

# Schiefelbein Farms

## From humble beginnings to beef industry leaders and innovators

By Erin Donnay, Staff Writer

Frank Schiefelbein Senior worked for an oil company based out of the Twin Cities metro area, and he enjoyed fishing. He found a cottage for sale near Kimball. However, the family would not sell the cottage on its own, thus the farm was included in the sale. Frank Senior bought the 170-acre farm located on the East side of Lake Betsy.

Frank Senior brought his family, wife Lucille and sons Frank Junior, John, and Charles, up to the lake throughout the summer. Frank Junior was not interested in fishing or hunting. A local farmer suggested that he come and work for him when he came up to the lake. Frank Junior worked for the local farmer, which continued on throughout his high school years, gaining more responsibility each year, and earning him the nickname, "Farmer Frank."



Frank Junior and Frosty Schiefelbein began raising purebred Angus cattle in 1955. This year marks the 31st annual Bull and Female Sale. In 2021, Frank Junior was inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation for his lifetime contribution to the cattle industry.

### Humble beginnings

Frank Junior met Donna Mae at a party. He knew on that night that he had met the woman he was going to marry. The only problem was that she came to the party as the date of one of his best friends. When Frank Junior asked his friend about her, he told Frank that he could date her because she was so "frosty." From that time forward, Donna would become known by her nickname, "Frosty."

Frank Junior earned bachelor's degrees in mathematics and science from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Frank Junior and Frosty married on Aug. 22, 1953. Frank Junior served two years in the U.S. Air Force. His duty ended in January 1955. Frank Junior, Frosty, and newborn Frank III traveled straight from his Air Force assignment to the farm on Lake Betsy.

The farmyard was buried under about two feet of snow. They had to trudge through the snow for the length of the driveway. Nobody had been in the farmhouse for about three years. The house did not have insulation, heat, or running water. The house was empty except for a 5-gallon pail left in the middle of the living room. Frank Junior excitedly explored the old desolate farmhouse and imagined all of the possibilities. He returned to the living room to find Frosty, sitting on the pail, holding baby Frank III, and crying about the condition of the house and their new lifestyle. However, the pair rolled up their sleeves, and the two Twin Cities natives began to work on improving the farm.



A photo of the Schiefelbein family from the early years (around 1976). Pictured in the front row, left to right, are Dan, Don, Frosty, Frank Junior, Mike, and Tim; in back are Rick, Bob, Tom, Bill, Frank III and his wife Cathy.



Potential bidders fill the Schiefelbein sale barn to capacity at auction time.

Frank Junior and Frosty updated the farm as they expanded their family. They would be blessed with nine boys: Frank III, Rick, Bill, Bob, Tom, Mike, Don, Tim, and Dan. Each son was encouraged to attend a different agricultural college so he could bring new ideas back to the farm.

### Industry ingenuity

The Schiefelbeins began raising purebred angus on their farm. "I knew that, if I was to have a good product, it had to be good every time. It had to be the same size," said Frank Junior.

Bob said, "Our genetics are everything for our customers, and we really take a lot of pride in having the type of genetics that we think will make them money. That is our main model."

Each year, they breed 1,200 females, producing about 500 bulls annually. The bulls are sold into about 15 states and internationally each year at their bull sale.

"Our customers purchase the bulls, create feeder cattle, and we help work with them to take those feeder cattle and get the most possible dollars we can for the customer," said Tim.

He adds, "One thing about our program when we started selling bulls from the get-go, it was never going to be a program where we sell you a bull and 'see you next year.' It is a program where, when we sell a bull, we work with our customers throughout the entire year."

When the Angus Association began keeping records, Frank Junior had more than 10,000 records already on carcass data he gathered while working with Iowa Beef Processors, based out of Luverne, Minn., since 1978. Today,



The success of the annual Schiefelbein Bull Sale is the result of family members working together.

Schiefelbein Farms collects carcass data on more than 3,500 head of cattle each year.

Schiefelbein Farms was an integral part of the beef industry's meat grading system since they had been working with all of the big meat packers. Frank Junior convinced buyers that, instead of paying the same price for all of the beef, they should vary the price according to how good each is. Tim came up with the concept of value-based grids while working for Monfort (a leading meat company based out of Colorado), when they were looking for a buying system that would reward or discount producers based on their cattle.

