



Washing out the show heifers... Penny Shorts of Shelby, N.C., and student at Crest High School can be more careless with a precious commodity now that the drought's broken. Water's importance came home quickly when crops dried up and meadow brooks that had run for "a hundred years" trickled down to frail and worrisome remnants.

According to the Palmer Drought Index and precipitation records, the Southeast had the worst drought in more than 100 years last spring and summer, says meteorologist Lyle Denny of the Joint Agricultural Weather Facility in Washington, D.C. Affecting parts of Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, and southwest Virginia, the drought registered a -6 to near -7 in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, the maximum negative values on record.

This is a short account of how adversity created new challenges for Cleveland County, in western North Carolina, a locality known for its density of Angus breeders and their good seed stock. They coped, thanks to their own tenacity and some timely generosity of more fortunate neighbors.

When It's Dry... There's No Rain In Sight

By Jim Cotton, Editor

The Legacy of Johnny Bridges, Crest Angus... Cleveland County...

Every area, region, or neighborhood had one. Or should. One of those effervescent types that keeps things moving, spirits up, and folks getting things done.

Mention Johnny Bridges, or better, just ask who he was and the stories start to roll: "I didn't think we could, but Johnny did.... There was no one left but Johnny an' me.... It was gettin' late, 'bout midnight, but Johnny said, 'Let's go ahead....'"

President of the North Carolina Angus Assn. Dr. T.G. "Ted" Westmoreland spoke of Johnny Bridges in these terms:

"I consider Johnny Bridges to be the father of the present-day Angus industry in Cleveland County. I think Johnny set a good example for the rest of us to follow—"work together and promote Angus cattle" was his motto."

John J. Bridges was a fighter ace of WWII, flying for the U.S. Navy. He worked his way through college and became a partner in the Shelby Bonded Warehouse where he saved enough to start a small registered Angus herd around 1956. This dream, nurtured through the war



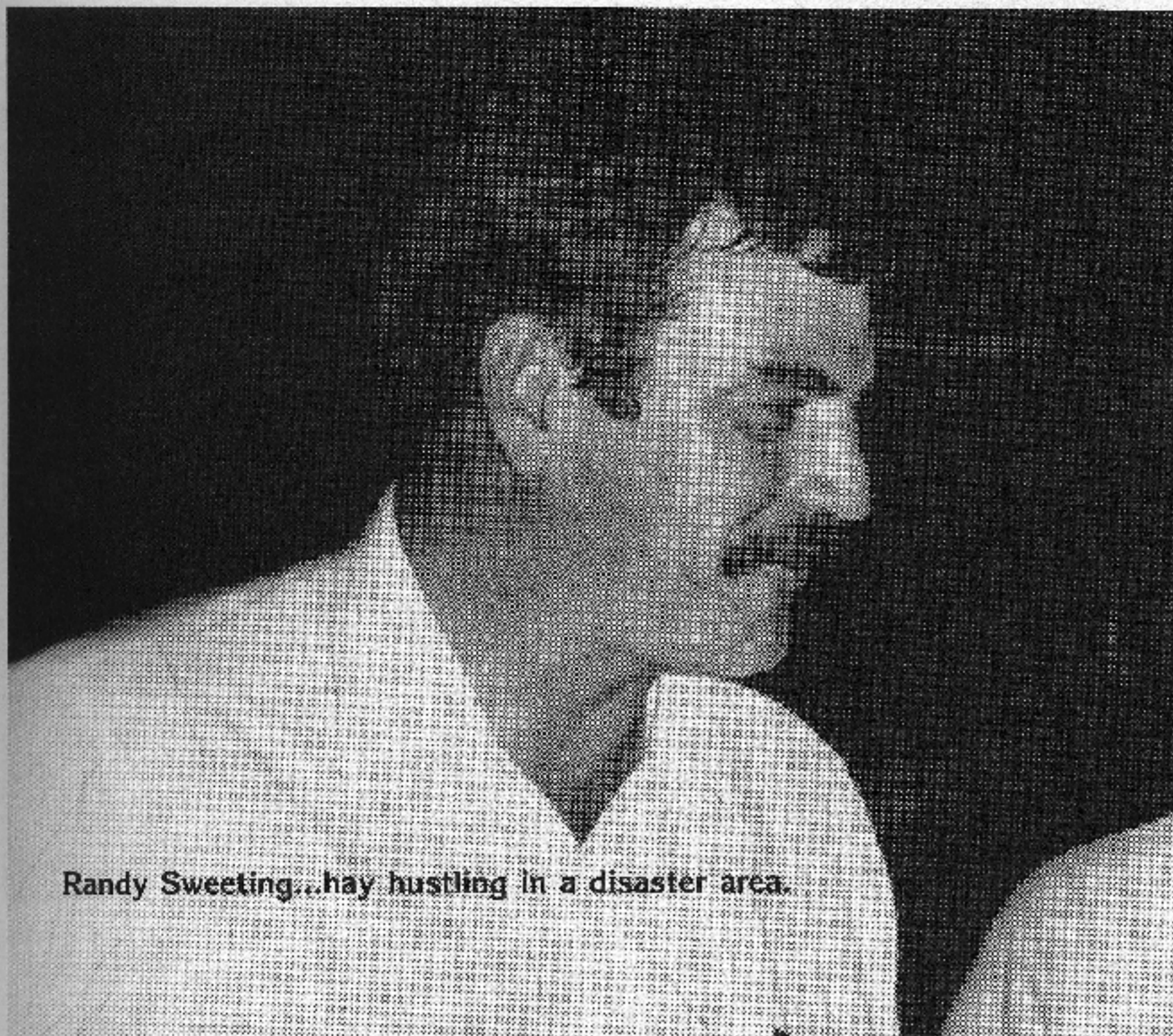
years, became a reality in partnership with his brother, Jesse. With the death of his brother in 1963, Johnny became the sole proprietor.

Then began his involvement in the state association holding directorships, presidencies, and chairmanships of bull sale committees and junior activities. He "belonged" to the outfit and served it on the national level as a delegate to the annual meetings in Louisville, Chicago, and Denver.

The whole Bridges family took up the raising and showing of Angus under the banner of Crest Angus Farm. A son, Charles, continues the program. Breeding at the herd's height included influence from notable western, midwestern, and Canadian herds.

He was the favorite son of many across the state and beyond the borders of Cleveland County, and their loss was keenly felt when Johnny's life was claimed in a tragic farm drowning.

Little reminiscing goes on around the county's kitchen tables or across the straw that the name of Bridges, John T. ("Johnny"), doesn't surface with a smile. Some folks' candle just burns long into the night.



Randy Sweeting...hay hustling in a disaster area.

T · H · I · S L · I · F · E



Charles Bridges, Owner
Crest Angus Farms
Shelby, North Carolina

"That drought made you think."

—"Buddy" Hamrick

Such the reaction of Maxwell "Buddy" Hamrick Jr. to a sale he made during the drought. Hamrick operates H&H Farms with his father.

"This breeder wanted a good set of heifers and it was a good price." The shipment of those heifers relieved some of the pressure on pastures burning up. "It was hard to let them go," he admits. "We're going to try to save all our heifers from now on. But then, we like to have a market for anybody."

"No, we didn't put in for the free hay as our livelihood is not in farming as some of the others are around here. There were several people here that really needed it. They filled this country out with really good hay," he says of the rescue effort. "Buddy" has also found silage available at different times since the dairy buyout. "Often, I can buy silage for \$25 a ton, and that's cheaper than I can raise it."

Herd improvement and searching for that cutting edge bull to give one's herd something really special is familiar territory for Hamrick, and he's participating with River Hill Farms in some joint ventures.

Randy Sweeting wasn't anxious to get into the hay brokerage business. But for six weeks in mid-summer, 1986, he ran up an "unreal" phone bill, talking to folks from Colorado, Ohio, and points in between lining up hay and transportation.

Sweeting, chairman of the Cleveland County Extension Service, described the emergency hay bailout as a total effort, night and day, demanding all his time and energy. "Nothing else was done around here," he says of the typical summer and service programs.

