

# York County Shives are totally into Angus

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

**SEVEN VALLEYS** — Angus cows graze serenely across the hill behind the Gordon Shive family's rancher at Seven Valleys R1. Inside, dozens of bright ribbons - heavy on the shades of blue and purple line the walls of the dining room. And just down the road, at his parents' farmhouse, an attractive sign announces "Shives Angus Farm."

Gordon Shive, his wife Diane, and their three daughters, Chris, 17; Cathy, 12; and Robin, 10, are totally "into" Angus cattle. In fact, the activities of the Shives are so mingled with the purebred black beef that the state breed association named them the Angus family of the year, at the group's annual meeting during Farm Show week.

Shive grew up on the Dan Shive family's general farm, with its three milk cows, flock of chickens, steers and hogs. When he was 12 years old, Shive joined the 4-H program, raising steer and hog projects.

"Actually, I did better than showing Berkshire hogs," he remembers, adding that their daughters have done far better showing beef cattle than he did in his 4-H career.

He and Diane, daughter of a Hanover-area farm family, continued exhibiting hogs after the couple had married. Chris was just six weeks old when she traveled along for her first York Fair visit, while the Shives competed in the Berkshire show.

Gordon's father, Dan, found his interest in beef cattle growing; and he and his son many years ago together purchased a couple of purebred brood cows.

Dan Shive became a sort of "industry pioneer" back in 1964, when he was the first county beef producer to experiment with wintering his herd outside in the pastures, at the suggestion of the then-fledgling assistant extension agent Tony Dobrosky. The move

initially earned Shive raised eyebrows from neighbors and headlines in farm publications.

Grandpa Shive took his little granddaughter, Chris, along to a 4-H beef meeting one night, stirring her interest to the point that, just as soon as she was old enough, the youngster signed up as a member.

That first steer might have discouraged a less determined rookie. He never tamed down, but remained so jittery and wild that Chris finally exhibited a heifer instead, winning two small ribbons.

"I wasn't discouraged," Chris says. "I didn't know any better."

Today, all three of the Shive children "know better," as their dozens of ribbons and rosettes, won each year attest.

The family was the county's first to exhibit at the national junior Angus show, beginning in Louisville in 1977. Since then, they've attended other national junior exhibits in Indianapolis, Nashville, and Georgia, where in 1980, Chris' spirited brood cow, "Killer," was chosen reserve champion bred and owned heifer.

This past year's junior successes put Cathy in the spotlight, with SAF Queen Dolly 42, a heifer from one of Dan Shive's cows. She topped all heifers for the championship at the state junior breeders show at Centre Hall, won both the junior and open class at the York Fair, and wrapped up the year by winning the junior show at the Keystone International. At the Farm Show, Cathy was again a winner with the mediumweight champion steer.

Robin was out "helping" with the beef cattle when she could barely toddle around, and is considered by the family as their true "animal lover." They vividly recall the scares she gave them by calmly standing under the older girls' steers and playing near the legs one particular animal known for her quick feet.

During her second year of 4-H, Robin showed her showing mettle



Shive family conference is held to evaluate showing candidate. Looking over "Dixie," from the left, are Diane, Robin, Cathy, Chris and Gordon at halter.

by winning the champion middleweight honors at the annual Adams-York roundup this past November, while Chris copped the champion heavyweight and reserve grand ribbons the same day.

Now, the Shive family has added open class competition with the purchase of Clarimont Barbara 99C, an embryo-transplant heifer they call "E.T." Owned in partnership with Pleasant Valley Farms of Lebanon, Bill Holloway and Dr. Joe Calderzaao, the typey heifer is housed at the Shive's show beef barn, adjacent to their home on the farm.

Last year on the show circuit, "E.T." claimed numerous honors, including the open class heifer championship at the Keystone show, and summer and reserve grand champion at the Farm Show.

Plans are to flush and transplant embryos from "E.T.," possibly breeding her with some of the top young sires that have been winning at the Louisville and Denver national shows.

Having started at the bottom of the Angus show competition, the Shives agree that competition within the breed is getting "tougher each year."

