When Jane and Jim Green of Clark, South Dakota, married back in 1982, they were establishing a family that would remarkably mirror the eventual development of their two-breed cowherd.

“We are a blended family. I had been divorced and had two girls: Anne Jo, 14, and Amy, who was 10. Jim had lost his first wife in childbirth, and had a daughter, Vicki, also 10, and a son, Brian, 8,” Jane volunteered. “I had a herd of 25 registered Angus cows and told Jim that I wasn’t going to marry him unless I could bring my cows along,” she laughed.

Jim had concentrated on commercial cattle before their marriage. “I had a little bit of everything before turning to Simmental. I had real good luck with them and have really enjoyed the breed. I’d added a few registered Simmental cows to my herd and Jane convinced me that I should join the Association and get the papers on those cattle. I signed up the same year we got married,” he explained.

Jim was raised on a family farm, located right next door to their present farm, and has been in agriculture for his entire life, except for a two-year hitch in the US Army and a brief period when he worked in road construction.

After graduating from South Dakota State University on a Saturday in 1970, Jane began teaching the following Monday. A political science major, she taught primarily senior level English. Her 35-year teaching career ended in 2005, when she retired. Since that time, she has carved out a second career, capitalizing on her college minor in journal-
Improvement of their current herd, which includes 18 head that belong to Brian, dates back to February 27, 1982. “That’s the day when we spent $2,500 each on two Simmental bulls: MCLars 1N, a son of Mr. Clean; and Mr. Renz 50M, a son of the famed imported sire Renz,” she says. “That was a high price to pay for a bull in those days — both were red and white, but the Renz bull was polled. Then, Jim bought 20 cows and 20 heifers that originated with A.W. Spiry of Hecla. Those females, along with the two bulls formed the foundation of our Simmental herd. That’s what really got us going.”

The Greens continued to raise red and white spotted animals through the 1980s and realized that the market was rewarding black-hided cattle. Then, they began AIing to Black Max, a polled bull owned by former ASA Board President Jim Nickeson, a long-time, outspoken advocate of hornless cattle. “We’d tried some other black bulls, but it wasn’t until we used Black Max that we began to get the kind of results we were looking for,” Jim said.

Today, the Green cowherd numbers 115 head, a figure that includes 44 registered Angus cows, 53 registered Simmental and SimAngus™ females and Brian’s cows. “Jim and I like to maintain right around 100 head. We used to have more than that, but when corn went to $7, it caused a good portion of virgin prairie pasture to be plowed under, limiting our grazing options,” Jane added.

They’re moving in the direction of increasing SimAngus numbers. “Halfblood Simmental x Angus bulls are very good and they frequently outsell the straightbreds,” Jim remarked.

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Founded in 1886, the Willow Springs Ranch has been in the same family ever since. Situated in the arid and often harsh environment of far western Utah, the ranch is currently owned and operated by Don and Beth Anderson. Beth is the fifth generation to live and work on her family’s ranch, previously named the Bagley Ranch.

The ranch is located near the small town (population, including ranchers: 35) of Callao (pronounced Call-ay-oh), just a few miles from the Nevada State line. The nearest paved road is more than 35 miles away. It is 90 miles southeast to Delta, and 80 miles north to Wendover, Nevada. It’s also just south of the famed US Army Dugway Proving Ground and the Great Salt Lake Desert.

“We’re at 4,300 feet elevation, but don’t usually get a lot of snow or severe cold,” Don said. “Because we’re on the high desert, which is part of the Great Basin, our forage doesn’t have the same qualities of the higher mountain grasses of some other regions of the West. We don’t get quite the weaning weights that other ranchers often report. If our steer calves top 520 pounds at six months of age, we’re generally satisfied.”

The Callao area has a rich, Old West heritage. When settlers began to move to northern California, the relatively even terrain and widely scattered water sources became part of the migration route. “Our little oasis of Callao has a good supply of stream and ground water, so many of those groups made this a rest stop during the mid-1800s,” Anderson says.

“In 1857, the Overland Stage Company had a relay station located here, so their horses could be rested, fed and watered. Then in May of 1860, the Pony Express was founded, following the same route before making its final run in October of 1861. We have the original Pony Express station right here on our ranch, an old adobe and wood-framed building that we still use. We store some relics in there and also use it now and then when we cut up a beef,” he reported.

When the Bagley family founded the ranch, they primarily raised horses, including supplying mounts for the US Cavalry. When wild horse stallions and human thieves made that endeavor unprofitable, a switch was made to cattle.

“The earliest Bagley cattle were Hereford and at one time, they even had a herd of registered cows,” Anderson said. “The first few generations of Bagleys who ran the ranch stayed with Herefords, until Beth’s dad, David, began Alining with some of the first Simmental semen and continued that Simmental-Hereford cross-breeding program until the 1990’s, when he and Beth’s mom, Reuvo, decided to retire.”

Simmental genetics have a significant impact on the commercial breeding program of a remote, isolated Utah operation.