Heading up the county task force devoted to drought relief, Sweeting dealt with some severe dislocations. People had to sell off



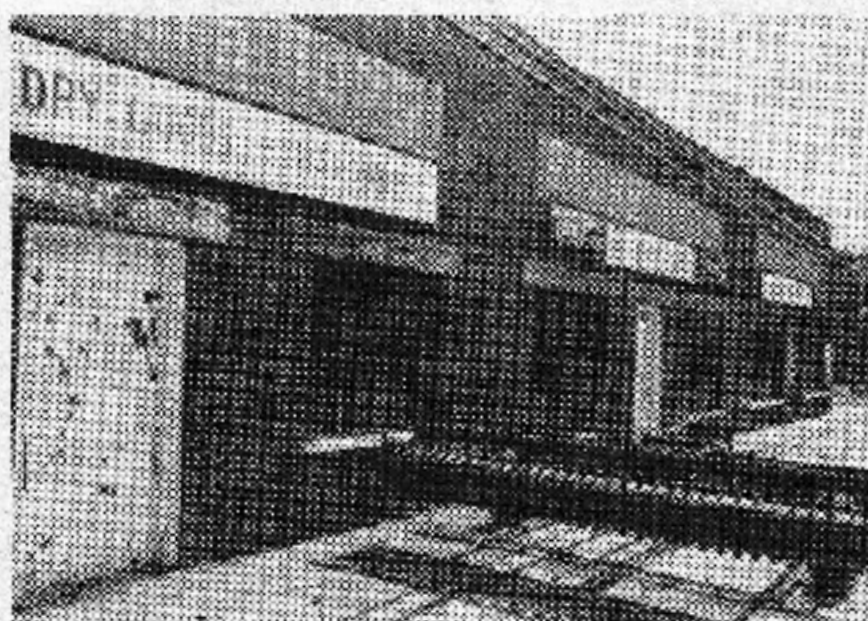
"Breeders here in Cleveland County have A.I.'d for a long time, and there are some breeders here that have spent money on nationally-known genetics."

"Buddy" recalls traveling to South Dakota when the Jorgenson movement in the breed was first beginning. "I used the N-Bar bull back when we started A.I.ing. This was when you had to own part of the bull. ... I got to use some of the big bulls early on such as the Rito 707 and 149 bulls."

He remembers the progeny doing well on the tests of that era. Then came the impetus to change with the type shift toward greater height and leg.

"But I didn't and I don't want to get away from performance. Our top calves go to test stations, and we've got several excellent stations in the area—Butner, Waynesville, Clemson, Salisbury."

He's loyal to the cows that have worked for him even if they lack some in style and modern dimensions. One granddaughter of Finland of Wye he describes as too short-bodied and not an appealing sale prospect. "But she's an absolute producer. We sold her calf for \$2,025 in Salisbury



Grandfather Elijah Hamrick founded the family store in 1875 at what became Boiling Springs, N.C. As was customary then, the enterprise handled dry goods and hardware, meats and groceries, lumber, took on a John Deere dealership, a line of insurance and, when cotton was commonly raised in the area, it became the gin site and molasses mill. Today, it's "C. Hamrick & Sons" and is operated near the original site appropriately at the head of Homestead Avenue.



"Uncle Clifford lives in the white house," Maxwell B. "Buddy" Hamrick Jr. points out.

test sale. He gained nearly four pounds and had a frame score 7. That's fine—we'll keep her!

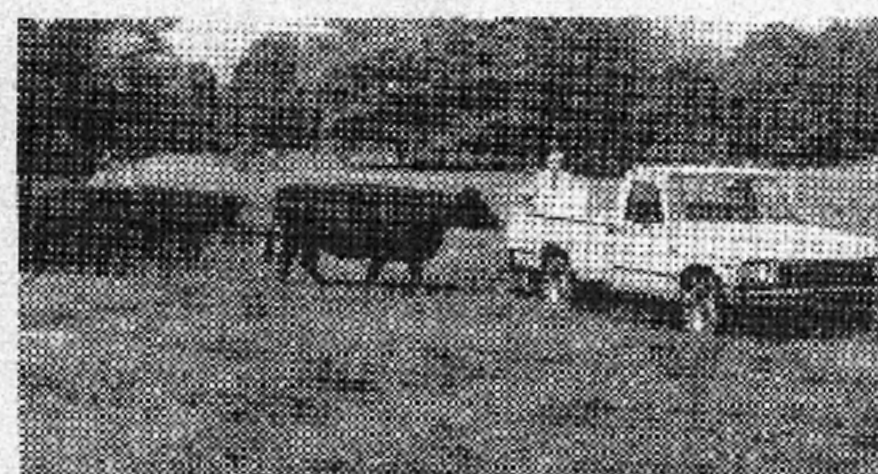
"If these cattle compete at the test and their heifers are better than the cows and yet hold some of the maternal traits of these cows, that's all I care about. They're not all going to be show prospects, but I don't think that's what the total Angus business is built on."

"Buddy" might attempt an extension of his breeding program so he can place a bull in most every test available. This means juggling A.I. some but he's had good success for a part-timer. "We had two repeats on 25 cows bred A.I. this year. Last year, we had three repeats on 30 plus cows. I'd like to build a set of daughters from Power Genes (River Hill Power Genes) because of the maternal potential there."

Like the man who bought the heifers and helped balance the demands of the drought, customers come looking for ease of calving and docility. "People like our calves as they're so gentle and easy to handle. But on a small scale, you've got to have them with good dispositions when you A.I. Some say dispositions are prod-



"I have a loyalty to these old cows as they've made us money. I bred 'em and they were born here. There's satisfaction if you've got the grandmama and find every generation is a step above."



"These people we sell bulls to have management conditions a lot like our own. They don't have facilities to pull a lot of calves. The first thing they ask—'Am I going to have a lot of big calves to calve out?' Birth weights may be more important than weaning weights...maybe."



"This was Hereford Country. Our grandfather would absolutely turn over in his grave with a black bull in there. That was 'O.T.,' and he was the principal of the high school and business manager of the college here. The land's been in the family for over a hundred years."



Inviting oaks and spacious lawns create a genteel country.

ucts of genetics, but I think it's the way you handle them too.

Folks buying, for example, a March bull and turning him out for spring breeding is a practice that bothers him a bit. "He's really not ready. Here, he comes off test and has been fed all he'll take, then the buyer throws him out there with 40 cows—that's stress. It would be better to

gradually let him down and keep him on a growing ration.

"It would be better if people would buy a bull a year ahead of when they want to use him. But most folks do things like I do—when they have to."

Will his insurance firm write drought coverage? "Don't ask!" he laughs.





cows, dip into winter feed reserves, and even haul water to thirsty stock. The 1986 drought depicted during last summer's evening news was more than just a five-minute spot of reality for the folks of

Cleveland County, North Carolina. It forced a major adjustment to their future course. But, as Sweeting points out, the crisis had a silver lining as well.

