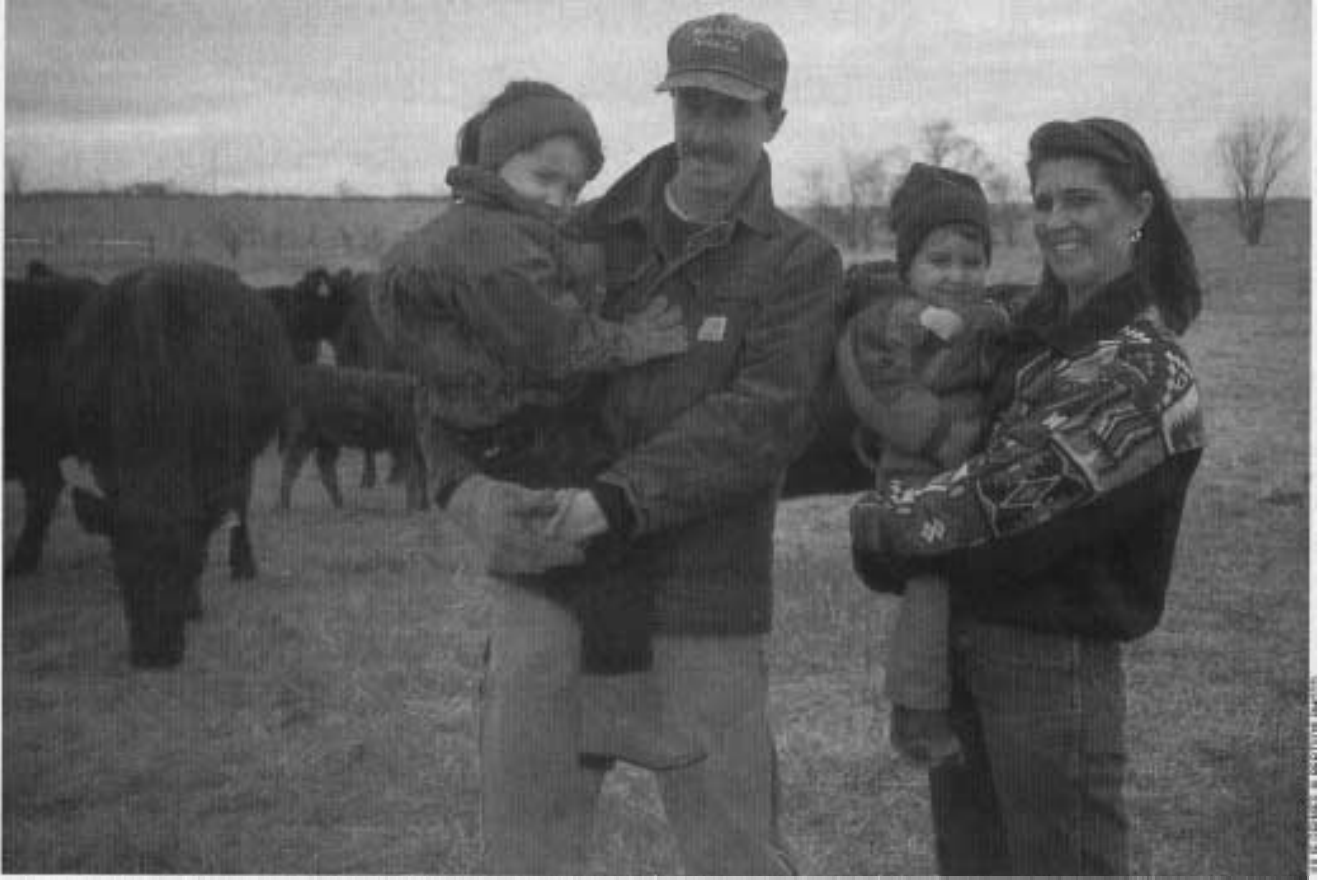


# Following a Dream



*The Wallace Family—Ernie, Tammy and children Paige and Sam—enjoy life as Angus breeders on their farm near Windsor, Mo.*

*How many of you young Angus breeders have dreamed of someday managing one of the breed's finest herds? Does the thought of starting your own Angus enterprise seem daunting?*

*Ernie and Tammy Wallace were once in your shoes. Now this Missouri couple shares some of the experiences that took them from junior breeders to successful professionals.*

BY JULIE GRIMES ALBERTSON

Craig Wallace might have been from a small town, but his dreams, hopes and aspirations were anything but small. Success has followed him like the nickname, "Ernie," his friends gave him as a youngster.

"Ever since I was a kid, I've dreamed of owning my own place," says Ernie. "I hoped to first be a herdsman at a big firm and later a manager. Things have gone ahead of schedule."

Is he lucky? Probably a little, but he's the first to share the credit with his wife, Tammy. "I don't know how it would work without her. Our

whole life is the cattle business, and Tammy enjoys it as much as I do," he says.

One reason Tammy Wallace is so understanding of the business of raising Angus cattle is that as Tammy James, she and her family raised some of the country's most respected Red Angus cattle. Her Iowa roots gave her not only a sense of what it was to work hard, but also a determination to make a career out of the cattle business.

Tammy pursued her interest while attending Kirkwood Junior College in Iowa by interning both at

Glenkirk Farms in Missouri and later at R&J Ranch in Texas.

"I started at R&J helping in the show barn and with the cow herd in 1986," says Tammy. "When one of the guys got hurt, they asked me to stay on." So for two and a half years, she gained invaluable experience with one of the Angus breed's most respected programs.

Only two weeks before Tammy began her internship at R&J Ranch a young Missourian named Ernie Wallace was finishing up his stint there as herdsman. Leaving the farm surely wouldn't have been his luckiest move if he hadn't later become acquainted with Tammy while attending R&J sales.

