

Woodpile Ranch: Producing Quality Angus Cattle

by: LeAnne Peters

ANGUS

James and Dolores Townsend's registered Angus operation located in east Mississippi near the small town of Union may very well be one of the best kept Angus secrets in Mississippi.

Operating under the name of Woodpile Ranch, the Townsends, in a short amount of time, have created a herd of quality Angus cattle.

James grew up in Mississippi until the age of 16 when his family moved to Chicago. He and his wife Dolores lived there for many years but gradually they began to grow tired of city life and started looking for land in Mississippi.

"Here I was in a high rise apartment in Chicago, looking at a Mississippi Market Bulletin trying to find land," stated James with a laugh.

After searching for several years, James and Dolores found the land they were looking for, but it took them 5 years to finally make the decision to purchase the farm. "When we bought the place, it had been laying idle for 20 years," says

Dolores. "There was just enough room to pull your car off the road and then you had to walk in because of all the undergrowth."

The 200 acre farm was once worked in cotton by sharecroppers, but time and lack of care had taken its toll. The Townsends

immediately set about clearing, fencing and improving the grasses on the Newton County land. As the herd grew, 150 acres of rented land was added to the operation.

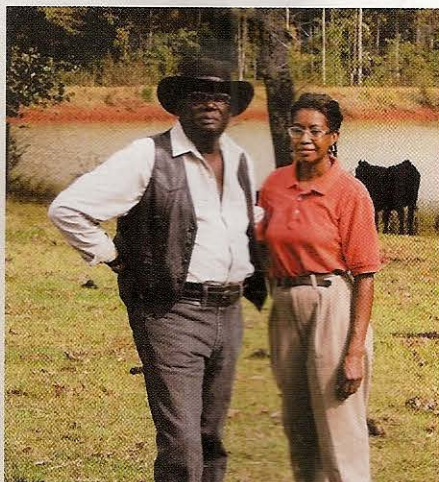
The first cattle that the Townsends purchased were commercial.



They went several years with the commercial herd without obtaining satisfactory results.

A decision was made to switch to a purebred operation. After researching various cattle breeds, talking with agents from Mississippi State University Extension Service and other cattle producers, they decided on Angus cattle.

"We started going to sales in Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas; reading and studying Angus publications on EPD's, bull selection, heifer selection and asked tons of questions" stated James. "We talked to Mississippi State about cattle pedigrees and we learned a lot from the Gardiner



James and Dolores Townsend principles of Woodpile Angus Ranch.