Before it could shine, however,

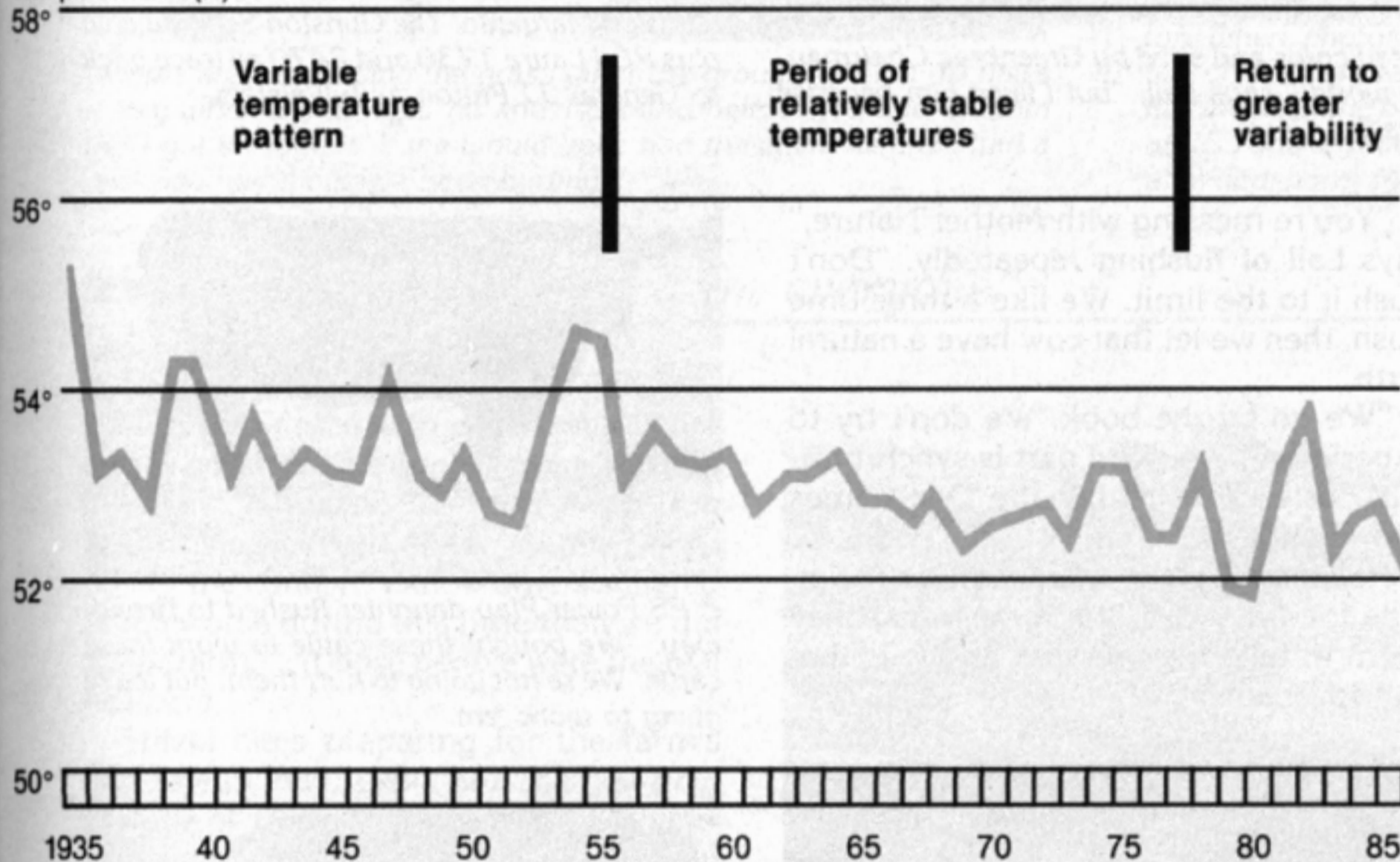
rescue measures had to be mounted. Producers up north were having a banner year and soon, offers for haylifts and relief came from those wanting to donate some of their bounty. Then began the late night telephoning and coordinating. Who's got it, how to haul it, where to unload?

Periodic feed situation updates were held where cattlemen, farmers, and officials could be advised of in-bound shipments of hay, any stockpiles available, and areas of critical need. And, when the hay started to flow, the problems mounted.

"Most of it came in with a 'Whoosh!' From the first week of August through the last week in August—we handled right at 27,000 bales. It was enough to get us through the real crunch period." One concern in directing shipments was the quality question.

Weather's behavior: signaling more variation, less stability?

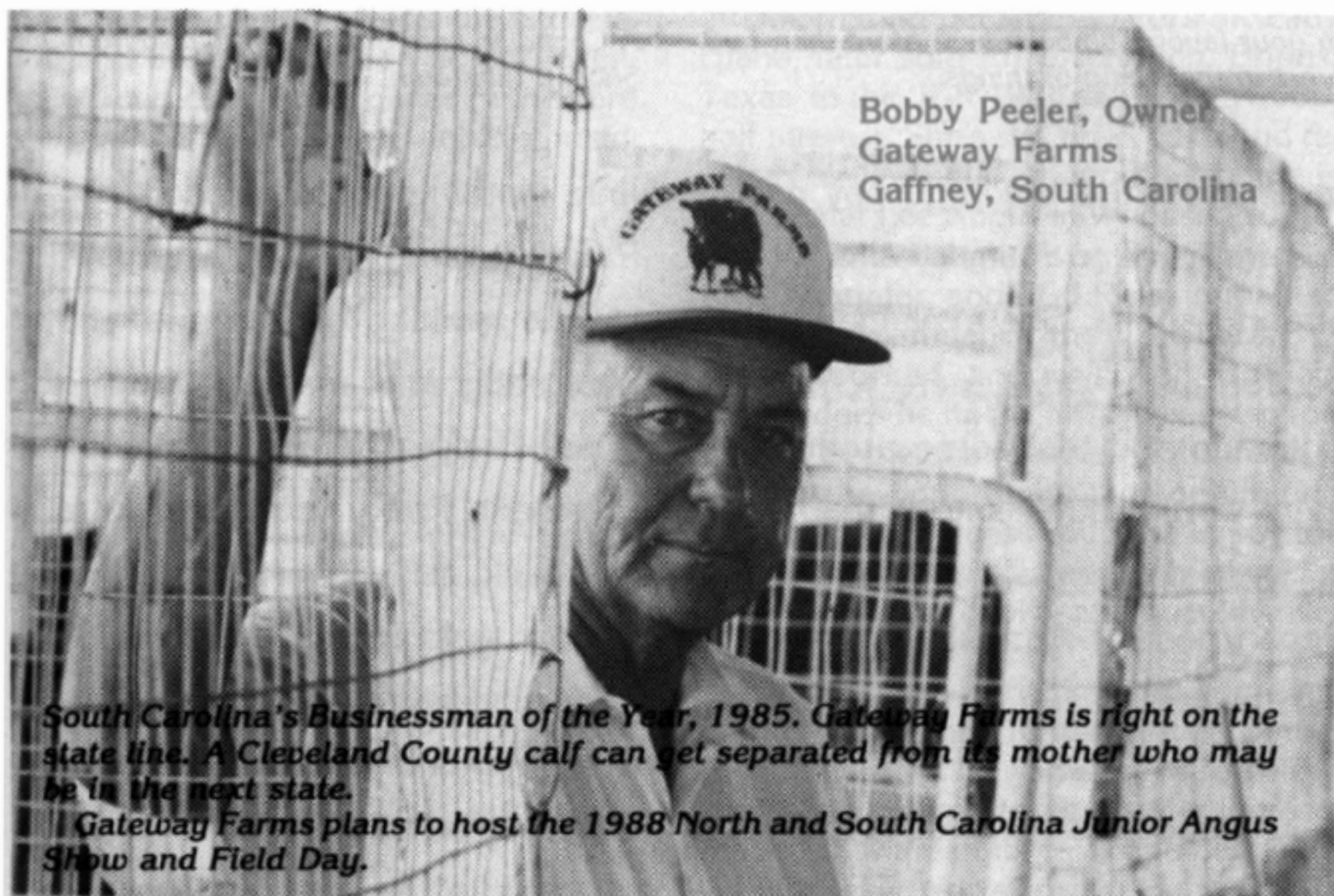
Average annual U.S. temperature (F)



Source: National Climatic Data Center, Asheville, North Carolina — Published in *FARMLINE*, March, 1987

"We irrigated. That's what saved us."

—Bobby Lail



Bobby Peeler, Owner
Gateway Farms
Gaffney, South Carolina

"We pumped all the ponds dry," says Gateway Farms' Bobby Lail. "Another help was the hay we had accumulated from the year before."

Irrigation was a different method of drought survival and not commonly available to many in this normally moisture-rich country. As crops are also an important part of the enterprise mix, emergency irrigation equipment was in place to save what could feasibly be salvaged.

But then, there were some high-dollar cows and an embryo program that couldn't suffer a setback. Gateway principals—owner Bobby Peeler, General Manager Bobby Lail, and Herdsman Mike Humphries have a growth program in place that's making steady and impressive strides. Droughts are untimely, and a lot rides on the benediction of Mother Nature. Consider the embryo transfer management, for one.

South Carolina's Businessman of the Year, 1985. Gateway Farms is right on the state line. A Cleveland County calf can get separated from its mother who may be in the next state.

