

of a life well-spent

by Jim Cotton, Editor

Oak leaves carpeting the lawn . . . geraniums fading by the fence . . . barn wood weathering and burley tobacco curing . . . a limestone loading chute . . . stalks ricked on the wagon bed . . . wood racked for the winter.

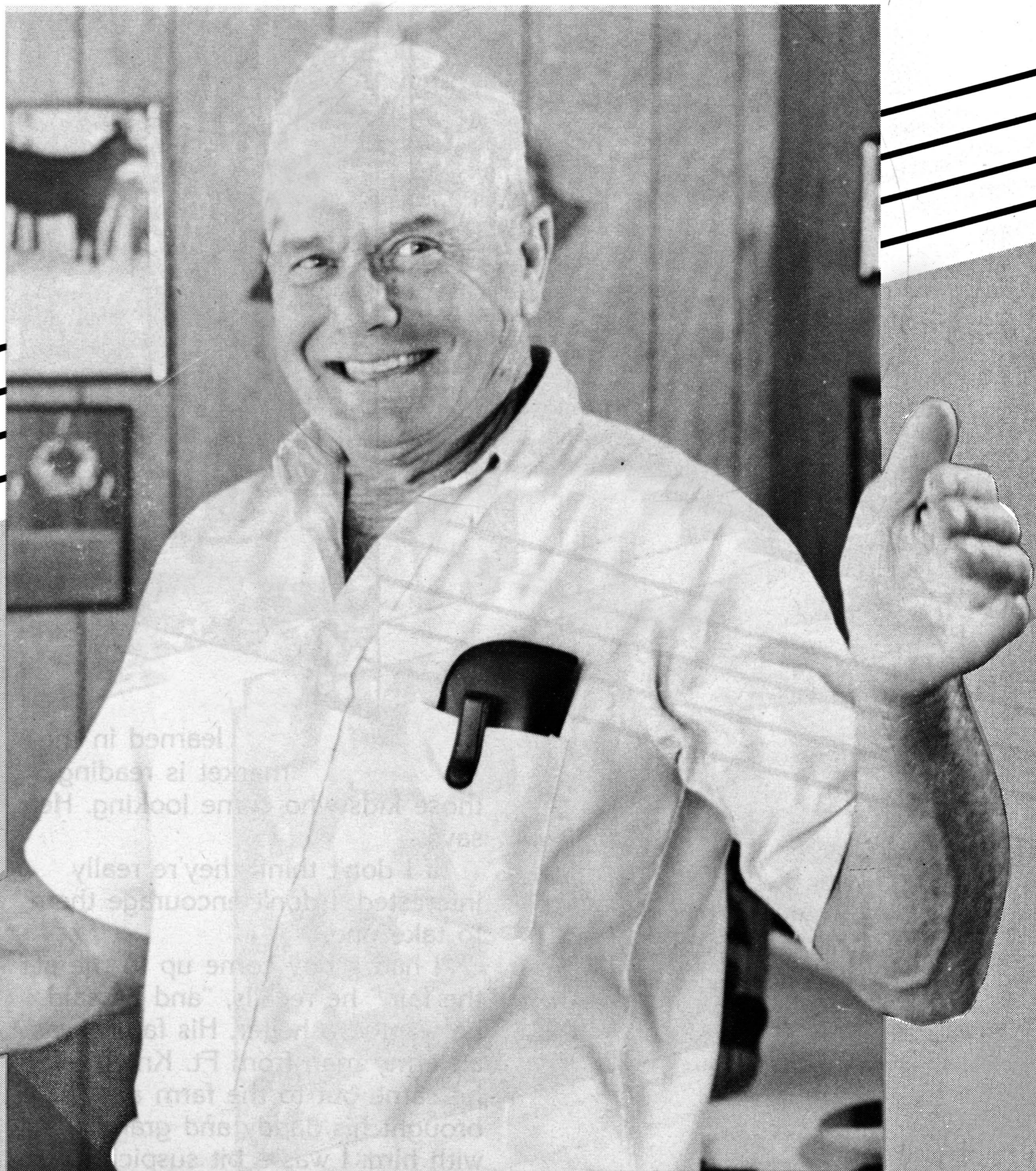
Brooks Hill offers these sights and smells to savor, the earthy, barky, gritty things from time and nature's touch which beg the visitor to reach out and possess. The rough-hewn, homespun textures of back where things began.

The Brooks, Russell and Ruby,

grew up in this homey country, and their roots would be envied by many. People respond to the place, and one wonders if some sales aren't sealed just because the surroundings say the decision is so

right. There's an honesty here, simple and forthright.

