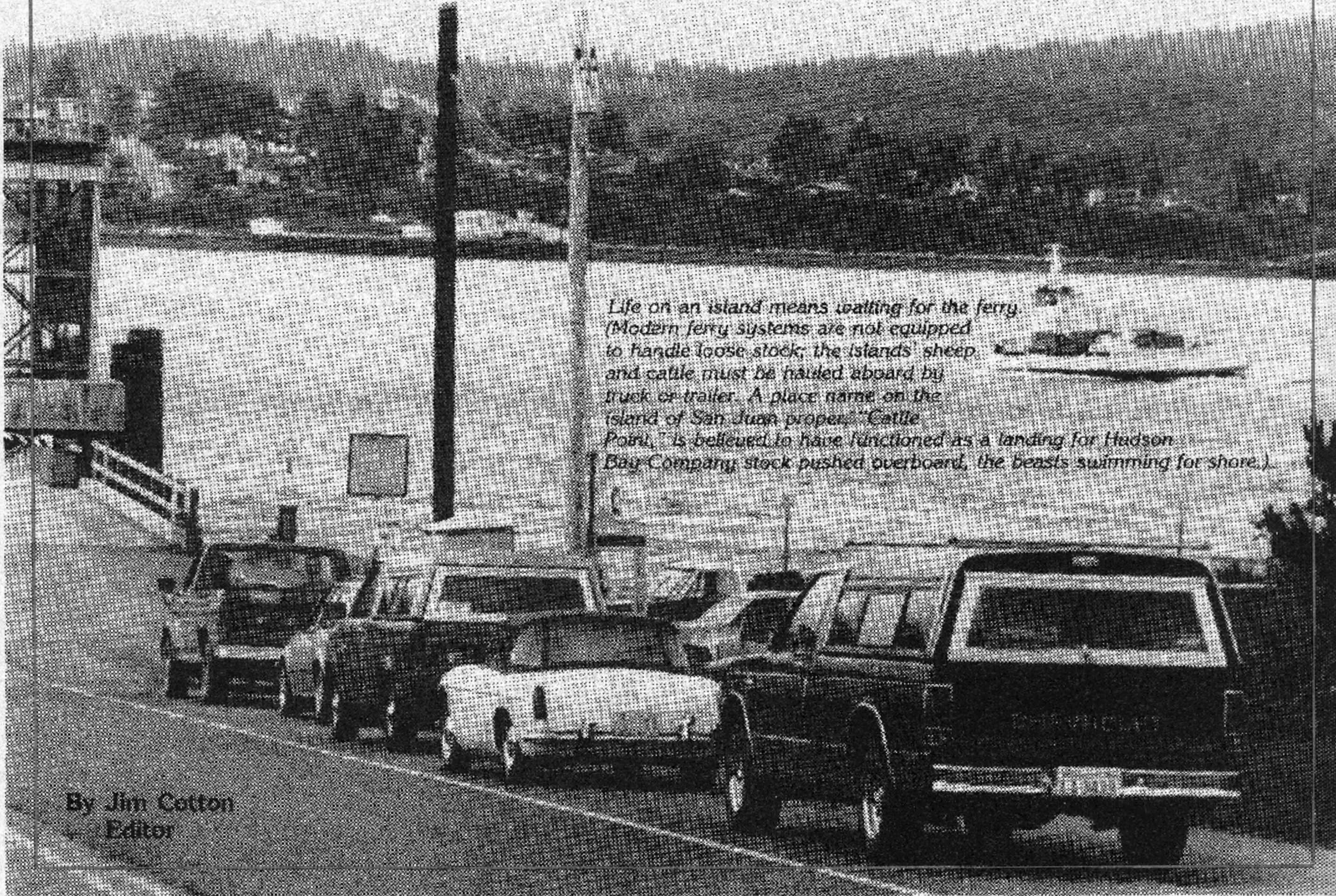


May we present the Bush family—Allen, Nancy, daughter Audrey, and son Allen? Allen is a member of the executive committee, Washington Cattlemen's Association, and operator of a mega-crane at the Anacortes (Wash.) terminal; Nancy's career is in public education; Audrey's just graduated from junior college in Missouri and will attend Washington State University at Pullman; and Allen enters WSU this next fall on an architectural scholarship.

All this may sound similar to your own family's situation or phase. It should, for many in the Angus community will find common ground in this profile with one exception. Bushes raise their Angus..

ON AN ISLAND RANCH



Life on an island means waiting for the ferry. (Modern ferry systems are not equipped to handle loose stock; the islands' sheep and cattle must be hauled aboard by truck or trailer. A place name on the island of San Juan proper, "Cattle Point," is believed to have functioned as a landing for Hudson Bay Company stock pushed overboard, the beasts swimming for shore.)