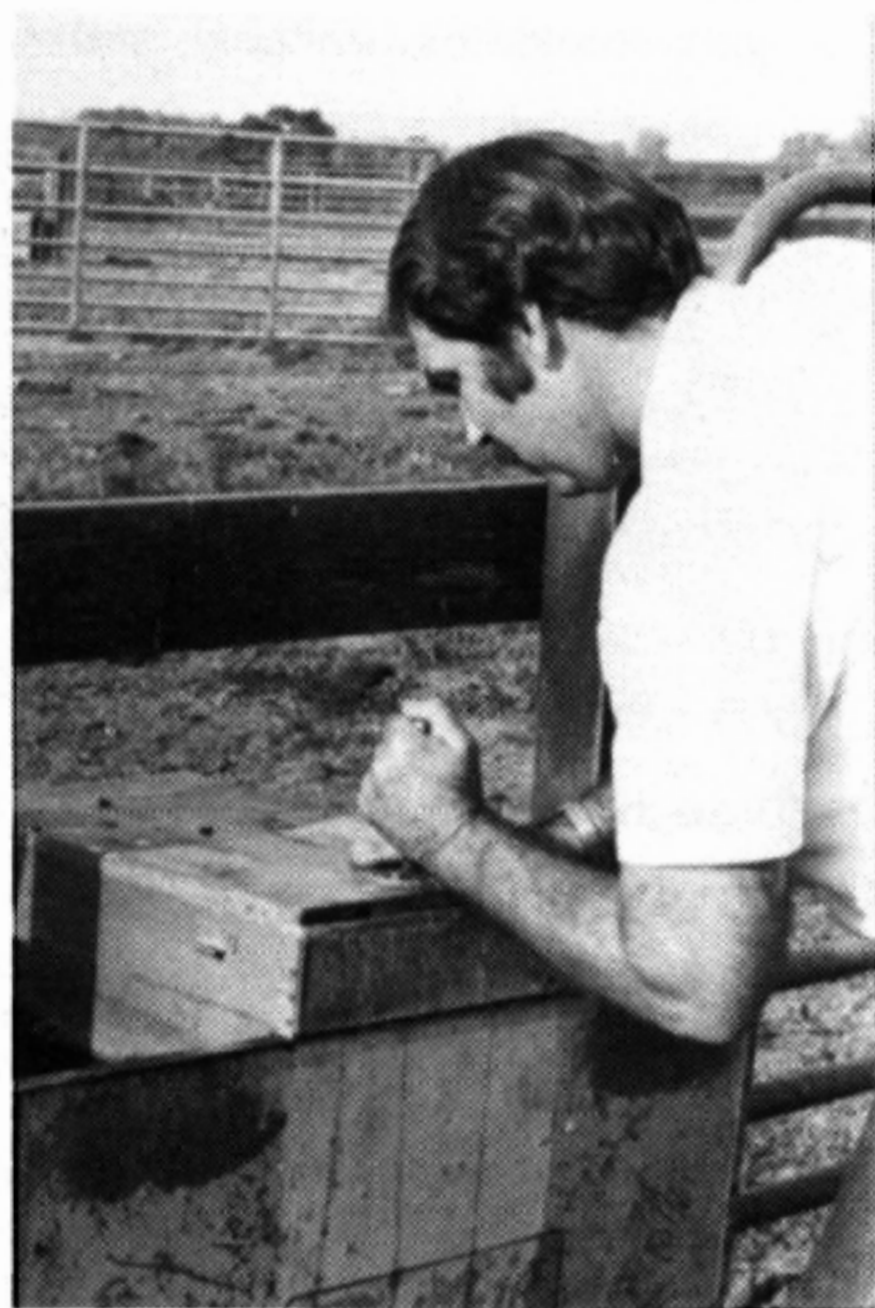
Gateway Farms plans to host the 1988 North and South Carolina Junior Angus Show and Field Day.



Here's a heifer package from largely Sir Williams-based cows and sired by Greenbrae Chairman. "He was a bull that didn't have all the frame in the world," says Lail, "but I liked him because of his muscling and the Mr. Angus maternal values."



The cow is Gunston Laura. Says farm manager Bobby Lail: "We're planning on building the herd around the Laura family." Laura is the daughter of Gunston Senorita and sired by Cobble Pond New Yorker. She's a full sister to Gunston Margarita. The Gunston Senorita cow plus R&J Laura 1730 and 2470 all trace back to General JJ Patton as full sisters.



"You're messing with Mother Nature," says Lail of flushing repeatedly. "Don't push it to the limit. We like a three-time flush, then we let that cow have a natural birth."

"We go by the book. We don't try to experiment. The hard part is synchronizing. Easiest part is when the 'Doc' comes and flushes them."

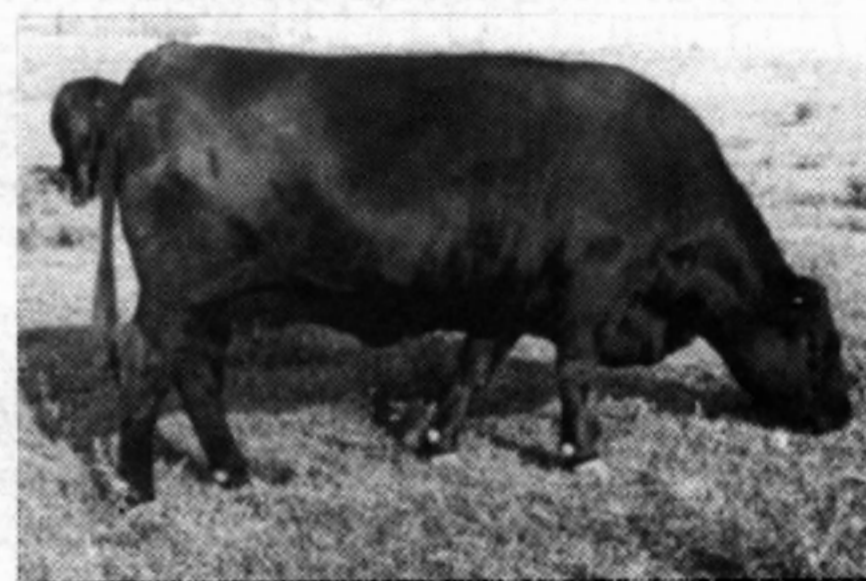
Holsteins have worked well as recipients for Gateway. "We have found they seem to take the pressure and love that calf to death."



A PS Power Play daughter flushed to Broadway. "We bought these cattle to work these cattle. We're not going to hurt them, but we're going to work 'em."



Gateway Farms' General Manager Bobby Lail: "This whole thing is a guessing man's game, but when you study your business, the odds are in your favor. I've been here more than two years, and it's going to take five to seven years to get in the swing of things."



A Canadian-bred matron purchased from Joel Stivers, Pittstown, N.J.

"We didn't have any idea what was being described as beef quality and dairy quality."

Dairymen were interested in dairy-quality hay as they had lost their corn crop. There'd be no green chop or silage—none at all. "The crop boys too really suffered worse than the cattlemen and the grass farmers," Randy points out.

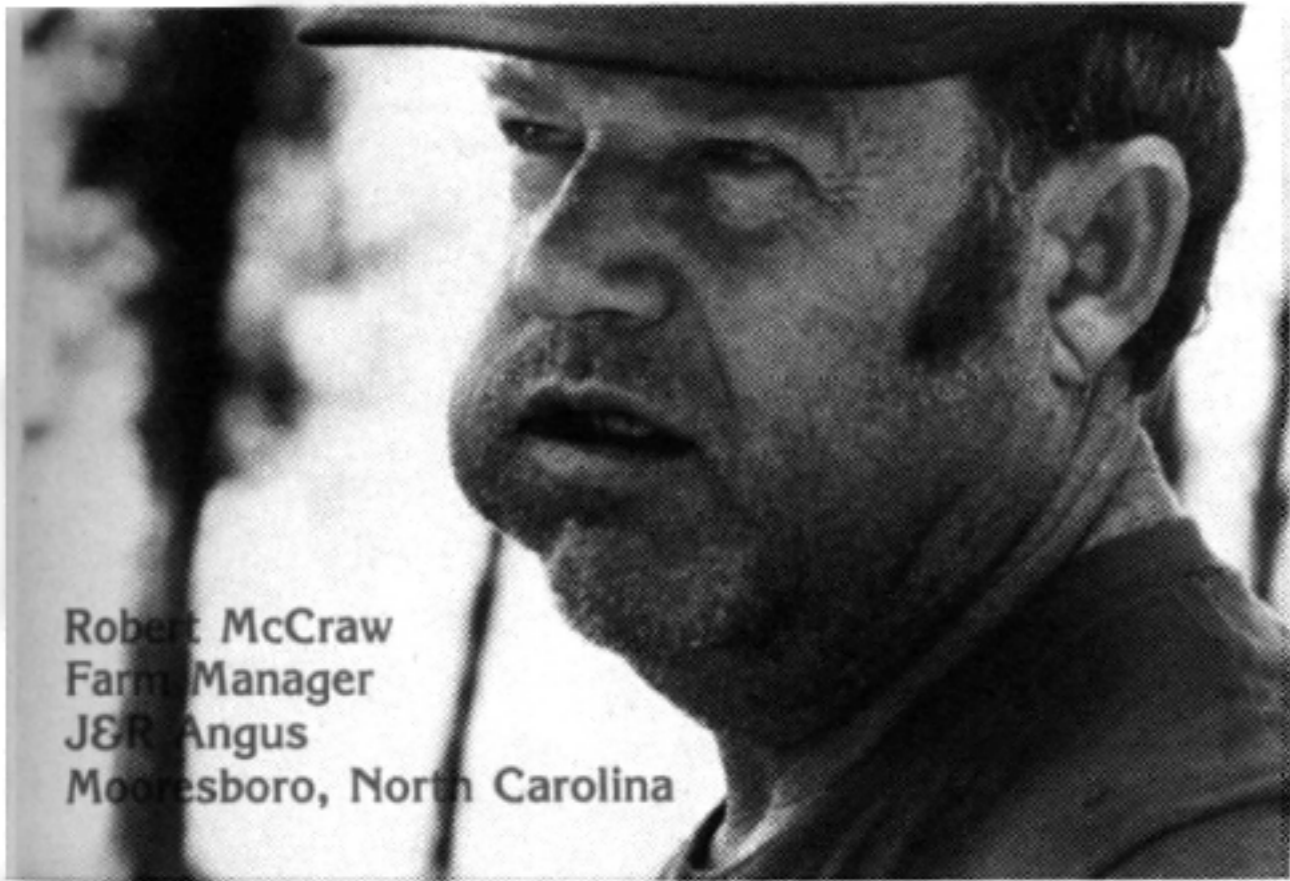
Transportation became the frequent headache. Randy vividly

