

"this new life"

Making Short Steps Count toward the Long Haul

Oh, the lengths folks will go to make a good thing work. Take a job in town, start a shop, get more training so this or that will open up, become a distributor, sell something so we can keep something else going. The list trails on.

Now, in the situation at Black Magic Acres, Tony Brown commutes to the Louisville area where he works at Colgate-Palmolive. This keeps the home fires fueled while Mally takes care of the cows. It's an arrangement that may not be ideal at times especially when a heifer's calving and it's time to go to work; there's been nothing but overtime at the job which means breeding cows at 10 p.m.; or the cows are out, you're there alone, and the neighbor's alfalfa looks too inviting for them to resist.

The Browns have largely been through the baptismal phase. They've got their patterns down, and things are beginning to work for this young couple and new herd. A.I. is a cornerstone; they didn't waste time, setting up a program just a couple years after their first venture into the breed.

"Mally is the heartbeat of our A.I. program," Tony praises his

wife. "She detects for heat, and she's with these animals constantly and can sense their changing moods and such. Her records have been splendid in helping us maintain a health program and what I'd call an A.I. program that's well above average.

"We breed our cattle at all hours of the day. And, as an end result, we have a conception rate of 80 percent plus on first service."

Tony ranks A.I. as the farm's number one improvement and management tool. It could have been a disaster, though, had the Browns not come to grips with the nutritional factor. They found Black Magic Acres and the surrounding area extremely low in selenium, thanks to some testing. Consulting with a feed and nutrition authority helped formulate a special mineral mix. This plus some timely injectables helped spur timely rebreeding of the herd. With Mally's attentive eye and the sober lessons of the importance of balanced rations, the Browns have shored up that part of the foundation. With a herd this small, hand feeding is more or less feasible.

"We figure what they're going to need almost every day depending on the weather. It varies," says

No one said it would be easy, and it's a sense of triumph we all can share when the "little guy" gains a foothold, hangs on, and even picks off a plum or two in the process. There may be other pursuits, avocations, or enrichments available, but the Angus life is an earth-life where roots are fostered and buds become milestones.

Thankfully, new people enter the business every year. They're the momentum for its future and vigorous new growth for its family tree. . . .



**Tony and Mally Brown
Black Magic Acres
Fredericksburg, Indiana**

"How many dispersions have we planned so far? Five?" The humor is sometimes too close to reality. But . . . there's always humor.

Tony. "The ones we've spotted as being good enough to keep in the herd are brought along with some crimped oats."

Winters can be rough in this area, so feed, forage, and supplements are important if one expects his cattle to take him places. The area will support the larger-framed type, and Tony and Mally have gravitated toward cows with greater volume and high-performance caliber. Their nagging regret is the timing.

"We should have studied the markets and trends better. Instead, we got into the cattle business when the prices were peaking."

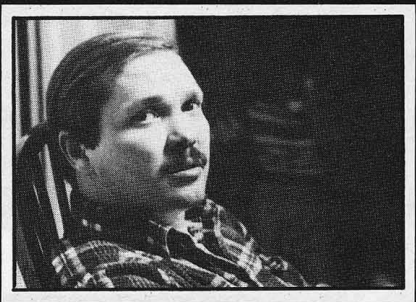
But, right or half-right, they plunged ahead and made some selections that have proven out to their satisfaction. They've been pleased with a flush mate of Waldeck Shocker, Skarship High Tensile, as a herd bull; they have high hopes for a linebred Premier Independence KN mating out of a Mr Angus dam.

It's the daddy—Ken Caryl Mr Angus—that Tony finds especially productive for their purposes.

"We think using the Mr Angus breeding has produced some great results for the short time we've been in the business. His progeny—directly and indirectly



Sharing the frustration of not having room for expansion with other small breeders, the Browns continually weigh their resources and consider how to derive more from the land and cattle. They could meet more bull demand if they could run more cows.



"We feel the breed is perhaps more sound today than ever before."



Mally is also a hairdresser and here trims up niece Bridgett's locks and bangs.



One of the stalwarts of the Black Magic herd, lucky number "7," a cow that traces back to Canadian Colossal and the Happyvale lineage up north. The calf is a daughter of Perryville Esso Extra.



Expanding toward the future. A new barn on the hill will mean a major step up and ahead.

through Independence and other sires—have been the most consistent performers for milk, red meat, and frame. Perhaps his greatest breeding son to date is High Voltage—we hope so!"

Despite, then, a less than fortuitous beginning, Tony and Mally Brown have seen enough to keep them excited. The breed, the breeding has fulfilled some expectations. Now if the economy would only provide similar encouragement.

Tony lists his concerns to include a downward trend in beef consumption, development of second and third world countries with a concurrent decline in U.S. beef exports, and unbalanced "free" trade adversely impinging on the agricultural segments of the business community.

"There are too many regulations and laws enacted for the agri-industry by people who haven't the

real knowledge of what farm life and the family business are facing in today's world," he believes, "especially regarding profit and our culture here."

Still, he remains confident of the breed's role and future.

"Technology plus concerns by genuine groups and individuals along with the breed's recognizable traits help keep Angus on top."

One of the reassuring boosts veterans of the breed need now and then is to see newcomers take ahold and bring new enthusiasm and energy to the business. Tony and Mally represent that spark; they intend to leave their mark. Tony summarizes what might be his or any breeder's credo:

"That every calf we produce will be worthy of becoming breeding stock which in turn will bring name recognition, payback, and self-satisfaction of a great achievement in such an industry."

Meaningful to the Browns so far has been the improvement from A.I. and rigid culling to get to those outstanding cows, meeting with other cattle breeders and friends, and fitting, showing successfully on a local basis.

"We're in the midst of expansion at this time. We plan to maintain a

brood cow herd of approximately 30 cows. Our prime market at this time is long yearling bulls to commercial producers. We plan to participate actively in all regional, major shows in the near future. And, we hope to capture a secure market for some brood cows and show animals.

"A completely functional animal," he says of his ideal type. "The area here can support a beef cow with greater volume with a minimum of supplementing. So, we're seeking a larger-framed cow with heavier weaning weight and maternal ability—an all-around high-performance animal. That's both at growing and mature stages. We feel in the five years we've been in the business, we've made substantial progress."

We point out Mally hasn't said much, but Tony dismisses it: "She's the real backbone in our operation."

AJ

