I just wanted to talk to him in the worst way. I don't know how to explain

it. There was an attraction about the cattle and how he kept them," Amie says of their first meeting at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo. "It's lasted and worked this long."

The two met in January, and eight months later they exchanged wedding vows. "It is one of those things that you know immediately," she continues. "I can honestly say that I believe in love at first sight, because it happened to me."

Bruce says he knew he'd found his match at that Denver meeting 15



► **Above:** Bruce and Amie are well-respected for their talents of working with cattle, says Paul Hill of Champion Hill, Bidwell, Ohio.

► **Right:** Amie grew up on a dairy farm but showed steers in 4-H. She says she always knew she wanted to be involved in showing in the beef industry.



gained many skills in raising, fitting and showing cattle. Some of the most well-respected herdsmen say the couple has a knack for working with cattle.

Brian Barragree, Beartooth Ranch, Columbus, Mont., worked with Bruce when he first got started and says Bruce knows his way around the clippers and cattle, as does Amie.

"There is probably nobody that works any harder at it or does a better job as far as the quality of the work they do on their cattle and the way they present them," Barragree says. "It's almost like [the cattle] are part of the family."

Hill says he has worked with Bruce in many capacities of the cattle business. They've worked cows, fitted cattle and halter-broke many calves to get ready to sell as show calves. During this time Hill came to respect Bruce.

"Bruce has been fitting cattle for a long, long time. If you were to ask ... who's the top fitter in the Angus business, Bruce Stertzbach would certainly be one of the top two or three," Hill says. "Anybody fitting cattle would say that when it comes to grooming cattle and getting them prepared ... nobody is better at it than Bruce and Amie Stertzbach."

Bruce and Amie put a lot of heart into the Angus breed, and Hill says that while Bruce has his strong convictions and opinions, raising and fitting cattle is a way of life for him.

"It's a way we support our family. It's not just a hobby," Bruce says of his role in the beef industry. "It is all we know, and it's the way we pay for everything and take care of our kids."

### It's about youth

When it boils down to it, Bruce and Amie love working with youth and those involved in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA).

"Part of their job was to work with youth and youth's families," Hill says of their role while employed at Champion Hill. "They have a good rapport with people, bringing them along and actually helping train young people and showing interest in them. They were very skilled in that because they genuinely like people."

Barragree agrees that the people aspect is important to Bruce and Amie. "They are always really good-natured, and they are always in an excellent mood, real upbeat kind of people."



► **Left:** Cade and Dillon both love showing cattle. They say they help their parents do chores and take care of the cattle while on the road and at home in Ohio.

► **Below:** Dillon exhibited at his first NJAS in July 2003 where he won junior champion female — division II. That same heifer won the ROV show at the NAILE in November.

Teaching is perhaps as much a calling for Amie as working with cattle.

"I absolutely love teaching a kid that may never have shown or may have shown for a couple of years but maybe didn't go about it the right way. I like when kids are coming out of the ring with smiles on their faces. It's rewarding," Amie says. "I take a lot of pride in junior kids who go out, and, even if they don't win their classes, they do the best job showing."

Dillon and Cade share their parents' love for Angus cattle and showing.

"Our boys are a big part of it, too," Amie says. "Dillon is old enough to show now. Actually, the little one thinks he is as old as the big one, but they help out quite a bit at the farm and here at shows, too. So they are kind of our little hired hands."

The Stertzbachs strongly believe in the NJAA and say there isn't a better way for them to bring up their family than being involved in the program.

"I think that motivates us some. My kids have seen the world already, while other kids their ages don't get to," Bruce says. "If it wasn't for the cattle business ... we wouldn't be able to take them all these places."

The family can be on the road as much as 150 days per year. While it can be a challenge, the boys embrace the opportunity and say they enjoy helping their parents.

"It's funny — when you leave the show you're tired and you know it's been a long week. But the next thing usually out of the boys' mouths, or even ours, is, 'Can't wait for the next show,' or 'Where's the next one?' They're just as ready to head to the next one as we are," Amie says.

The family has established a comfortable trust with the breeders in the barn. It allows Bruce and Amie to get things done while at the show, knowing that the boys can be near the stalls watching things and be safe themselves.

"It's a comfort zone you have around the rest of the fellow breeders or competitors," Amie says. "They are all friends, and you don't ever worry. You all help each other out and watch out for things."



### What's in store?

The family has seen recent success with their cattle. Dillon exhibited the junior champion female — division II at the 2003 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Louisville, Ky. He returned to Louisville in the fall to exhibit that same female at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) and won grand champion female at the Super-Point Roll of Victory (ROV) show.

"I was really tickled, and there probably wasn't anybody happier than they were when they won the heifer show in Louisville this last fall," Barragree says.

The Stertzbach family says their future remains in the beef industry, and maybe some day they will have an operation of their own.

"We are not there, but we are working at it," Bruce says of running his own place. "In another 10 years, I hope it is just us and our kids."

Bruce says he admires the Angus operations that have been in the business for 100 years. "I respect that. That would be great 100 years from now to know that there were still Stertzbachs running an Angus operation," he says. "I don't know if that is a goal; maybe it's a dream. It would be great to [reach that point], and they all had to start somewhere."

For now, Bruce and Amie say they respect their fellow herdsmen and were honored to receive the Herdsman Award at the NWSS.

"We have a lot of respect for everybody out there," Bruce says. "When you compete with people, obviously at times things get a little heated. But when it is all over, people are still friends. We consider all those people out there friends of ours."