remembers the Colorado hay deal and a Mrs. Ann Mauck calling, offering alfalfa. She explained the per ton price was a mere \$37 in Colorado and that some producers there would rather ship it than sell it. She'd contacted the Colorado Department of Agriculture which in turn began talking to North Carolina's.

"Colorado's a good distance away and transportation was a key

link. Nothing could get done," Randy recalls. "A Mrs. Jean Wyatt started working on this end, and finally this Mrs. Mauck called The White House and got an aid to the President. Pretty soon, she got a call back, telling her there'd be five railroad cars to load in Colorado."

Finally, both the quality descriptions and trucking problems began to be addressed through a state allotment system. "Right at



Robert McCraw
Farm Manager
J&R Angus
Mooresboro, North Carolina



Changing the face of the land and making it say "grass" instead of "Carolina pines" was one of the big and continuing undertakings by Bob and June Stitzel at their J&R Angus farm near Mooresboro in the county.

"Nothing could be finer (than to be in Carolin-er in the mornin') is part of the spirit and graces the back cover of the 1986-87 state directory where photos of the farm's Patricia daughters are featured. Fountain of the flush was J&R Lady Diane, sold to R&J Ranch for \$51,000, half interest. She became the foundation female for the "Patricia" family at R&J and was later sold in 1986 to Dr. Lee Miller of Mar Lee Angus at Woodsboro, Md.

"Weeds are outgrowing the grass (after the drought). I had 40 bales of hay when the drought hit and 12 round bales. I fed two of them and I got through it. If we would have had the cows here we had a year ago, we would've been hurting."

"(The drought) was hard on everyone."

—Bob Stitzel



"We were blessed with excellent pasture and a good grain supply going into the summer," states J&R Angus owner Bob Stitzel, Mooresboro, in the southwestern part of the county. "I know others suffered much worse during this time than we did at our farm. ... (t)hose people were the real troupers."

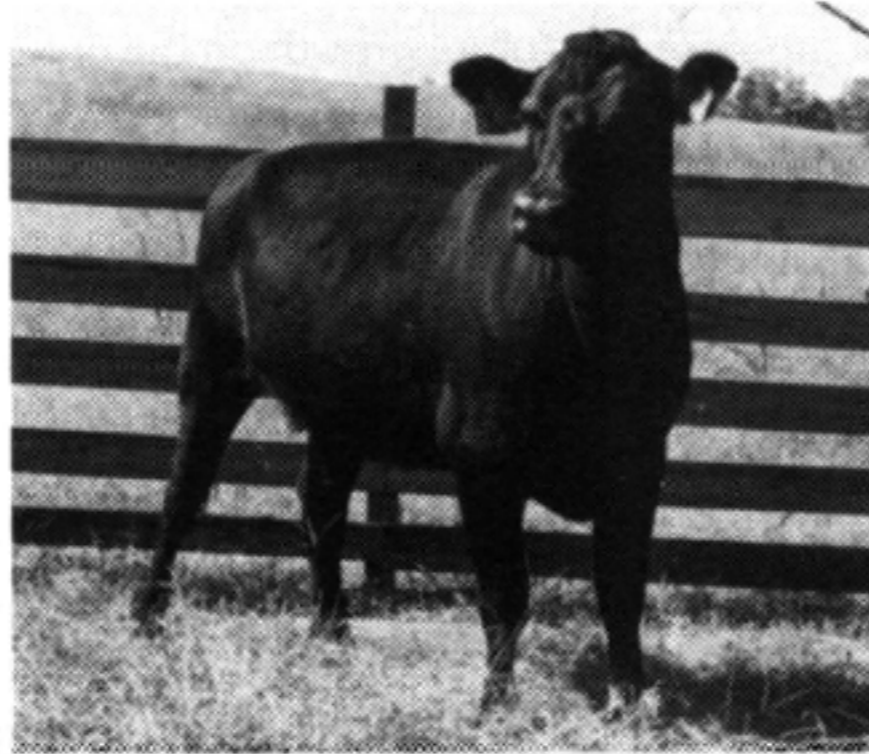
Stitzel cites preparing for the farm's first sale in May, 1984, and the first field in June of 1985 as particular challenges. However, as one surveys the construction and clearing effort that's gone into the farmstead and surrounding pastures, it's evident there's been energy expended here all along.

Stitzel began purchasing embryos in the year 1980. The goal was to leap upon some "genetic strength that would have taken decades for us to produce."

It's been a wise move as the Stitzels, Bob and June, have been able to accumulate some desirable genes in the herd and pass the fruits along to notable breed-

the beginning, there was a lot of confusion," Randy remembers, citing the variety of arrangements that began taking shape between hay-rich areas and the drought-stricken.

"The Ohio Department of Agriculture made some connections. There was a county-to-county network going, and then there were just some individuals



An embryo from J&R Lady Diane and sired by Pine Drive Big Sky takes her place as one of the leading cows of the herd.



ers. One of note, an embryo from Sky High Patricia 981 sired by Cracker Jack 12J, is the stuff of dreams.

This mating became Stitzel's JR Lady Diane, later sold to R&J Ranch, Briggs, Texas, in the J&R 1984 sale for \$51,000, half interest. She's still referred to and revered as "Patricia," though her home is now at Mar Lee Angus in Woodsboro, Md. Six "Patricia" daughters by Pine Drive Big Sky, Wrangler, and R&J Rolex remained to strongly influence the J&R herd.

That worked, and well. Still, Bob acknowledges he hasn't always been so fortunate. Some changes he might make if he had the opportunity include limiting cow numbers. "Guess you have to pay tuition for all your education. I learned a great deal about quality and quantity over the past several years."

E.T. has provided him with some exciting markets and fundamentally sound foundations, yet he warns the practice can turn into a taskmaster or disaster if breeders aren't aware of its costs and demands.

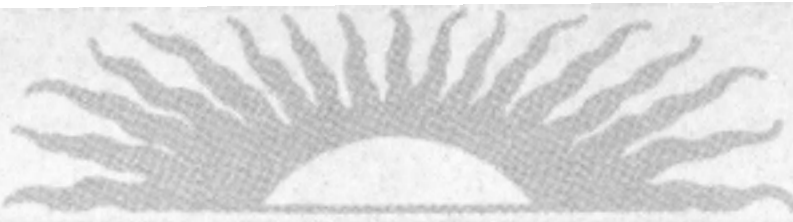
"I like E.T. as it allows genetic growth

quickly. It is very dangerous from a cost standpoint for most breeders. It serves your program well if you plan on keeping the females produced by E.T. in your herd to develop a strong genetic base. I would bet it is cost efficient for very few breeders.

"Always looking for that better calf," is how Bob Stitzel describes "an amazing cycle. It's always a challenge to breed a great individual plus a pleasure in all the life and vitality you see in young calves."

