

## Rustlers

(Continued from Page B2)

the state's Department of Agriculture's "hotline", to alert officials and determine what auctions in the area would be likely places to search.

By Thursday evening, Baker and a neighbor had traveled to four Pennsylvania livestock sales barns, and gotten what he termed "excellent cooperation" from three of them.

But a fourth Lancaster sales facility, preparing for a dairy sale the next day, refused him admittance. Baker remembers vividly that the auction's representative appeared visibly nervous, lighting one cigarette after another as he argued about letting Baker and his friend into the building.

Returning to the same barn that night, a friend of Baker's simply walked in and looked over the cattle tied there. There was no sign of Betsy or Patches.

It was a rainy show day for the Baker family that Friday at the Timonium Maryland State Fair. As Baker went out the kitchen door to head for the fair, on a whim he picked up the two registry papers and stuffed them into his pocket, figuring the thief might return in search of the certificates.

Midday, as the Ayrshire judge prepared to pick a grand champion, fair officials came to Baker with word that his cattle probably had been found. Two animals matching the "hotline" description were being held at the Baltimore Livestock Exchange, known locally as the West Friendship auction, in Howard County.

Upon arriving at the auction, Baker was asked to identify all the markings on the cows, as proof of his ownership. Knowing that he could not have reproduced every marking on the two cows, Baker pulled from his pocket the two papers, which carried photographs of the animals.

Again, calls went out to the state police plus contact to both the Howard and Carroll counties' state attorneys.

That evening, a friend trucked the cattle back to the Baker farm. However, because the two cows were actually impounded state's evidence, Baker got them back only because the Humane Society had no facilities for milking the pair. He was told that, under no circumstances, could he dispose of either until the case was settled.

Both were, in Baker's words, "in bad shape," due to not having been milked for 48 hours. But, while the cows were now back home, there was still no sign of the missing calf.

Within several hours, Maryland state police arrested Calvin Ambrose at his job with the Baltimore Sun papers. Ambrose lived at a New Freedom RD farm, just a few miles from the Baker farm. An employee of the auction had recognized him when he unloaded the two cattle at the Howard County sales barn.

Baker learned that Am-

brose had kept a pet lion on the farm. He speculates that either the animal, or something with its scent, was perhaps used during the theft. He ties this possibility to the strange jumpiness of the dairy herd, to the calf remaining in the hutch which refused to come out and nurse until dragged out, and the farm dogs which hours after the robbery finally crept out of the barn on their bellies, seemingly frightened.

The Bakers also wonder if their baby calf may have gone for lion food. He adds quickly, of course, that it's sheer speculation and has never been proven.

Trial was scheduled for just before Christmas, 1979, at Carroll County circuit court in Westminster. But the legal proceedings were delayed, since Ambrose had checked himself into a Maryland State hospital.

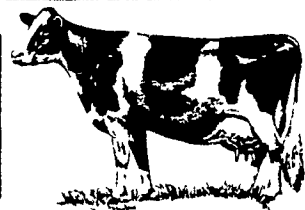
In April, the trial came up in the Westminster courthouse. Several witnesses were in the courtroom, ready to testify if necessary. Among them were state police, a representative of the ag department's "hotline", auction officials, and of course, Baker, armed with a sheet of registry papers, transfers and DHIA records.

Calvin Ambrose pled guilty to the charges.

He was ordered to reimburse the Baker's for all costs involved in the theft, including trucking, vet bills and the cost of the considerable lost production from Patches and Betsy.

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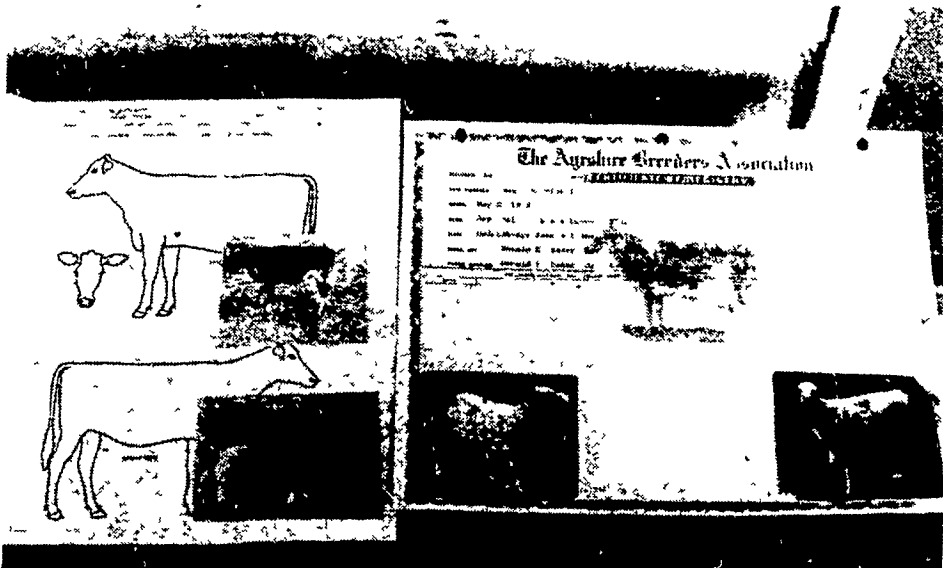
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