By Jim Cotton
Editor

Complications arise in this beef business. If there's a perfectly-ordered operation where nothing needs built up or torn down, fences perfect, calves arriving conveniently, with no surprises from the vet, bank, neighbors, or market place, it's a marvel and needs documentation.

Across the Angus community, there are any number of little enclaves where several farms and ranches raise Angus. Sometimes, their boundaries join. Other operations are outposts surrounded by wheat farms, other

breeds, or nestled in dairy country for one example.

Our subject family here raises Angus on an island, Guemes to be exact, part of the San Juan archipelago, northwest of Seattle, Wash. Allen Bush has been engaged with this island farm since the middle 1950s when as a high school senior, he began 30-year involvement with some phase of beef cattle.

"Dad was transferred out here (from Denver), and they bought this summer place—16 acres. I spent my last year in high school in Seattle and would

spend the weekends on the island. We'd come up Friday night and that's when the 4-H club would meet. That's how I got started."

The Bush family enjoys some "pros" peculiar to island living and yet must accommodate some of the "cons" to their schedule. There are drawbacks despite the idyllic setting. For cattle marketing, they are well away from the established outlets. Ferry schedules must be considered foremost when joining any off-island activity. Miss the last ferry, and you're stuck for the night. Dawdle over the morning's

coffee, and you'll be an hour and a half late for work. Consequently, there can be only limited participation in organizations off the island. Plus, there's always planning for ferry outages as the system needs repair and maintenance too.

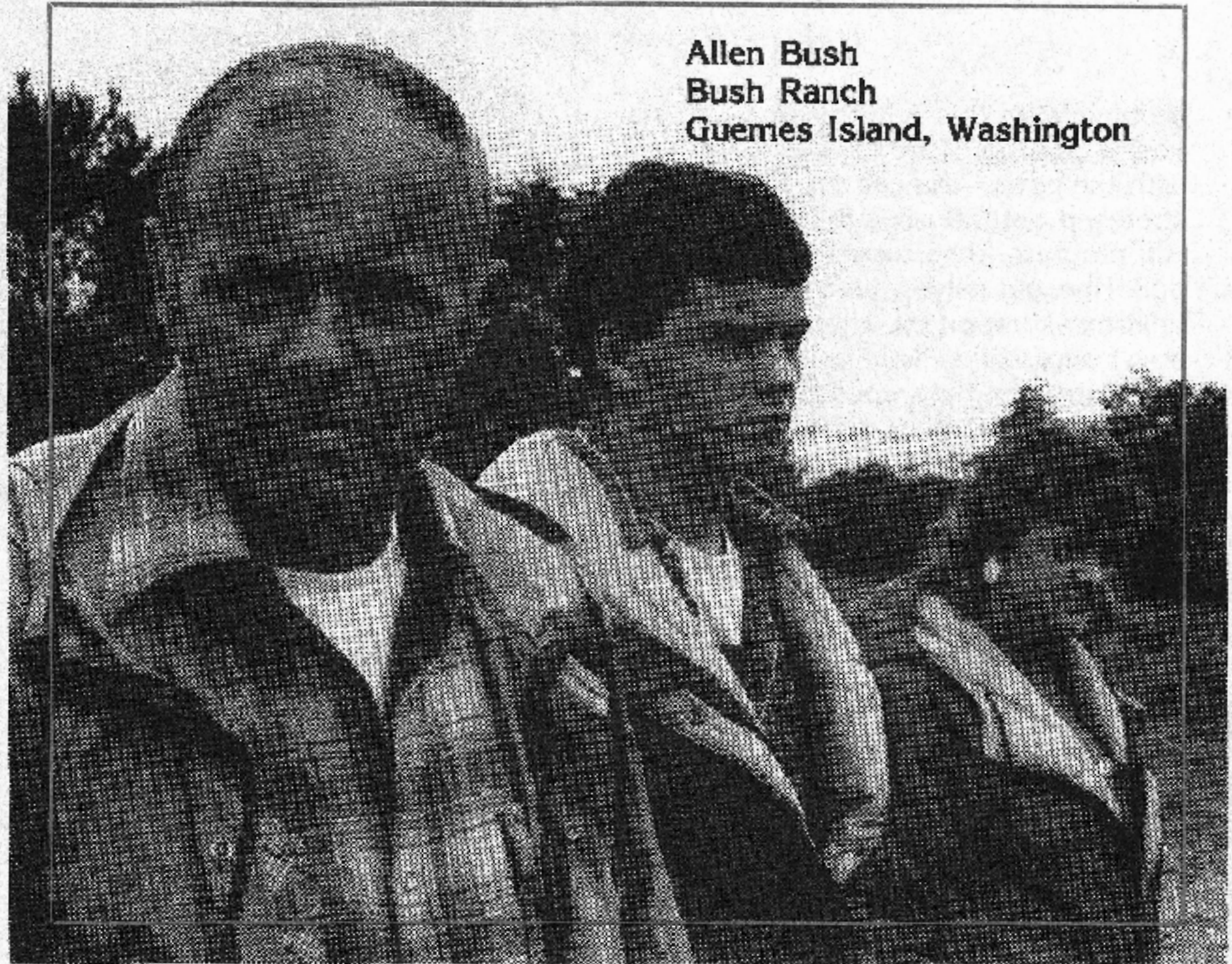
Advantages listed by Allen include a good family environment, close proximity to town (Anacortes, by ferry), beautiful surroundings, disease-free isolation, and "no rustlers," he adds.

