

Every winter on a day in late January the northeastern Oklahoma community of Miami becomes the Cattle Capital of the beef industry. Cattlemen migrate toward Sunbeam Farm's annual achievement sale to bid (above) on pure-bred Aberdeen-Angus aristocrats.

A Sooner Special

Sam Fullerton: Cattleman

Since he was 14, the owner of Sunbeam farms has been building his herd of Aberdeen-Angus. Now the Sunbeam name has come to mean the finest in black cattle circles. The farms' latest sale topped \$300,000 mark.

By Bill Goodner, '52

Tension hovered around the sales pit. The bidding was coming in at a sizzling pace.

Cattlemen, hands thrust deep in pockets or anxiously twisting sales catalogues, clad in range coats with beaver collars, cowboy boots and hats, were vigorously puffing and chewing half-smoked cigars. The smoke crowded the ceiling.

The booming voice of the auctioneer was

keyed to the high strung atmosphere that crackled with excitement. The breaking point was near. Bidding stopped at \$35,100 for Blackcap Bessie 6th of the faubulous Sunbeam Farms of Miami. The big moment of the sale had been reached . . . and passed!

Bessie was a blue-blooded aristocratic heifer that set the livestock world talking last January. Unknown to Bessie, she had established the new world's sales record for

females of any beef breed for her owner Sam C. Fullerton, Jr., '24-'30, owner of the Sunbeam Farms.

It was a colorful throng that had arrived early for the sale, the cattlemen in their rough range coats; their wives draped in mink. Outside, the parking lot had taken on the appearance of a Cadillac convention. Inside, an estimated 13,000 people crowded around the sales ring. Bleachers were

crammed. Many spectators had to stretch their arches for a look at the blue-bloods. They came from all parts of the United States and several Canadian provinces to bid on the 60 head of stock offered for sale at the nationally famous Miami farms.

When the auctioneer had taken the last bid, the 60 lots of 20 bulls and 40 females had run up a total of \$334,605 for a sale average of \$5,592. It was the highest average for any registered beef cattle sale ever held in Oklahoma and one of the highest in the nation. The medium built man, whose ruddy features were crossed by quiet smile lines was "pleased with the sale."

From appearances it seemed that Sam Fullerton was no more concerned with the new record than his famous heifer. But that's how Sam is.

Sunbeam breeding has always commanded tall price tags. A Sunbeam animal has topped every national cattle sale held. The top bulls sold at auction during the past several years have been Sunbeam Bulls.

Blackcap Bessie 6th was purchased by R. L. Smith, Kansas City. Smith, owner of a herd of 225 Angus, has set many records before at Sunbeam sales. Ringside visitors recalled that at this same sale in 1946 he paid \$21,000 for a heifer which was then a world's record price for a female of any cattle breed.

Back in March 1944 at the National Angus sale in Chicago, Smith bought Prince Eric of Sunbeam for \$40,000. He later sold the bull and the new owner disposed of him when he was eight years old at a private treaty sale for \$100,000. The highest priced bull sold from the famous Sunbeam herd was Prince Sunbeam 249th sold privately to R. H. Schlesinger, Lake Forest, Illinois, for \$60,000. The two-year-old was named grand champion at the International Livestock Exposition the following year.

Sam started the sales in 1939 and continued until 1942. He started the sales again after the war. This year's was No. 12. Perhaps the greatest sale Sunbeam held was the one in 1946. A follower of cattle auctions said, "I doubt that the livestock world will ever see another sale like that one." It didn't for quite a while, but the cattle-man's observance hadn't allowed for inflation and higher prices of meat.