"R&J was a really good stepping stone for me because they were probably number one in the breed at that time," says Ernie. "I was able to meet a lot of people in a hurry and a lot of people got to know who I was."

The credibility he earned at R&J Ranch led Ernie first to Bear Creek Ranch in Montana and then to Brady Land and Cattle in Knob Noster, Mo.

"Weldon Brady gave me the reins to run the farm how I thought it should be run," says Ernie. "I experienced firsthand what it was like to build a cow herd and be successful in the business."

With less than 100 head of Angus cows, Brady Land and Cattle was always competitive, with sales averaging more than \$4,000. "We raised cattle that were accepted in the show and sale rings and we weren't spending a lot of money doing it," says Wallace.

**It was during his** four years managing Brady Land and Cattle that Ernie started believing he could duplicate that success on his own. Except by this time, he was no longer on his own. Ernie and Tammy were married in 1990.

Together, they bought a farm near Windsor, Mo., in the same community where Ernie was raised. Tammy had 25 Red Angus cows and Ernie had assembled a herd of 35 Angus cows while manager at Brady Land and Cattle.

"I believe that when you start out, you've got to have either your cows or your land paid for. If you try to jump in and borrow money to do everything, it's just almost impossible," says Ernie.

So starting with a base cow herd of 70 head and a 180-acre farm, Ernie and Tammy worked side by side to make Wallace Land and Cattle Company a profitable venture.

"I hear guys complain about the pressure of being a manager or herdsman. If they really want pressure, they ought to go out and buy a farm and try to make a living with no paycheck coming in," Ernie says with a grin.

The pressure surely mounts when your family expands, as well. The Wallaces now have two children, Paige, 4, and Sam, 2, who fill their house with a happy sort of chaos, and who can't wait to climb into some Carhartt overalls and head out to the barn.

As duties of mother take precedence, Tammy spends much less time out with the cows than she once did. "I found out how much she did on the farm when she wasn't there all the time," says Ernie.

Not only does Tammy have many responsibilities at home and on their farm, for three years she's done all of the artificial insemination (AI) work for Jim Reed in Green Ridge, Mo. She would AI 70 to 80 head per summer in addition to their own cattle. She also began a new career in real estate in 1995.

Together, Tammy and Ernie hope to double the size of their herd to 150 head in the next five years. "During our first five years our numbers have stayed at 75

*"In the Angus business, even though you might have a good show heifer prospect, you've got to make sure she'll be a good cow when you're done. Pay attention to pedigree and performance information and seek the advice of people you trust."*

— Ernie Wallace



head. We've done a lot of culling to increase our quality. Now, we're starting to get the quality where we want it, so we'll begin to increase our numbers," explains Ernie.

**A larger cow herd** will hopefully translate into more junior show prospect heifers and bull calves to sell. While they don't concentrate their marketing on one segment of the industry, the Wallaces do sell a fair amount of junior prospects each year. They sort off their best seven or eight heifers and bulls to target for sales like the Missouri Futurity and the National Western Bull Sale in Denver.

"We take bulls to sales because in the commercial market we have a hard time getting \$2,500 to \$3,000 from commercial buyers off the farm. We really have to take the bulls to the people to get that extra \$1,000," says Ernie.

One reason Wallace cattle bring a premium when on public display is Tammy and Ernie are experts in

presenting cattle. Ernie says his expertise has only come after years of practicing his trade.

"I did a terrible job of displaying cattle at 13 or 14 years old. But I paid attention and watched how the best people did their work. I watched how they blew their cattle's hair dry, how they combed it, what they were feeding."

Similarly, Tammy started showing her family's Red Angus when she was young. "We showed only what we had on the farm, and we were still able to do a lot of winning," she says.

"Kids who have to succeed through hard work will usually have more interest than if they succeed because mom and dad paid a lot for a heifer and for someone else to do all the work," says Tammy.

When the Wallaces sell one of their top heifers as a junior project they try and make it a positive first experience. "When a kid is interested in learning, we'll teach them how

## Following a Dream *cont.*

to break the heifer, feed her and help get them through their first show. We're kind of like a car dealer; we service what we sell," says Ernie.

One satisfied customer is 14-year-old junior Angus member Brett Sayre, Purdin, Mo. Brett did his show heifer shopping at the Wallaces because they're prominent breeders in the area who have had a lot of success in the show ring.

"They were helpful when we went looking at heifers," says Brett. Once he found one he liked, Ernie took Brett out to see the cows. "He showed me her dam and sire and I was able to see her before she was weaned, to see how her mother milked."

"Brett has known Ernie since he started showing. He's always been willing to help and answer just about any question you have for him," says Don Sayre, the father of Brett.

Providing service to customers like the Sayres takes time and effort. But the Wallace Family is willing to take whatever time is necessary to reach their goal of producing a valuable, quality cow herd.

They are reaching their goals both through hard work and with support from friends and family. Ernie's dad, Bill Wallace, has been the resident carpenter. Bill added a feed room, a wash room and an office complete with a bathroom, to their main barn.

Wallace Land and Cattle Company is but another example of how hard work, determination and a supportive family can lead to success and fulfillment of dreams.

## Cattle Knowledge Tested as Judge

Ernie Wallace is probably best known by junior members as the judge of the 1993 National Junior Angus Show in Wichita. "Before I got started the first day, I felt a little overwhelmed by four days of judging 700 head of cattle," Wallace says. "But once I got into it, the show was so well organized that you just get into a rhythm,"

Wallace says that as long as you don't think too much and begin doubting yourself, judging a show of that size isn't so difficult.

"On that day you've got to think of yourself as the smartest guy who ever walked. You've got to have confidence."



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