To keep up with the constantly improving breed, calves selected for show must have good size, but be structurally correct. Purchased animals are generally selected at 10 to 12 months of age, and many of the bought 4-H animals in recent years have come from Rally Farms in New York.

Shive insists on femininity in heifers, plus a long, clean neck and a good stride.

Success with homebreds begins the moment they hit the ground. Each calf is weighed and measured, with follow-up measurements taken each month and added to individual records. At the seven-month weaning period, a first selection of potential show calves is made.

Each calf is tied and fed individually, with feed weighed carefully so that records will reflect gain efficiencies. From the initial dozen or so calves selected as show candidates, about eight usually emerge for top consideration as show season nears.

While tied, calves are brushed and worked with regularly so that they become accustomed to being handled. Brushing daily goes a long way toward overall fitting of the animal, which the Shives feel plays a large role in showing

success. Wetting down of the coat, as well as brushing, is added to the daily schedule over the summer.

Regular walking sessions teach halter obedience, plus muscle and condition show entries. A Shive daughter out walking her steer is a common sight in the rural neighborhood, especially just before major shows, then mile-long treks help polish steer finish.

While there are slower seasons between shows, beef breeding and exhibiting is definitely a year-round business.

"There's no real break any time," Chris admits. "We get new animals about October, while we're still working with the roundup and Farm Show entries. Then when those shows are over, it isn't very long until spring calving and preparation for the first shows!"

The Shives' herd presently includes 26 cows and calves, but spring calving will soon boost that total. Sires favored for use include "High Guy," the sire of the Denver show's champion bull and female, "Pine Drive Big Sky," and the popular "Ten," officially named "Rosebank Connection 69."

Peak of the breeding season falls in June, a month also busy with haying and hauling cattle to shows. Shive credits their high conception rates to his dad's spending "48 hours every day with the cattle," and the Atlantic technicians who handle all their AI work.

While the row of show banners, rosettes and ribbons has lengthened considerably over the past few years, this family's goal is to continue upgrading their herd.

"We still have some cows I'm not happy with," relates Shive. "We want the kind of cows that will throw calves with eye appeal, and that will both show and sell."

Individual cows are enrolled in the Angus Herd Improvement Registry (AHIR), an association

program which computes information on genetic potentials of mothering ability, based on weight and feed gain data.

Merchandising includes consigning to the Pennsylvania Angus sale, scheduled this year for March 9 at the Farm Show building. Their entry in this year's lineup of 90 head is a May heifer bred to "Big Sky." She was the reserve champion at last year's Pennsylvania Junior invitational show.

"It's a quality sale with a good reputation," Shive says of the sale that pulls in buyers from many surrounding states. He credits Lancaster extension agent Chet Huges, formerly with the State Angus association, with helping establish the high-quality consignment auction.

Junior members also use the sale as a fundraiser, auctioning off semen from some of the country's top bulls, donated by the sires' owners. Last year, the juniors earned \$5,000 toward their activities, and they're now working to accumulate a fund for hosting the Eastern Regional Junior show in 1985.

During 1983 Farm Show activities, Chris was named the state's Angus queen, spending many hours of the ensuing year promoting beef, speaking to various events and handing out ribbons. She was one of the key figures in working with the promotional events surround "J.D.," the record-setting York County Farm Show steer champion purchased by Art Glatfelter and then donated back to the county's youth.

A noted 4-H public speaker, Chris has won state honors for her speeches many of them focusing on beef or beef products, and on promotion. Cathy, too, is polishing her public speaking skills and won a blue ribbon at regional 4-H competition on her beef tattooing demonstration. Animal lover Robin exhibited her project independence by skipping public speaking and concentrating instead on hatching out baby chicks.

Angus-related activities fill a large part of the Shive's family time. Diane is treasurer of the state association, and Gordon serves as a director and advisor for the junior group.

And, while ribbons, rosettes and banners are fun to collect, what the Shive's value far more are the friends they have learned to know and fellowship they have shared through the Pennsylvania Angus Association.



Adding a few more Angus ribbons to the family collection are, from the left, Chris, Robin and Cathy Shive.



Both Gordon and Diane Shive are active in the Pa. Angus Association — he as a director and she as treasurer.