Meeting everyone's demands and schedules with a herd of 30-plus brood cows thrown in takes some juggling.

"We have to manage our time very wisely," Allen points out. "We seldom can leave together as a family because there are chores to do. The size of our herd is controlled by the fact our farm is a one-man operation. My wife and I both work at outside occupations."

Echoing some sentiments heard the Angus world over, Allen confides the life has been a struggle and will likely continue to extract its due. Living the Angus life and witnessing other families with like minds and goals has been helpful.

"I'm not going to get out of this thing, not after all this work I've put



Allen Bush
Bush Ranch
Guemes Island, Washington

"One of the pleasures of this business is watching the kids take an interest in the cattle and shows, both the 4-H and junior Angus events."

in," he says. "We're determined to stay in this business and our main goal is to stay afloat for now."

The Bushes have cut the herd back over recent years, from 80 head down to 28 registered females. Plans are to consider a entry-level E.T. program

plus expand the A.I. effort already in place. Allen wishes he would have developed an A.I. program sooner as well as turned over his herd bulls a little faster.

He likes to flush the cattle for 30 days prior to A.I. breeding. "The



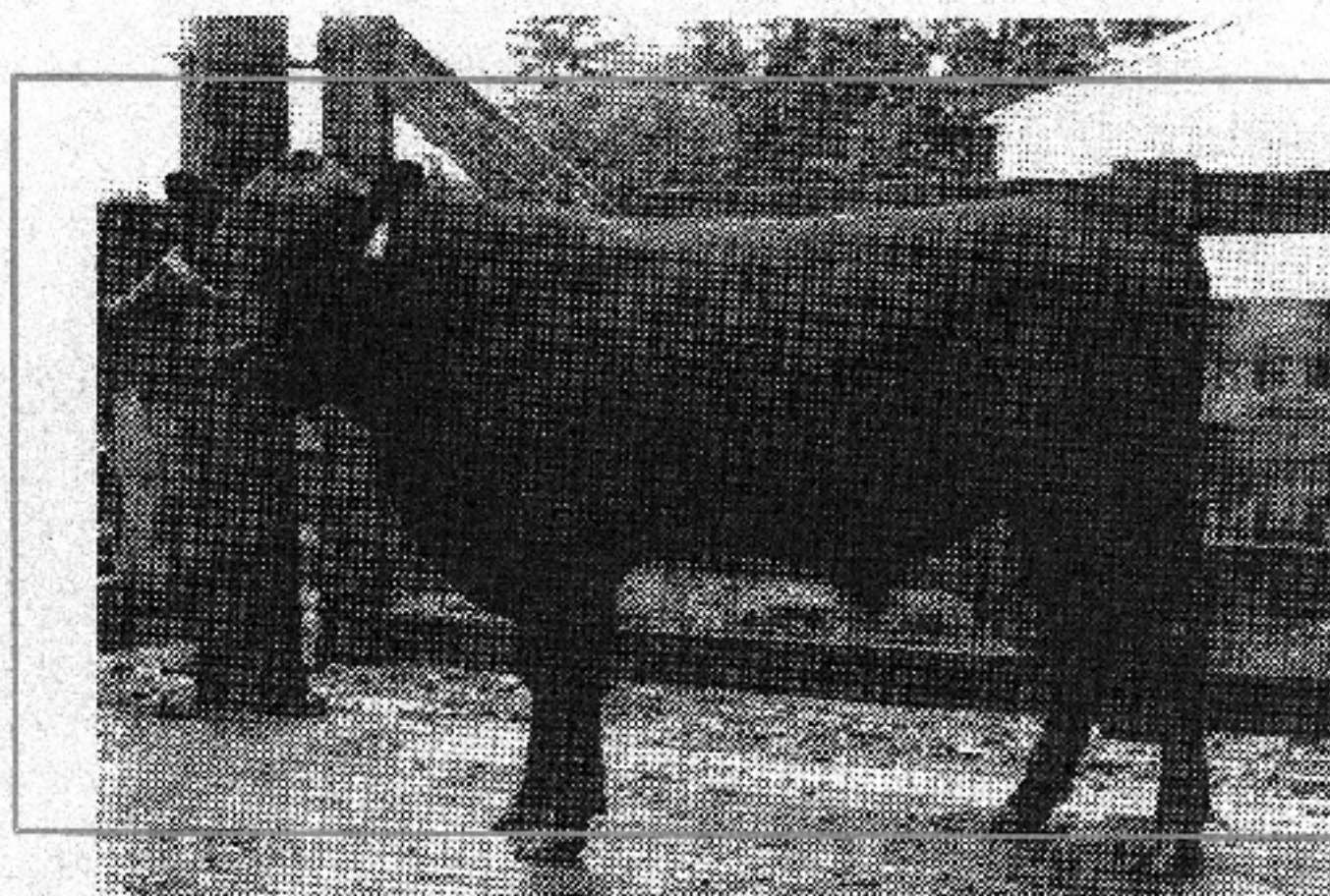
Nancy Bush: "We're about the only farm family in the church (Episcopal) and we hosted the 'Blessing of the animals' at our place. It's traditional, 40 days after Easter. We had a 'bovine choir,' all right. It seems, though, our crops were better the years we had the blessing."