His concerns for the breed and beef in the future encompass all segments, rising to meet the consumer's skepticism. "The beef industry is under intense pressure from the consumer and many advisory groups regarding health and risks. We need the strongest and most respected breeders, judges, sale managers, and industry media to lead the way with a meaningful commitment to breed, judge, and market cattle the way the beef consumer will accept and purchase. ... (w)e have no choice except to produce what sells."



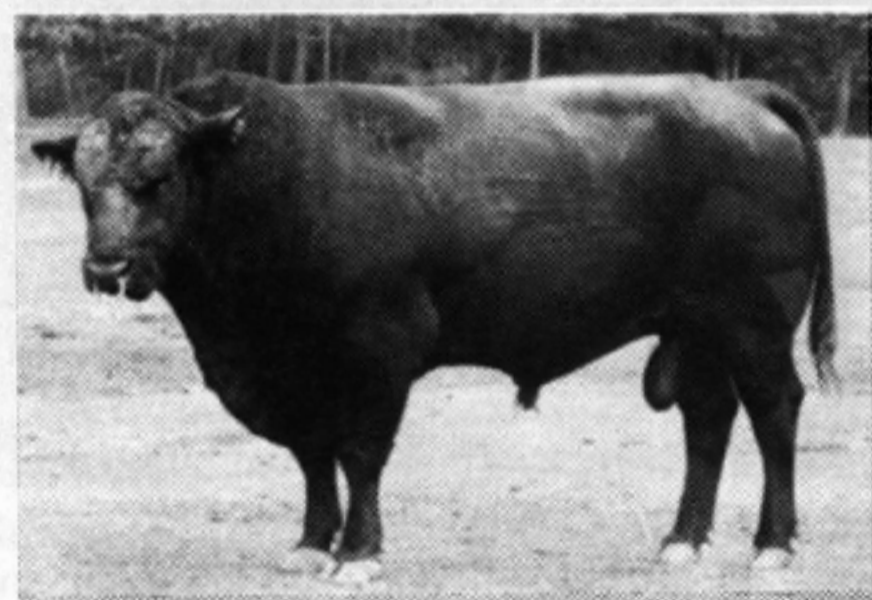


Grady Ward, Owner
Dallas Ranch
Lawndale,
North Carolina

"I remember droughts similar to this in other parts of the state. ... We've had droughts that have come close to the damage this one's done."



Glen Islay Erroline 41G, top-selling cow in the Canadian Royal sale, 1981, is a proven-transplant producer for the Wards.



"The General (JJ Patton)" in fatigues. Dallas Ranch is his home with interests owned by Kansas State University; Premier Beef Inc. of Howell, Mich.; JAC's Ranch of Bentonville, Ark.; and Dallas. "We've enjoyed working with this caliber of people over the years," Grady says, and of the bull: "He's put some awful good, growthy calves on the ground for us. He's a docile bull which I appreciate."

contacting people who needed feed.

"We weren't adopted by a county up north like some of the other areas, but we did make a connection with a county in Indiana through a couple of oil

"We had to open our silos."

—Grady Ward



It was one of those bullet-biting decisions for Grady and Barbara Ward at Dallas Ranch, near Lawndale and in the northern section of the county. Here was their winter's feed, neatly tucked and packed but "the wreck was on"; cows had to be kept in condition.

"You can't give up and let your herd go downhill into winter because you just don't recover," Grady says of the decision. Other measures taken at the Wards included keeping the cows in most of the summer and feeding grain. "We tried to keep the young stock growing. We were lucky in that we *did* have a little silage, I guess.

"Then we had some of the free hay in the big bales that came in from Colorado. We took it as we were able to handle it. It's nice hay."

Of special importance to the Wards was their A.I. program. They've banked a lot of progress and future growth on the outcome and when drought threatened to undo some of the hard-earned gains, priorities were shifted.

"It's been a hard winter and hard summer on us. Nutrition becomes much more important when you start fooling with A.I.," Grady notes. "We have grained and supplemented all through the summer for both the cows and calves. It's been a rough year handling the feed bill for the cattle," he acknowledges sharing the ex-



Cooling off a show heifer. Hot weather determines some of the area's management practices. Says Grady: "When hot weather comes on here, we use a clean-up bull. But we try to A.I. everything."

perience of many others in the area. "We've had bills we just normally don't have this time of year."

Still optimism prevails, a cheery companion common to most stockmen, especially when there are some outstanding calves from the Old Bull. Grady's had several reports of the General's descendants doing well, drought or no drought.



Lookin' good despite a tough summer, these heifers represent sires General JJ Patton, PS Power Play, SVF Pistolero, Cobble Pond New Yorker, and Wrangler.

jobbers talking to each other on the phone. That connection brought us 18 loads, and we only had to pay some freight on part of it."

(The folks in Indiana were subsequently invited down to Shelby, N.C., the county seat, to

enjoy a weekend of its hospitality and world-famous barbecue. Barbecue is a local art and an important industry there.)

The National Guard was first employed to help unload, store, and re-load the hay sent in, but it



"...had to buy extra hay and grain."



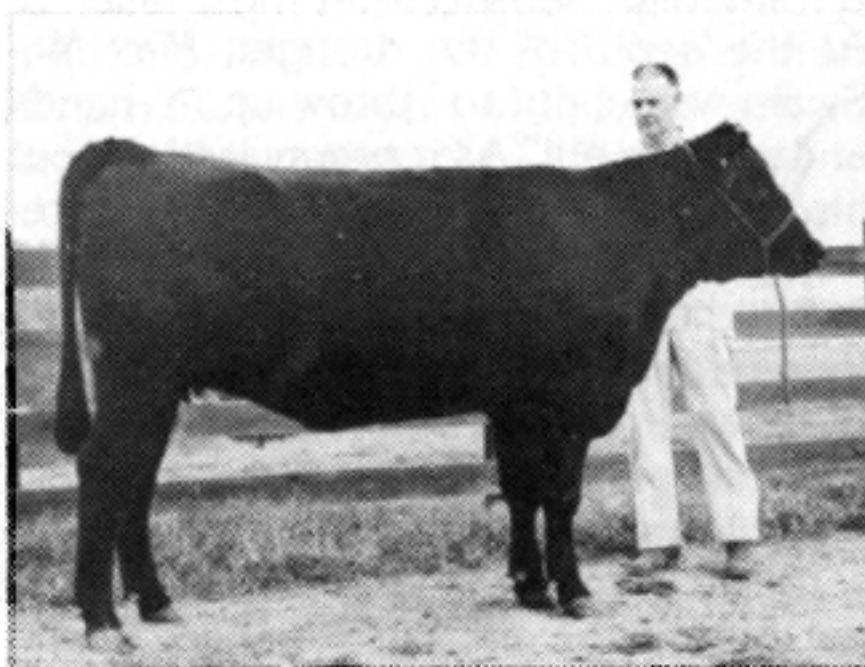
—Dr. T.G. Westmoreland

As the drought progressed and folks girded up to face something that just wasn't going away, some serious decisions had to be made.

Fortunately for the Westmorelands at River Hill Angus Farm, Shelby, some of that adjustment was already in motion. The mature cow portion of the River Hill herd had been sold prior to the onset of the drought. The arrangement included breeding cows back while River Hill kept the calves. By the time the customer picked up his cows, the area was well into the drought, however.

"We were almost out of water when the rains started (in the latter part of August). We don't have any grass left," said Westmoreland of his surroundings. "We have already reseeded some pastures with fescue, wintergrazer (a hybrid rye), and clover."

While the country looked green and even lush in late September—"fair time"—



"Playgirl" is the daughter of River Hill Playmate, a flush mate of PS High Pockets and River Hill Miss Genes and out of PS Playmate 905, PS Power Play's full sister. "Playmate," "High Pockets," and "Miss Genes" were all born at River Hill Farm. They were purchased from the Pennsylvania State University herd as embryos, sired by Ken Caryl Mr. Angus 8017. "Miss Genes" is the dam of River Hill Power Genes, most recently the reserve senior champion bull at the Atlantic National. "Power Genes" is a Pine Drive Big Sky son. "Buddy" Hamrick's H&H Farms is a partner.

"Playmate" was owned in partnership with Northcote Farm, Forest, Va., and sold in the most recent Northcote sale to Gateway Farms, Gaffney, S.C., a neighbor to the Westmorelands.

"Playgirl" is Pine Drive Big Sky-sired and is also owned together with H&H Farms, Boiling Springs, N.C.