The 1946 sale smashed four world records for livestock prices paid at auction. Smith's purchase of the heifer for \$21,000 was the first record to topple. The 15 herd bulls sold for the grand soaring total of \$151,025, an average of \$10,233, was the second record established. The third new mark given the cattle industry to shoot at was the total sales figures for 50 animals—bulls and heifers—that brought the high total of \$281,450. At that time, this figure topped the overall take ever recorded at a

Ed's Note: This is the first article of a new Sooner Magazine feature. A Sooner Special will concern itself with things that are patently Southwestern. This month: An aspect of the cattle industry. Next month: Oil. April: Indian painting and painters. In every case the feature story will also spotlight an alumnus, student or faculty member. We hope you like the magazine's broadening scope.

cattle auction. The pure-bred enthusiasts, who keep their fingers glued on such things, said the average of \$3,607 paid for the heifers set another world record. When the 1946 auction closed, the Sunbeam farms, as holder of four world records, gained lasting recognition as the greatest producer of Aberdeen-Angus cattle.

Each year cattle fanciers, who follow purebred Aberdeen-Angus to market, circle their calendars in late January for the annual Sunbeam Achievement Sale. Just before the sale they descend on the northeastern Oklahoma community faster than movie stars to Reno hunting a bargain day on divorces. The hotels and tourist camps hang out the "no vacancy" signs two days before the sale. Miami's hospitable and all that, but a room's a room.

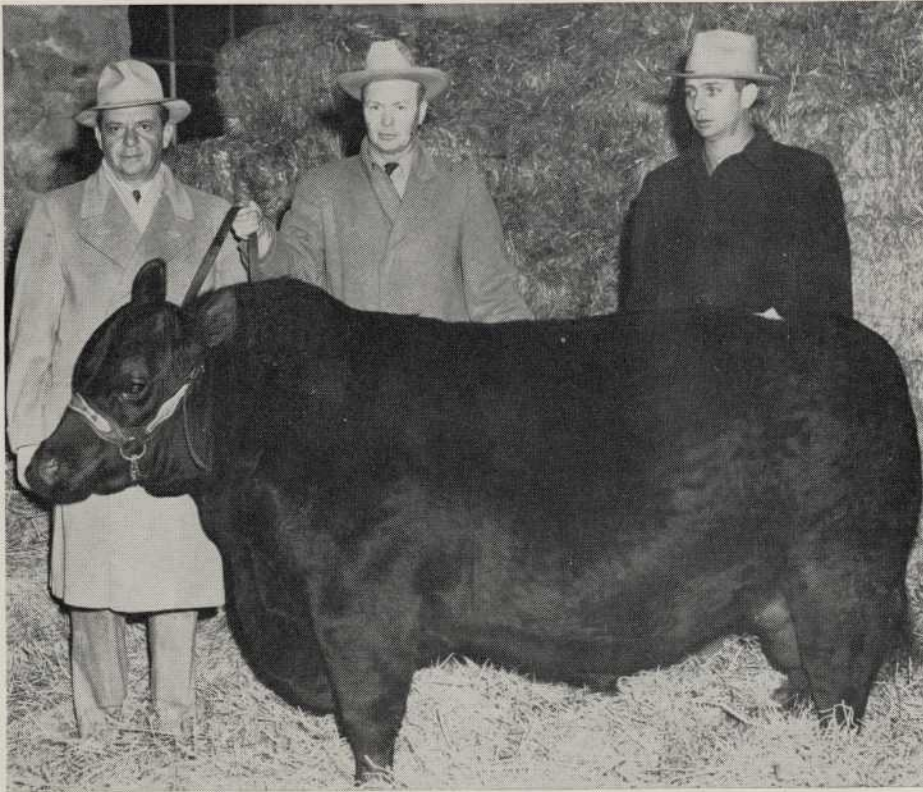
"Why there just ain't no place to go," said a courthouse lawn authority. "Them cattle breeders moved in and they come to stay—till after the sales over of course." The breeders of the black beauties consid-

er it their show, and they plug it. Just profane the occasion by a casual mention of "Herefords" or "White Face" cattle and the Angus enthusiasts will argue you out of your saddle and spurs that the black breed has 'em all topped.