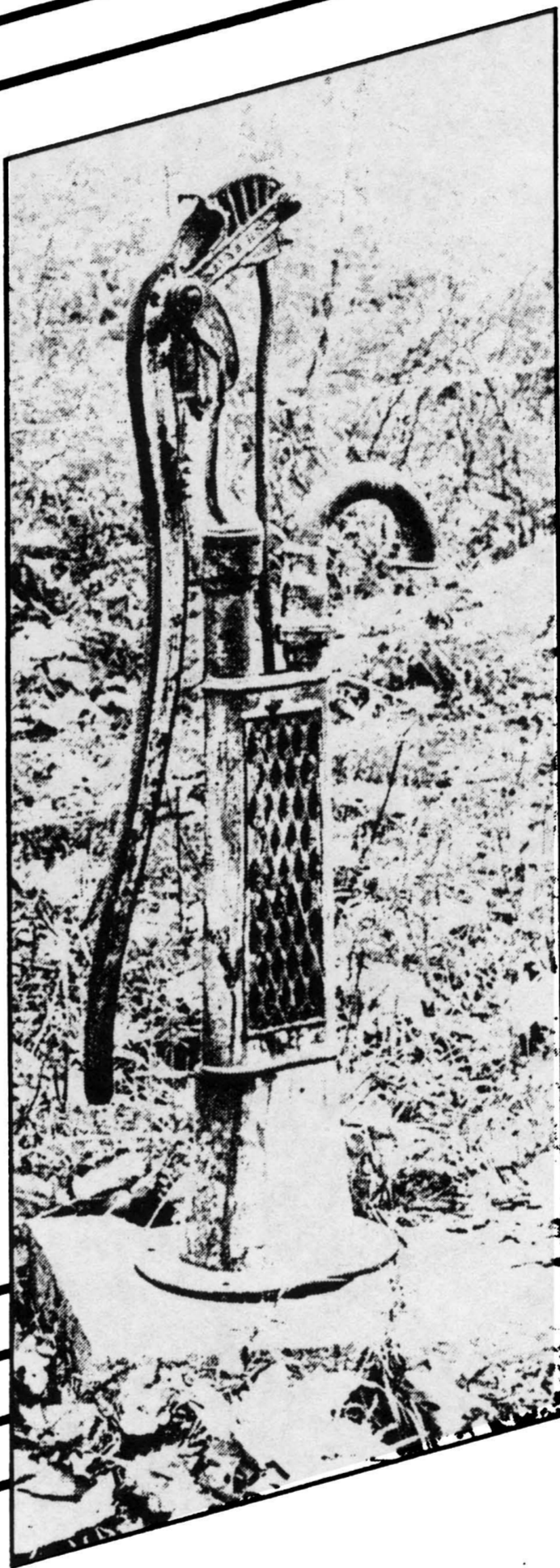
Russell Brooks works with youth and cattle, bringing the two together quite successfully. He's done it for years. One of the skills



"I can recall visiting with J. Garret Tolan and something he said to me: 'Son if you raise 'em, show 'em and sell 'em, you're a cattle breeder. But if you buy 'em, show 'em, and sell 'em, you're a cattle trader.' That's always stuck with me—I've tried to be a cattle breeder." Russell Brooks, Brooks Hill Farm, Buffalo, Ky.



*“My father
was a contractor.
We started this herd together,
1935. Joe W. Brooks & Son.”*



I said, “What are you going to do with that heifer—are you sure you want a heifer?”

“‘Yessir,’ he says, ‘I want me a heifer.’”

“And I recall his grandfather said, ‘Now, son, you better listen to this man. He’s honest—he’s not trying to sell you no cattle.’”

“When I delivered that heifer, I thought, now where am I going to take this animal here in town? But, he had him a little place rented out at the edge of town, and that boy did an excellent job for five-six years.

“I’ve thought about that a lot.”

The Brooks have gathered a bundle of such memories over the decades selling good Angus. One loyal customer began a pattern of buying over the phone. This man, a buyer for American tobacco, reported unfavorably on his first Brooks Hill bull, though, and returned the animal claiming it was sterile.

Russell declared there’d be no problem, offered the man his money back, and then delivered him a replacement instead.

“That next summer he called me and asked—‘What did you do with that bull?’”

“I said I sent him to the Bourbon stockyards, I figured he was sterile.

“Well, he said, ‘That bull settled every one of those heifers. I’ve got a real set of calves and I’d love to have him back,’ and I said, ‘Sir, that’s impossible!’”

If there’s a summary statement, that incident and the ensuing relationship dramatizes the farm slogan “Discover the Heritage, Share the Quality, Perpetuate the Excellence,” an attitude in a

learned in the market is reading those kids who come looking. He says:

“If I don’t think they’re really interested, I don’t encourage them to take one.

“I had a boy come up to me at the fair,” he recalls, “and he said he wanted a heifer. His father was an army man from Ft. Knox. So, he came out to the farm and brought his daddy and grandfather with him. I was a bit suspicious, so

capsule. Satisfaction's defined here as seeing some 4-H or FFA youngster show a calf bred from a Brooks Hill dam.

"Of course, I enjoy showing cattle," Russell points out. "Just as long as I stand pretty well in the class—I don't like to shut the gate when we all leave the ring." Russell looks forward to more straightbred steer interest, trending away from the crossbred animal of recent years.

However, Russell's cattle have gained appreciation from more than just the youth trade. Dr. Donald J. Wade, DVM from Hardinsburg, Ky., has provided an unexpected spur for Brooks Hill bulls penetrating that region of the state.

Wade plays, a bit atypically, a role beyond that of a good-hearted and conscientious country practitioner. He helps his clientele seek out the genetic thrust lacking in the "native" cattle there. Two concerns are paramount, says Dr. Wade: Keep the horns off ("We dehorn fewer and fewer head each year.") and hold the carcass weight to accepted levels.

"Louisville determines our fed cattle market, and it's really particular about carcass weight. To hit the high market, that carcass must come from an animal weighing 1,000 to 1,050 liveweight. This area of the United States does not lend itself to heavier carcasses, not at all. A 1,250-lb. Low Choice steer is generally moved on east or north.

"Our idea is to increase the number of good to excellent bulls in this area, because we do sell a lot of feeder cattle west and south. We were talking about that this morning. If we had enough bull power in our area, the premium could mean two or three cents more than the surrounding areas

just because the buyers could count on getting a calf that would do the job and gain.

"Some might say a 22 to 2,600-lb. Angus bull might produce a steer that matures at 1,200. But we've a lot of 750 to 850-lb. cows in this area. If you continue to use a 14 to 1,500-lb. bull on them, it takes too long. Time is money and it's important to show these bulls with genetic growth will get us there a little quicker.

"It takes a pretty complete bull to get these steers gaining up to four pounds a day and yet