Tim said, "It's a model where everybody wins. There is value for each segment within the industry." Once the



A view of the bulls for sale as customers start arriving at the Schiefelbein farm.



Don Schiefelbein was recently elected as the 2022 President of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. He was the 2019-2020 President and Chairman of the Board of the American Angus Association.

other meat packers found out Monfort was doing this system, they began to follow it as well. This system rewards the entire beef industry.

There are 20 traits are sought after for every animal. Frank IV said, "The main traits to focus on are calving ease and birth weight. You will want good growth traits. With our buy-back program and feeding out our calves, we also focus on those carcass traits."

Dan adds, "We are not going for extremes. We're going for moderation for all these traits so we don't lose a particular trait that's important." There is even an animal disposition score.

"The buy-back program adds value to the feeder calves when our customers are ready to sell them. When they have produced these calves, we are there to help market those calves, either with Superior Livestock, or by buying them ourselves. They go into our feedlot or other commercial feedlots across the country. Then they are sold on the value-based grid," Tim said.

Making money for their customers is their number-one goal. To assist with that goal, a slat barn to house about 2,500 calves was expanded in 2011. Schiefelbeins purchase 30,000 customer calves annually.

### Bull and Female Sale

Each year, the Schiefelbeins host their Bull and Female Sale. Customers from across the United States and internationally attend and bid on their cattle. This year marks the 31st year of their sale. The sale is held at Schiefelbein Farms, just south of Kimball. This year more than 400 bulls will be auctioned off, along with 40 bred heifers. Execution of a successful sale requires family members pitching in and working together. This year's sale will be held on Saturday, Feb. 19. However, many of the auction festivities, including farm tours, speakers, vendors, and meals begin on Feb. 18.

### Industry recognition

Don was the 2019-2020 President and Chairman of the Board of the American Angus Association.

In 2021, Frank Junior was inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation for his lifetime contribution to the cattle industry.

Don was elected as the 2022 President of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

### Future generations

In addition to Frank Junior and Frosty, eight sons and five grandsons work on the farm. Each of them has their own specialty and tasks to accomplish. They have worked to make Schiefelbein Farms the largest registered angus operation in Minnesota, and the

37th largest seedstock operation out of all breeds. They farm 5,600 acres in the Kimball area.

The size of their family has grown to more than 90 descendants – with more expected to arrive in 2022. Having their sons and grandchildren coming back to the operation is their dream come true for Frank Junior and Frosty. And they want the farm to be safe for all of the family members, including grandchildren.

"I love seeing them all work together like they do. Now that their kids are in it, they are really dedicated to this whole thing," said Frosty.

Frank Junior adds, "Basically, our enjoyment is the kids."

He said, "I had this idea that we were going to have the best cattle in the world." Frank Junior adds that it all started because, "I just loved farming."

Check out the Schiefelbein Farm Facebook page for the 2022 sales catalogue, and for information on a live-stream of the big annual auction on Feb. 19.

### Farm Responsibilities

**Frank Junior** - driving around the farm, running errands, and accounting for the feeding program.

**Frank III (son)** - managing feeder cattle.

**Rick (son)** - managing the cow herd and capital purchases.

**Bob (son)** - managing day to day activities and overseeing crop program.

**Tom (son)** - chief mechanic and hauling corn and wet cake in his Kenworth.

**Mike (son)** - marketing grains and delivering them in his Peterbilt.

**Don (son)** - overseeing the finances and managing farm promotion.

**Tim (son)** - overseeing the buy back program and managing customer relations.

**Dan (son)** - overseeing the seedstock cattle program.

**Frank IV (grandson)** - managing embryo transfer program and assisting Dan with seedstock program.

**Sam (grandson)** - diesel mechanic and feeding cattle in the slat barn.

**Travis (grandson)** - assisting with buy back program and order buyer for Superior Livestock.

**Austin (grandson)** - feeding and overseeing the backgrounding yard and assisting Bob with crops.

**Zack (grandson)** - welding, tire management, oil maintenance, and fabrication.

The Schiefelbein farm is completely owned and operated by family members. Each of the sons and grandsons involved in the operation have their own specialty and tasks to accomplish.



The most recent attempt of a Schiefelbein family photo at a wedding. Today, the family has grown to more than 90 descendants.