Dr. "Ted" points out appearances are deceiving. "The grass visible from the road is wiregrass, crabgrass, and invaders responding to the drought conditions broken by the rains. They'll be gone with the first frost. The fescue and clover we rely on for long-term fall grazing just isn't there. Most will have to be reseeded."

The transaction described above is the marketing approach Westmoreland likes to follow—"you take the cow and we'll keep the calf. It makes a good market as the buyer can see the results."

And, the method harmonizes with the stress he places on genetic turnover. If he had opportunity to change the beginnings of River Hill, "Doc" Westmoreland says he would have started earlier with modern genetics. The original cow herd consisted

middle. That was a little intimidating and most producers were reluctant to take any of the monsters thinking they couldn't handle them.

"One of those big bales broke when we were unloading, and



T.G. "Ted" Westmoreland, DVM, president of the North Carolina Angus Assn. during 1985-86 and 1986-87 terms and owner, River Hill Angus, Shelby, N.C.

"I really think what got us started was sending bulls to a central test station. We have used the sale money from the central test and re-invested it in good genetics such as embryos. I have strongly supported and promoted test stations, and they in return have made me money and promoted my herd."

of older yet proven producers, but it's Westmoreland's experience and conviction that aggressive producers must move on the inside track. Today, he says, "you're either on the bandwagon or you've missed it."

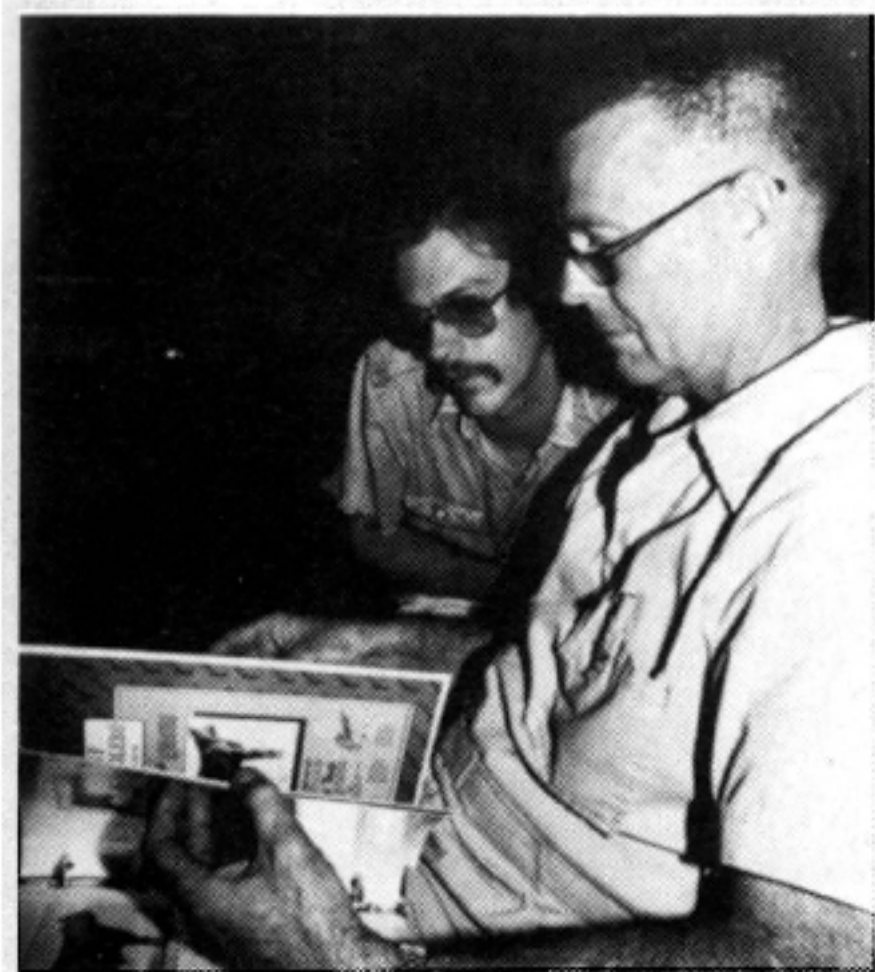
That's why A.I. and E.T. are so important at River Hill. "Superior genetic predictability," he states adding that genetically sound sires have been vital to River Hill's present success and for future progress. No clean-up bulls have been used, and the herd's been A.I.-bred for more than 10 years. "Turned-over" cows are sold to new breeders or to producers wanting to update their herds.

He's also tried to flush two to four cows annually for the past seven years. "I think A.I. and some on-farm E.T. are both essential to making the fast genetic improvements necessary for success. I do not believe you can produce and market purebred seedstock without some A.I. breeding."

One of the great satisfactions of the business is selling a group of good cows, bred A.I., to a new breeder. "I am very disappointed," he says, "if that customer doesn't return to purchase more cattle.

everyone peered over and got a look. Then, they started to say, 'I think we can take one of those big bales.'

"Those were the best quality bales we got in here—super quality."

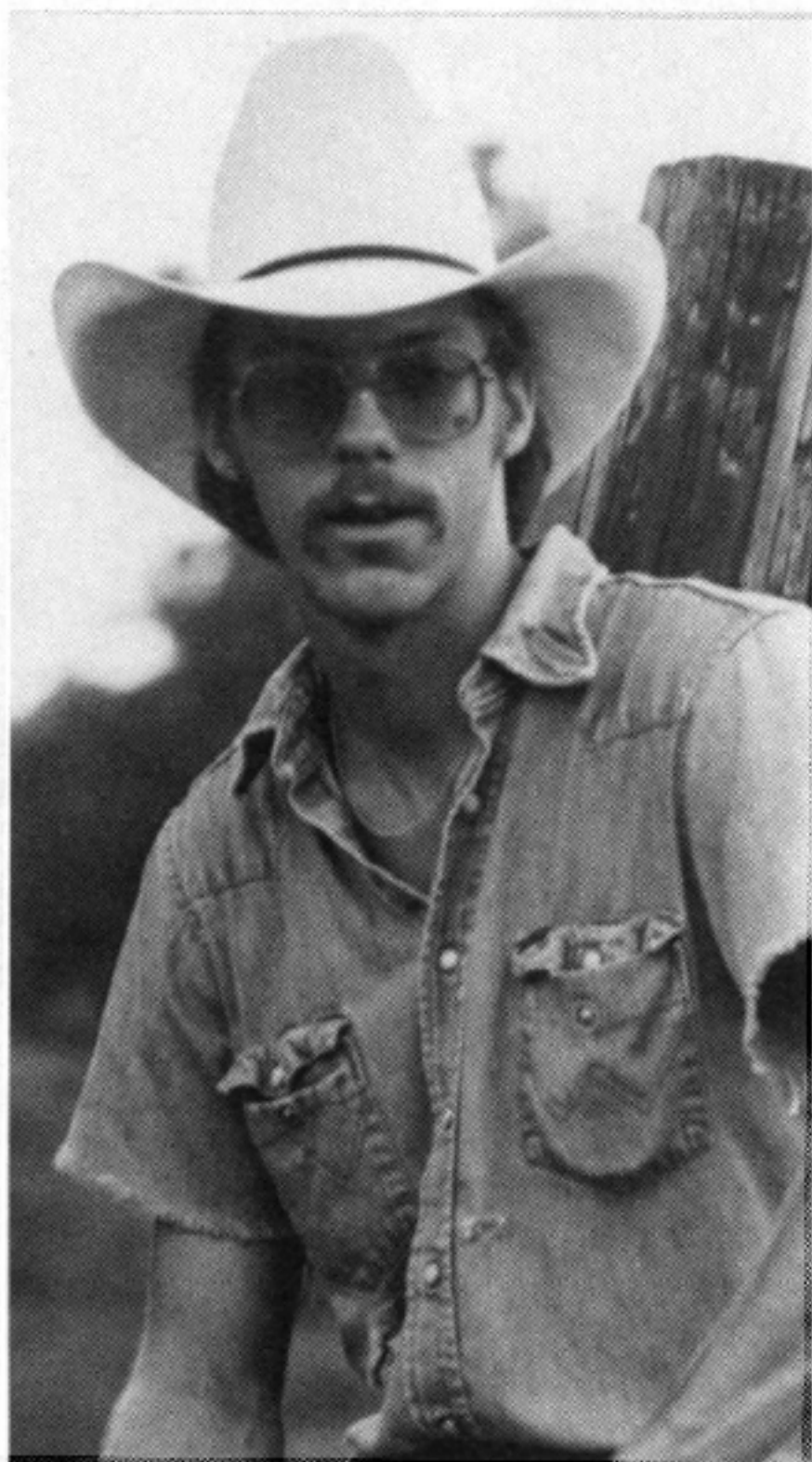
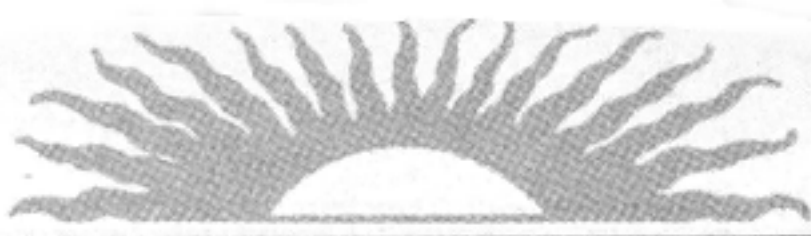


"I think the more we watch the daughters of Mr. Angus, the more we're going to like him. We knew he had the frame, but we had to see the daughters. Then we found he had the milk too.

