

# It's a Family Affair



amily. That's what Clarahan Farms in Harper, Iowa, is all about. It started in 1973 as Kenneth M Clarahan & Sons, which included Dennis, his younger brothers Dan, and their father, Kenneth. Today the operation is working with the

next generation and consists of Dennis and his wife Sheryl, and their sons Ryan and Neil and their families. Ryan handles most of the livestock end of the operation and Neil takes care of the farming end of the operation, making for a perfect mix. Clarahan Farms runs 275 head of Chi cows and also farms 750 acres of corn, soybeans and sudex for cattle feed. Ryan and Neil also operate Rockin C Feeders, where they run between 75 to 125 commercial cows depending on pasture availability.

From the early beginning with his father and brothers, Dennis always had a lot of input on the breeding decisions of the operation and once they tried the Chi cattle, they knew there was no looking back. "I saw a few Chi cattle around in shows and appreciated the growth in them. While the growth in the cattle got us started, from there we found the vigor in



*RDD New Direction 1436R 2CA –  
Herdsire at Clarahan Farms.*

## *The Family:*

*Dennis & Sheryl - married  
37 years*

*Ryan & Michelle (a regis-  
tered nurse)*

- Heidi, 9 years old*
- Jack, 7 years old*
- Reagan, 4 years old*

*Neil & Donita (high school  
teacher)*

- Patrick, 8 years old*
- Nicole, 6 years old*
- Kimberly, 5 years old*
- Madison, 2 years old*

the newborn calves to get up and go nurse right away was second to none," Dennis said. They started keeping back replacement females and found the longevity was outstanding and that udder quality of the females, even at 10 to 12 years of age, was better than most other breeds at younger ages.

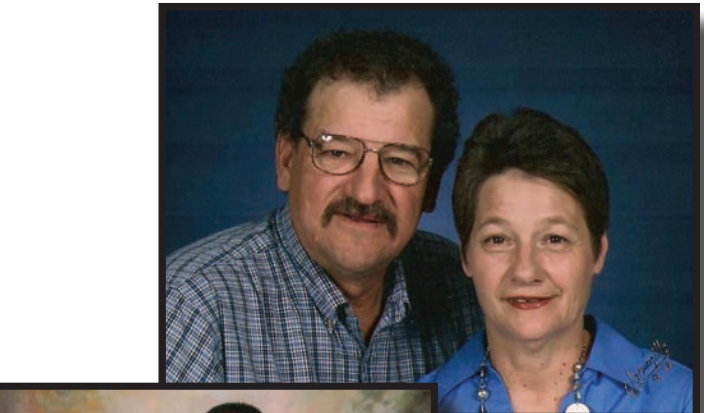
Raising quality cattle has been a passion for Dennis since the beginning and having cattle that have the growth, ribeye, IMF and backfat to have an ideal carcass, while also being structurally sound is a main focus for Clarahan Farms. They have chosen for these qualities for years and it shows in their cattle. "In 2006 we sold the first load of home raised Chi cattle and they made 92% Choice, 6 Prime, 60% Yield Grade 1&2 and 13 qualified for CAB," said Dennis. "Our record in the ACA Beef Derby has also shown the quality of cattle we are able to raise." And the information Dennis has garnered from the Beef Derby has been beneficial, showing that the feed efficiency in the Chi cattle is hard to beat and the carcass quality is second to none.

"Chi cattle are made for the feedlot," says Dennis. "The Beef Derby at Decatur County Feedyard in Kansas has proven the feed efficiencies of the Chi cattle, and this along with the growth and the ability to produce a lean edible product without giving up marbling and tenderness in the finished product is amazing. Now we just have to get the rest of the beef industry to figure out what we as producers already know."

The marketing aspect of Clarahan Farms has changed over the past few years. Prior to 2008 they fed around 1,000 head of cattle for harvest each year, but due to the lack of competition on fed cattle in their area, they switched to backgrounding cattle. The downside to this is they don't get the carcass information they used to on their cattle. However, last year they ultrasounded their Chi sale bulls and replacement females and the results were outstanding, again proving Chi cattle perform in the real world.

"Upon review of the data, this is one of the best raw data sets that I have seen on Chiangus cattle," said Ed Miller, former ACA Director of Marketing and current ACA board member. "When one considers the age of these cattle and the limited calorie diet that they were on, the marbling was tremendous with minimal backfat. The ribeye area measurements were well above industry standards and as good as I have seen for any breed."

Dennis believes the future looks bright for Clarahan Farms and the Chi breed. "The consumer, the retailer, the packer, the feedlot and the cow/calf man are all starting to see the light in the lean beef the Chi cattle produce. My



*Above: Dennis & Sheryl*



*Left: Reagan, Michelle, Heidi, Ryan & Jack*

*Below: Nicole, Patrick, Kimberly, Donita, Neil & Madison*



*WRL Tracken Norman PCA – 2-Time National Champion Chiangus Bull & Herdsire at Clarahan Farms*

biggest concern is when they finally all figure it out that we as Chi breeders have enough bulls to cover demand. What a great problem to have!"