

Beyond the White Fence

By Jill Meador

Imagine a white picket fence lining a county road. Beyond the fence black cattle graze the green pastures of Hutson Angus Farms. Bert Hutson has had a front row seat to this view off his back porch for almost five decades.

In 1975, the land, now home to more than 3,000 cattle at any given time, was once just a small barn and a farmhouse. Huston, owner and founder of Hutson Angus Farms, bought the farm with the intention of raising beef cattle, he says, but his passion for cattle started in a dairy barn.

“I was raised on a dairy farm in Canute, Oklahoma,” Hutson says. “My dad started milking cows in ’48, and we didn’t even have electricity until 1952.”

Hutson, the oldest of five children, recalls getting up early on winter mornings and fighting over who would get to stand in front of the coal-fueled heater before going out to do chores.

Bert Hutson married Sue in the fall of 1964, and they raised two children along with exploring all sorts of new interests, he says.

“We ended up having to sell my dad’s dairy cows after they came down with udder fever, and around the same time, I had started driving trucks for various jobs,” Bert says.

In addition to driving trucks at night, Hutson bought a service station and managed it until an unfortunate robbery incident, he says. He struggled to hire anyone after the incident, he adds.

In the early 1970s, Hutson worked on the construction of the Elk Lake dam, hauled mud to oil rig sites, and baled hay for just about anyone.

“In ’71, I kicked the hay off the trailer and started hauling mud,” Bert says. “Fifty-four years later, I’m still hauling mud.

“When we bought the farm in April of 1975, we plowed and planted for hay, but we had to find a way to pay for it,” he says.

In 1976, when the oilfield began booming, hauling mud provided a great source of income for the farm, he adds.

“While Bert was off working his many jobs, the kids and I worked around the farm,” Sue Hutson says. “We just made our own way out here [on the farm].”

Sue Hutson grew up in Elk City, Oklahoma, and attended beauty school in Clinton, Oklahoma. Although her passion is not as much in the farm’s operations, she enjoys the calving season and caring for all the new babies each year, she says.

“We had a couple of pigs when we started the farm,” Sue Hutson says. “The pigs were fine, but the cattle industry is what Bert wanted most.”

Bert Hutson started his cattle herd with about 10 head of Limousin, and within a couple of years, the herd size tripled. The Limousin herd did not start with all black cattle, but later Bert Hutson began producing black Limousin bulls.

“We ended up with some of the best black Limousin bulls in the country,” Bert Huston says. “My daughter, Angie, showed some of those Limousin bulls and placed really well at most shows.”

Bert Hutson recalls his future changing when he went to Mill Creek, Oklahoma, on a warm summer day in June 1998.

“My son, Johnny, and I went down to a sale,” Bert Hutson says. “It was called Birch Angus Ranch, and Mr. Birch had been with the Angus breed for 63 years.”

“When we got to the red sale barn, you could not tell the cattle apart from each other,” Bert Hutson adds. “They were the pure Aberdeen Angus cows and had not been crossed up with other breeds.”

Bert Hutson planned on only buying a couple of the Angus cows to bring home and start his Angus herd, he says.

“Bert and Johnny went down there and came back with two semi-loads of Angus cattle,” Sue Hutson says.

Hutson’s main interest with adding Angus cattle to his herd was because of the genetic research and information the American Angus Association could offer him, he says.

“Watching the cattle industry and the way it was going, Angus was gaining and specifically the purebred Angus,” Bert Hutson says. “The Limousins were great, but they were pretty high-strung and would run clear to the back fence when you drove up.”

The industry was leaning toward cattle with higher docility and marbling ability, Bert Huston adds, and Angus had those genetics.

“The Angus cows are where the true advantage lies,” Zach Long says. “The cow families hold more value to me than just the sire because there’s more history to the cow family than a one-shop sire.”

Long, Hutson Angus Farms herd manager and an Oklahoma State University alumnus, was involved in Oklahoma Beef Inc. where the university participated in feed efficiency research.

“We would take consigner bulls and measure their weight daily, but we really couldn’t tell you anything other than how much they gained,” Long says. “The feed efficiency test is

based off a high roughage ration, so it correlates to the pasture and gives us way more information about an animal's gaining ability."

The system Bert Hutson has in place is called Grow Safe. Each feed box has a scale inside it, and each calf has an electronic identification ear tag. Every time the calf lowers its head into the box to eat, the ear tag records the weight of the feed ration into a database in milliseconds. Then, when the calf goes to get a drink of water, it stands on a second scale measuring the calf's weight.

"Bert is ahead of the game by miles," Long says. "We get more and more customers each year, and they want to select bulls that are more apt to produce feed efficient offspring.

"Bert stuck with things when most guys would not have," Long adds. "He has played the long game and succeeded exceptionally because of it."

The white picket fence, which was built in 1987, still looks the same as it did the day it was brought to Hutson Angus Farms, Bert says. Even after traveling across the country in a truck and the many jobs Bert Hutson pursued, western Oklahoma always brought him back home, he adds.

"If I didn't live here, I would want to move here," Hutson says.