"We sell cows and then we go buy better genetics. We never buy without selling something first. Today we're gambling with young genetics, but to survive, a breeder's got to sell some premium animals somewhere down the line."

soon became very informal, according to Sweeting, with folks showing up at the distribution area and loading their own trucks.

Upon opening one rail car, the crew found a section of 2,000 pound square bails right in the



Wes Westmoreland, a student of political science, has already tasted public office as president of the North Carolina Junior Angus Assn.

Most of my cows are sold to repeat buyers or on the recommendation of a previous customer. We like to have prospects go home and think about it and then come back wanting to buy a bull or some proven cows."

But the greatest satisfaction? "Probably watching both sons, Wes and Jay show heifers with reasonably good results."

The alfalfa from Colorado.

By the third week in August, it began to rain on Cleveland County, North Carolina. By the third week of August, some growth had taken place. "We were in pretty good shape from a forage standpoint. Then we had a little over ten inches of rain in a 2-3 week period—which we're not used to."

Things back to normal.

Well, not quite. For one, herds are smaller in Cleveland County now as a result of the drought. A lot of cows went to market starting

"We kept our hayrack full..."

—Max D. McSwain

At the depth of the drought, Max McSwain was about to "throw up m' hands and sell 'em all!" As it progressed, he cut his herd down to less than half its pre-drought numbers.

But then, the culling coincided with his long-term, overall scheme anyway. He'd been planning to reduce numbers to some degree. "I had to sell some cows I didn't much want to sell. But I'd pick some I felt were least productive. Any little thing came up, I'd cull them, and I wasn't gettin' much for 'em."

Other than a couple or three very light showers—what Max describes as "dew," his records show Beaverland had no rain since March 15. His only reserve forage was some three-year-old fescue stacked in a barn on the backside of the farm. "The protein was gone and it wasn't much good for them.

"We kept our hayrack full of feed intended for the winter and also did more culling." Eventually, before the drought broke, Max took some of the hay from the north that was offered, and things eased up a bit.

Cows have been raised up and down Beaver Creek and along its dams for over a century, Max believes. His family has been there for several generations now and were once prominent in the Guernsey business.

"In between the dairy and the Angus, we raised Arabian horses for a good while. But my wife always wanted Black Angus cattle," he said. "I brought her first Angus cow to the house Christmas eve, tied a red ribbon around its neck, and put her up in the lot."

the end of July and early August, 1986. "We sold off roughly a third of the beef brood cows in the county," Randy notes. "Most of the county agents tell me they've had a 30-35 percent reduction in cow numbers in western and south central North Carolina."

Yet there's a benefit to be had. "That's going to show up in a couple of years as a plus because we rid ourselves of those marginal cows. What's left are pretty good cows.

"The quality of calves and feeder calves will be better," he predicts,



Max McSwain, Owner Beaverland Angus McSwainville (Shelby), North Carolina

"I'm 69 this morning. I've had three operations for kidney stones and been given up for dead three times. The doctor told me I couldn't ride and train horses anymore. That was in 1971, and that's when we started in the Angus business.

"Well, Beaverland Creek 'bout dried up this summer. Couldn't but one cow drink at a time—almost that bad."



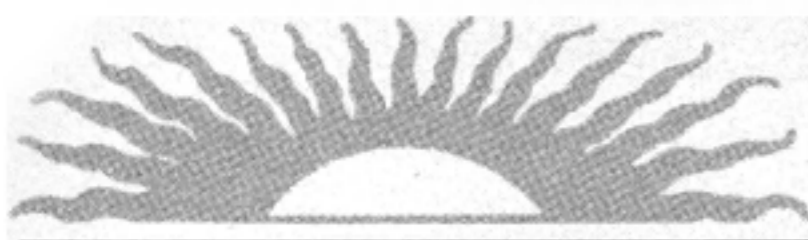
One of the area's landmarks, this huge barn was built in the 1930s when top labor paid fifteen cents an hour, ordinary wages were ten cents.

"They used a handmade mold that formed one block at a time. My granddaddy laid them. My father died working on this barn. He got too hot in the middle of August and developed leukemia. He died at the age of 34, six weeks later. We lacked 200 blocks of finishing up that barn. We had a Guernsey herd then, 125 head, and made all the shows.

"We tried to have the top animal. If we didn't have it that particular year, we made sure we owned it or one better by fair time next year."

"After that, Margaret decided that cow was lonesome, so we traded one of my last horses for a pasture mate.

"'Christmas' showed up with a huge udder," Max recalls, "then it began to get smaller. Eleven days passed. Margaret got a hoe—she's deathly afraid of snakes—and she walked the pasture and every gully. Finally, that calf jumped up and ran



out. It had nothing to eat for 11 days. My wife made that cow take her calf."

Those were the early Angus days. Max made some determinations. "I said if we're going to have cattle, we're going to have registered cattle. I started going to sales and buying some. And of course, not knowing anything about pedigrees, I made some mistakes."

Eventually, those were straightened out and through A.I. and attentive management, Beaverland Angus came on line with some notable producers and repeat

sales. His oldest matron is an Ankonian Dynamo cow. Hopes rest on three heifers by Transition, a son of Progression, and a heifer from Miss Beauty Maid, dam of Fairfield Hi Guy. An E.T. heifer from Briarhill Jane is part of the new generation at Beaverland.

The drought, then, is working some positive aspects into the McSwain herd and Max's objectives. In light of hindsight, Max allows he would probably keep fewer cows and better cows. "I'll probably sell down to 10 super cows," he says.



The McSwains entered the furniture business originally when driving hogs to Tennessee.

"M' great-granddaddy was the trail boss. They would dribble corn off the wagons, and the hogs would follow. They'd be gone for a month to two months at a time over to Solomon County, Tennessee.

"Wellsir, they began hauling furniture from there back in the empty wagons. Seems like we've been involved in makin' furniture or tradin' furniture ever since."

Max employed a crew for several years in the restoration and refinishing business. Margaret McSwain rescued this four-poster before it left the shop to be sold on consignment.

"I came home and found she'd moved it up to the house and was sitting on it as cute as you please. So I said, 'Aw, heck, I'll let y' have it.'"



"I can run a little water on 'em now that we're back to normal." The McSwain herd is comprised of genetics from Ankonian Dynamo, Premier Independence KN, Bold Image, PS High Pockets, Sky High, Power Pack, Transition and Briarhill Jane.



This growthy son of Progression weighed 1,285 pounds by 12 months of age. At 14 months of age, he weighed 1,402; at 15 months, 1,500 flat. Birthweight was 105 pounds. Dam was a daughter of LEMAR Eileenmere Lad 549, "Sky High." Max has named him "Beaverland Anniversary" as he arrived on the McSwain wedding date.

emphasizing the brighter side of the hardship posed by a rainless summer.

Of course, August redeemed itself and the earlier months with that ten-incher, and 1986 is going to look pretty good on the average, "but it didn't come at the right time.

"I don't think we'll have anybody around here not cutting hay because they don't feel like it," Randy Sweeting concludes.

And one final lesson folks may have learned from the drought of '86: both those who supplied the hay and those who benefitted from it likely found it's good when neighbors can get together over a barbecue . . . or a bale of hay. **AJ**



Sundown on Beaverland. The beaver ponds on the place nearly dried up, but rain showers restored the land and replenished the stock and grass.

Hope springs eternal . . . or at least it does return.