

INVESTING *in Youth*

Wilma Minix loved young people. Her latest gift to the Angus Foundation proved it.

by Becky Mills, field editor

If you want a technically correct, albeit dry, definition of the word "invest," you can always look it up on the 'net. The Oxford dictionary, digital edition, says it is to expend money with the expectation of achieving a profit or material result.

If you want an illustration, one that will make your heart happy, especially if you were privileged to know her, look at a photo of the late Wilma Minix.

The owners of the Hoschton, Ga., based Black Witch Farms, Minix and her late husband, Ed, loved and believed in young folks, especially those with an Angus connection. Wilma proved it in 2014 when she left \$102,500 from their estate to fund the Ed and Wilma Minix/Black Witch Farm Angus Youth Scholarship and Activities Endowment Fund. She proved it again when she left another \$250,000 to the Angus Foundation, which went to the Angus Foundation after her November 2021 death.

Those donations weren't the first, however. Typical of the couple, they donated their bodies to science, so they have no graves. Instead, Wilma donated \$7,500 to the Angus Foundation's Building a Legacy campaign in the form of a granite planter with the Black Witch Farms logo inscribed on it. In all, before she passed away, Minix donated \$250,000 to the Angus Leader fund, under the

direction of Milford Jenkins, the Angus Foundation executive director, now retired. An Angus Legacy Society member, Minix gave a portion of her estate to the Angus Foundation after she passed away. The Minixes' total giving of \$550,000 will leave them as Angus Visionary Donors, and they will be recognized this year.

While the generous donations were greatly appreciated, it didn't surprise any Wilma Minix fans.

"She loved Angus cattle, youth, and youth livestock projects," says Carolyn Shackelford Gazda, Athens, Ga., Angus breeder and longtime family friend.

"She was so supportive of the American Angus Association and the Angus Foundation," says David Gazda, Carolyn's husband, partner in their Angus operation and American Angus Association regional manager. "Whenever she was asked, she was always willing to support anything Angus-related."

The Gazdas' daughter, Taylor, won the first scholarship. Given the family's relationship with the Minixes, Carolyn says it was a special experience.

"They were very, very generous in the things they believed in, and they were totally sold on the Angus breed, the Association and friends they met through



Ed and Wilma at the Norcross farm

Angus,” says Steve Pass.

The Minixes had no children of their own, but Wilma described Pass as the son they never had.

While Minix’s latest gift wasn’t earmarked specifically for youth projects, Angus Foundation executive Jaclyn Boester knew of her love for young folks. As a result, she and the Angus Foundation Board members are using the donation to award to the winners of the annual Minix Stockman of the Year contest, given to junior, intermediate and senior exhibitors at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). It will be awarded for the first time at the Grand Island, Neb., show this summer.

The Angus Foundation is also using the donation to help fund the annual Raising the Bar conference, which was hosted in late March at Clemson University in South Carolina. Raising the Bar is a youth leadership event hosted at a land grant university.

Boester says the stockman awards and the conference fit right in with the Angus Foundation’s three pillars of education, research and youth.

The Minixes’ involvement with youth and the Angus breed started well before their first Angus Foundation donations, however. For 37 years, Ed was vice president and general manager of the Varsity, an Atlanta-based fast-food restaurant with an almost cult-like following. In 1962 they bought a 47-acre farm in neighboring Gwinnet County so they could have horses. They soon decided they needed cattle and Carolyn Gazda’s father, the late Wayne Shackelford, who was the county agent in Gwinnett County, steered them toward Angus.

In 1966, six Angus cows with heifer calves found a home at their farm. The Minixes would leave Atlanta at the end of the work day, drive to the farm and feed and halter-break the cattle by themselves.

Soon, more Angus females from Burch Angus in Oklahoma joined the original six cows.

At the same time, the Minixes became friends with Bothwell Pass, Steve Pass’s father, when the Varsity underwent a major expansion and he was the construction project manager. The Passes also had a cattle farm in Gwinnett County, and the Minixes would cheer on young Steve as he showed Shorthorn bulls, then Angus, in the Gwinnett County fair.

When Ed retired from the Varsity in 1985, the Minixes



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE PASS

Wilma Minix at her Athens home

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bought a 300-acre farm in Hoschton, Ga., and built a home in the middle of the farm. Some things stayed the same, however, including the Minixes’ hospitality when 4-H judging teams would come to the farm.

Carolyn Gazda recalls, “Two things you could always count on would be a Varsity orange drink and Mrs. Minix’s brownies.”

There were a couple of more constants, too. The cattle

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were still halter-broken, and the farm was truly picture-perfect.

“People used to joke it looked like a golf course with cattle on it,” Pass says.

After Ed passed away in 1991, Wilma later sold the farm and cattle, then moved to Athens where she lived until her death in 2021. Her memory, and the investments she and Ed made, live on.

“She was always warm, welcoming and always had a smile on her face. She was a true Southern lady,” Carolyn says. “She was always dressed to the nines, and even looked classy in jeans and boots.”

“She was so gracious, nice, caring and warm, and was always willing to support a youth livestock project,” David adds.

“Wilma was a doll and a class act,” Boester says. “I can’t say enough about her. She was passionate about the Angus Association and youth. This kind of investment can do so much. It is remarkable we can do more in their memory.” 



Carolyn and David Gazda

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ESTATE PLANNING

Estate planning isn’t exactly on the list of fun things to do. Besides the thought of facing your own mortality, deciding what goes to whom can be a tough mental exercise. However, this is one of those times procrastination is not the answer.

Nichole Huff, University of Kentucky Family and Consumer Sciences Extension specialist, says, “Everyone already has an estate plan. If you do nothing, the state will decide through state law how to dispose of your possessions after your death.”

The problem is that may not be at all what you wanted.

For starters, Huff says to go on a search mission. Find your personal records, account information, financial documents and even digital information like account passwords and log-in information. Clearly label all of it, and let your family and/or executor know where to find it after you die.

Having it all handy will make it easier for you to review it every year and will save you time and money when you go to an estate-planning professional. It will also make life easier on your executor.

When it comes to an executor, you can choose a professional like a bank officer, attorney or accountant or a close relative you trust. Huff says to keep from hurting anyone’s feelings, parents may choose one or more adult children to be co-executors.

While it sounds like an easy way out, she cautions, “Be careful about how many children you name as executors. The legal process can be cumbersome with too many executors managing an estate.”

Estate planning is not a do-it-yourself activity. State and federal laws related to wills, trusts and taxes are many and complex. Huff says attorneys who specialize in estate planning are the most likely legal professionals to be up to date on them. You can start your search for the attorney best suited for you and your estate with a call to your local bar association. Ask your friends, too, if they’ve had a good experience with an estate-planning attorney.

As for what to include in your plan, that is a lengthy list. This is probably one of those times when too much information is a good thing. Steve Pass, who was co-executor

of the Wilma Minix estate, says, “She had a very in-depth will. It named where the money would go and how much. It was a good will.”

If, like Minix, you wish to leave part of your estate to charity or a foundation, Huff recommends, “First, reach out to the foundation or charity in mind to ask who on their staff specializes in endowments, charitable giving, or estate planning. I also suggest talking with the attorney preparing your will on what’s best for your situation. For example, is a trust needed?”

Most of all, when it comes to estate planning in general, as well as charitable giving, Pass says to follow the example of Minix.

“It is critical you seek professional help ahead of time.”

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