Preceding each sale Mr. and Mrs. Fullerton entertain the livestock breeders and their wives at the Miami Country Club. Topping the occasion is a beef barbecue—Black Angus beef, naturally. Men and women widely known in the business world as well as the top brass of the Angus fraternity attend. Some of the sales have attracted such people as William G. Mennen, Newark, N. J., shaving cream manufacturer; Jack Solomon, New York City owner of the famous Gallagher Steak House; Edward Marcus, Dallas, executive vice president of Nieman-Marcus Co.; Lee D. Butler, Washington, D. C., vice president of Studebaker Corp.; Richard L. Smith, Kansas City lumberman; R. H. Schlesinger, Charlottesville, Virginia, Ingleride Farms



Sam Fullerton and his son, Sammy, look over some of the muley Black Angus cattle that lure cattle buyers the world over to the Sunbeam Farms at Miami. Much of the recent popularity of the Aberdeen-Angus breed can be attributed to Sunbeam Farm.



Prince Sunbeam 328th stands unconcerned, not aware that he brought his owner, Sam Fullerton (center) \$35,000 in the Sunbeam Farm's achievement sale in 1949. Dr. A. Hammer (on the left), founder of the Hammer Art Galleries, is the proud new owner.

owner, and Edward Jenkins, former vice president of General Motors Co. and owner of Redgate Farm, Milwood, Virginia.

While top prices and prizes are nothing new at Sunbeam, the herds rise to national prominence did not come overnight. Breeders who know their bloodlines, and in the cattle business "Blood Tells," also know they can rely on Fullerton's 35 years of experience with Angus. The story of Sam Fullerton, cattle breeder, is the story of Sunbeam.

"You could call this 'The Story of A Jersey Cow,'" said Sam, laughing, "Except that some of our competitors in other breeds might say that the Aberdeen-Angus were descendants of Jerseys."

In 1914, the late Judge S. C. Fullerton bred one of his Jersey cows that he was using as a family milk cow, to one of his neighbors purebred Aberdeen-Angus bulls. The result of the cross was a fine "muley black" heifer calf.

The Judge was so impressed with the calf as compared to the rest on the farm that he called his oldest son, Sam, Jr., aside and suggested that they buy some of those "Black polled Angus cattle." The following spring, Sam, Jr., was sent to the Oklahoma City Fat Stock Show. He was fourteen years old. His father had instructed him to buy one or two registered heifers, if he thought they were good enough and, of

course, worth the money. Sam, Jr., bought three. These were the first registered Aberdeen-Angus to set hoof on Sunbeam Farms. After buying some more cows they purchased their first herd bull. This was the start.

Sam, Jr., left the Sunbeam farms while he attended O.U. But in 1930 he returned from school, moved to the home east of

Miami, and in a short time Sunbeam cattle were walking the tanbark in the major shows.

An interesting story in connection with the development of Sunbeam concerned the purchase of the International Grand Champion cow, Barbara Rosemere 100th. Sam, Jr., and Judge Fullerton wanted to buy her. When the bidding passed the \$500 mark Judge Fullerton stated that he was through. However, Sam Jr., had made up his mind to take her home and bought her for \$860. The Judge told Sam, Jr., he was crazy. As the records testify, Sam Jr., knows his stock and the cow proved to be a good investment. Her first six calves were heifers. Three were sold at auction, one for \$1700, one for \$2,000 and the third for \$3,050.

"In producing cattle, we sometimes talk about the past a bit too much," said Sam. "But we try to remember the foundations of the past are a gauge only as they indicate the success of the present and future." Then he told of the influence of Sunbeam's greatest bull—Prince Sunbeam 29th. Often called the million dollar bull (because he sired stock that sold for over a million and a half) the 29th's show career came to an early end due to the war. The old 29th didn't win many grand championships, but he sired many worthy sons and numerous females who have produced outstanding calves with consistent regularity. Prince Sunbeam 29th did much to improve the breed. Perhaps, more than any other bull of his time, he captured the fancy of breed-

(Continued page 28)



The red-brick, white-trimmed house resting midst large elms east of Miami is the home of the Sam C. Fullertons. With barns and pasture lands close around the house, Mr. Fullerton is always near to his work—raising fine Aberdeen-Angus cattle.

