



PHOTO COURTESY OF NELSON ANGUS RANCH

► **Left:** On their way back to Idaho from Louisville, Ky., the Herbst family (from left, Darren, Brian, Rachel, Jared, Janna and Steve) stops at Saint Joseph, Mo., to tour the American Angus Association headquarters. The Herbsts take pride in raising Angus cattle.

Traditions Run Deep

In a small Idaho town with deep roots in family ranching, one family makes its stake in the National Junior Angus Association.

by *Cara Bieroth*

Deep in the mountains of central Idaho, along the Salmon River, lies the small rural community of Salmon, which encompasses just more than 3,100 residents. Bighorn sheep, mountain goats, elk, deer, mountain lions and Angus cattle live in the hills surrounding the city. The area is known as the white-water capital of the world and is said to be the gateway to some of the last wild river systems in America. The Salmon Chamber of Commerce boasts of the city's scenic beauty, rich history and strong

traditions in mining, lumbering and family ranching.

A true testament to the ranching and family traditions of the area, Janna Herbst is raising her children on her family's third-generation Angus ranch, making sure they have the same opportunities to learn and mature that she had growing up in the Angus business.

Janna grew up in these mountains, taking a very active role in the ranching life and also taking pride in showing her cattle and

participating in the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). In 1980 she served as a delegate, the first year NJAA Board members were elected. One of her proudest moments was in 1984, at 21 years old, winning champion bred-and-owned heifer during her final NJAS.

"To go out as a junior with the champion bred-and-owned heifer is an all-time high for me," she says.

Janna's family has always had strong family ties. Now she, husband Steve; daughter Rachel; and sons Darren, Brian and Jared live and work on the Nelson Angus Ranch with Janna's father and mother, Clyde and Ruby Nelson. They even live in the same house in which Janna grew up.

Family partnership

"We are all together; it's just one big family operation," she says. Janna and Steve bought land adjacent to her parents' place when they were married, but they have since combined it to manage as one. All irrigation systems run together, and all farmland is managed together. "My dad and Steve work side-by-side on a daily basis to work cows and make breeding decisions. But I think my dad still outworks us two-to-one. He is early-to-bed and early-to-rise. Dad still bales all of the hay, and he is out to check the water before we are out of bed."

It helps Janna and her family tremendously to have her parents' help on the ranch.

If her father had his choice, Janna says, he would travel to shows to watch his grandkids participate in the activity that he loves best. "But the difficulty of family operations is that everyone wants to be in the same place at the same time, so he stays home, making sure that the haying and the irrigating are getting done on our behalf, too," she says.

Ruby is actively involved as well, stepping in and helping wherever she can to make sure everyone gets ready for the shows. "My parents are both very supportive of our kids," Janna says. "They are both so proud of them."

Steve grew up on a dairy farm, and, Janna says, "he swore he'd never be around another cow again when he left the home



dairy.” He loved agriculture, though, and its way of life. He had strong interests in land, soils and cropping, which led to his graduation from the farm crops department at Ricks College [now Brigham Young University (BYU)-Idaho] in 1984 and the opportunity to come to Salmon to the family ranch.

This diversity has made for a good situation, Janna says, because her father has helped guide Steve with his experience and knowledge of Angus cows. Steve didn’t grow up showing cattle, so he has had to learn how to clip and fit. He now has a good basis on both ends — caring for the land and for the animals.

Pride in ownership

Both Steve and Clyde have an eye for good cattle, Janna says, which makes for a good program when they have the ability to select the winners. The Herbsts pride themselves on raising their own show cattle. Their show string comes from their seedstock, a tradition since Janna was in the NJAA.

“I can remember getting beat a lot in the showing,” Janna says, “and my father saying, ‘Well, we are not going to change our program because of one man’s opinion on one particular day; and we never have.’” The family is committed to breeding cattle that they believe in. They are progressive, but don’t accept every trend that comes along.

Once her children began to show interest in showing, Janna called upon her own experiences to help them discover what she had enjoyed — a career in the NJAA and the NJAS.

“It is pretty easy to encourage their involvement when that is how you make



PHOTO BY CARA BIEROTH

► Darren and Rachel participate in the team sales contest at the 2003 NJAS in Louisville.

your living. Angus cattle are what we are around day in and day out,” Janna says. “We waited until the kids began to show interest instead of pushing them when they were young and burning them out.”

NJAS tradition

Camaraderie, meeting and learning from great people, and the education that her kids can get through their involvement are the main reasons Janna feels so passionately about their exposure to the NJAS.

While a show does present a competitive atmosphere, the people involved act as one large family, Janna says. “It’s really wonderful to learn about agriculture, especially the Angus industry and the beef industry and how they fit into

society and our lives. Being agriculture-based is of great value to my kids. It’s our lifestyle, so I hope that is what they get out of it.”

Janna says the whole family learns about different areas of the country, different farming methods and diversity of agriculture itself. “There are lots of places we haven’t been where they are raising good Angus cattle in a different

way, in a different atmosphere and environment, so to get a chance to see that is good for all of us.”

The Herbsts attended their first NJAS as a family in 2001 in Denver, Colo. “My children’s eyes were opened to what was

out there and to some of the opportunities that were available to them,” Janna says. “They are continually developing interest in the different contests, such as public speaking, team sales and

photography. The more they are exposed to these things, the more involved they want to become. It is so motivating for them, and it really increases their interest in working with the cattle and trying to learn more about the product we are producing.”

After leaving the 2003 NJAS in Louisville, Ky., the Herbst family began to make plans to attend the 2004 NJAS in Kansas City, Mo. Darren returned home from the show with the inspiration and the drive to improve, to work harder and to do better, Janna says. It invoked a little competitiveness in her child who, up until that point, had been the least competitive of the four. One day, not long after their return, Steve went down to the corrals to see what the kids were doing, only to find them trying to halter-break some calves.

“They had gotten in three calves that had hardly even been touched, but there they were, at the end of the rope with the calves running hard,” Janna chuckles. “They said they were getting ready for next year.”

The family is committed to breeding cattle that they believe in. They are progressive, but don’t accept every trend that comes along.



► Janna (Nelson) Herbst won the champion bred-and-owned heifer at the 1984 NJAS in Columbus, Ohio. “The NJAA gave me so many opportunities to learn and to travel. I want my kids to have that, too,” she says.

