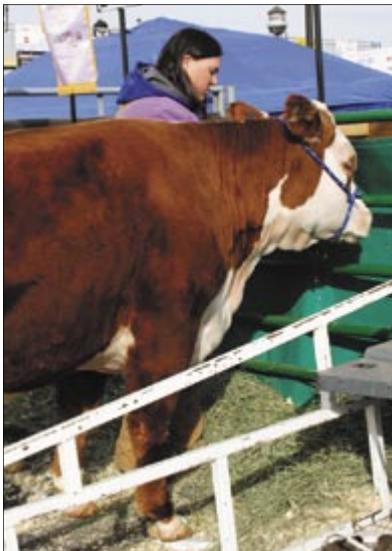




The Douthit pen.



Margo Douthit enjoys helping her family get the bulls and heifers ready before Denver and at the stock show.

## Selling Bulls, Building Relationships

*The Douthit family has exhibited bulls in the Denver Yards for 65 years.*

by Angie Stump Denton

For 65 years the Jim Douthit family from St. Francis, Kan., has spent a week in the Denver Yards exhibiting a carload of Hereford bulls during the National Western Stock Show (NWSS).

Three generations of Douthits have made the annual 200-mile trek to Denver. Walter, the senior Douthit, says his family keeps coming back because of the acquaintances they've made. "We've had customers who have come back and purchased bulls from us every year for more than 30 years," he explains. "We're here to sell bulls and build relationships."

Walter's brother Steve agrees. "It's a family tradition," he says about taking a carload of bulls to Denver. "It's like a bad habit you can't quit."

The Douthits have shown a few Herefords on the Hill through the years, but their focus has always been in the Yards. At this year's NWSS, the Douthits exhibited the

reserve yearling carload and the reserve grand champion pen of females. This was the first year for the Hereford heifer pen show.

"At one time thousands of cattle would go through these Yards," Walter says. "Ranchers would bring their calves in to sell and then buy bulls before going home."

Walter, who is almost 70, figures he's spent more than a year of his life in the Denver Yards. "I've seen a lot of changes through the years and made a lot of great friends."

The Douthits have raised registered Herefords since 1935. Jim, Walter's dad who started the family in the registered business, passed away in 1984. Today the family business includes Walter's brothers — Roger and Steve; Walter's daughter, Megan Downey and her husband, Chuck; and Roger's son, Jared. Steve's daughters — Margo, Erica, Courtney and Ana — also play an active role in helping with the Denver carload and on the farm.



Walter Douthit accepts the reserve grand champion pen of three heifers banner.

The Douthit herd includes about 300 registered Hereford cows. The cattle carry the 4V — for value — brand and are registered with the 4V prefix. The family also raises corn, wheat and alfalfa.

Each year the Douthits sell 80-90 bulls private treaty. The bottom half of the bull calves are cut and finished. Of their heifers they keep a third for replacements, sell a third as bred replacement heifers and then feed out the bottom third.

The Douthits have participated in the National Hereford Feedout, formerly the Genetic Outreach Program, for 15 years. “That’s why we raise cattle is for the meat,” explains Walter. “We need to know what we are producing. We participate in the feedout to see which sire groups are doing better in terms of feed conversion and carcass quality. The results help us do a better job breeding cattle.”

The Hereford tradition continues as the younger



Lining up the carload for the judges to view.

generation of Douthits is stepping into more of a management role. Walter adds with a smile, “As long as the girls want to keep doing all the work, I’ll sit here in front of

the heater and talk to people. If we didn’t come I’d miss the social part of the stock show.” **HW**