The Black Breed's Best: Miami's Sunbeam Farms

ers throughout the land. Many times Sam was offered \$100,000 for the 29th, but the "Not for Sale" was always on him.

Sometimes people get an inferiority complex about the prices purebred cattle haul down. Especially since science has informed us that a human body is only worth \$1.52, allowing for inflation of money and depreciation of stock. How can a bull be worth so much? Fullerton has a ready answer. After Prince Eric was sold to Smith, two heifers sired by Eric sold for \$3,000 and \$5,000. Top bloodlines improve the stock and Smith wasn't wasting any time getting his money back. Sooner or later the descendants of a breeding bull find their way into the market and sell by the pound as beef on the hoof. The goal of the breeder is to produce cattle that will produce the choicest beef with the least quantity of feed in the shortest time. Recently a boy exhibited a steer that dressed out at 78.1 per cent in usable beef of fine quality. In the old trail herd days it took a top notch steer to dress out at 50 per cent after it had been on full feed for a long time.

Sam Jr. married Mrs. Fullerton, the former Ruth Swihart, '27-'30, in 1929. How does she take to the cattle business? Well

as Sam put it, "Mrs. Fullerton has been kept pretty busy raising four children."

Sammy the third, 20, now attending Princeton, is smitten with the cattle bug almost as bad as his dad. A good deal of his father's livestock knowledge has rubbed off on him. Barbara, 19, an attractive blonde, is a sophomore at the University. Judy, 7, and Bill, 4, are still a mite young to be advancing opinions on their dad's cattle business.

People well up on their agriculture and stock say that nobody in the country knows more about Angus cattle than Sam Fullerton. His operation methods also bring words of respect from those in the vicinity. Comments went like this:

"Sam knows his pastures and his feed."
"He runs his ranch in a practical way."
"Sunbeam isn't just a showplace or a rich man's hobby, but a well run outfit."

The only praise that Sam, Jr., will accept, without trying to water it down, was given by one of his many admirers in Ottawa county. A praise that Sunbeam stock strongly verifies—"Sam's quite a cattleman!"

Most would surmise that a man who had established as many world records in cattle raising as Sam Fullerton and whose cham-

pions have gathered purple ribbons in the major shows from coast to coast—enough purple ribbons to make a set of draperies—would just naturally be calloused to success. They would be wrong.

Sam's attitude towards his livestock laurels could be best explained by the well put remark of a farmer a few sections over from the Fullerton estate: "Sam's good and solid and he's friendly, but you won't hear him say much about his achievements."

The name Fullerton and Sunbeam are both synonymous and legendary in cattle circles. But Sam Fullerton hasn't let success go to his Stetson. His downtown Miami office is simply furnished with two desks—one for Sam's manager—a book case containing a set of the *American Aberdeen-Angus Herd Books* with four rolled-up purple ribbons on the middle shelf and a generous supply of *Western Livestock* and *Country Gentleman* magazines scattered along the window seat. The walls support pictures of the "Black Breed's best. Under one eye-catching color picture of a sleek short-legged animal, the caption reads: "Without the 29th—There would have been no Master."

During the interview an old gentleman with a cane entered the office and congratulated Sam on the recent sale and said:

"If I had any of them black colored cattle, Sam, I'd turn 'em over to you and let you fatten 'em up for me."

Sam thought a moment, grinned a bit and replied, "I might not do too good at it."

Chuckling as he left the office, the old fellow piped back, "Well in that case, Sam, I guess I'd just have to take a chance on you."



An air picture of the Sam Fullerton estate shows the barns and grounds that lie to the east of Miami. From this farm have come the nation's tops in the Black Angus cattle breeding business that consistently has commanded championships and tall price tags.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE
ONLINE DUE TO COPY-
RIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this
issue is available at
call number LH 1 .06S6
in Bizzell Memorial
Library.