"Angus cattle are big enough. Now, I think the industry needs more continuity between the show ring and the market place." Cow #12 has an illustrious background: sire, Sir Wms Warrant and out of a Mon Reposa Chaparral daughter, Thomas Lucy Rose 807, which Allen bought at the Glacier View Dispersal last year.

problem with this A.I. business—unless you're dedicated and willing to live with the cows—the calf crop gets stretched out." Bushes follow a 30-day A.I. program, then turn it over to the bull. Keeping calves bunched and uniform is important when markets aren't accessible. "Late calves won't do well here, and they won't fit into any program," Allen says of the island environment and the show age levels they like to meet.

He has some philosophic objections



"I guess all breeders fantasize. We'd someday like to go to Denver or Reno with a top-quality animal." Calf 12A is a Premier Independence KN son and out of the #12 cow pictured.

Calf 153 is also by Pine Drive Big Sky and out of a Schearbrook Shoshone cow.



to creep feeding calves as it masks the performance of cow herd. Yet, the weather and forage restrictions posed by the farm and location have compelled him to consider it.

"We went to a creep feeding program because the show calves were just going flat on us after weaning. Pre-weaning creep primes them a little and we get them used to grain. We turn them back to the cows, but we gradually wean the calves we're going to show. The rest of the calves stay with their mothers until September."

January and February calves are



The #49 pair; calf by Pine Drive Big Sky and out of a Thomas Garnett daughter.



In this island climate, flowers grow in the most unpredictable places.

dispersal of last year, a Fairfield Hi Guy daughter, Lucy Rose. Other sires represented include Pine Drive Big Sky, and Premier Independence KN.

Sire evaluation is an esteemed tool for Allen, and he credits any improvement made in the herd over the years to birth records, weaning weights, using the farm scale, and studying sire evaluation.

Progress seems to come in plateaus in the beef game. One step ahead

high quality calves," Allen states.

"Improving each year on a set of calves with increased weaning weights and better conformation—sending a uniform group of calves to market. Those are some goals we've achieved."

Aside from improving the cattle, scheduling family participation in the breed activities has become more important.

"I think," says Allen, "an area where we've been lax, until the last couple of

preferred. By "grasstime" on these islands, conditions are such the late winter-born calves come on and do well through the summer. However, Allen's observed late calvers simply don't work. "By the time they're ready to eat, it's time to throw hay out."

Despite expectations, this is dry summer country. It lies in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, experiences less rain and more sunshine than areas to the north or south, and is thin-soiled, susceptible to quick drying and droughtiness.

"Last August we put hay in the barn and two weeks later, we were hauling it out again. We really get dry in July and August. We'll dry up but we'll get by."

Late summer's no time to be running an A.I. program in this latitude. Allen and the family have been quite successful in the A.I. program by watching nutrition and studying the sire information available through the Association and the stud services.

"The bull that's really done well for us is Premier Progressor. We have several of his daughters in the herd that are good producers. They'll put some pounds on. They're not really stylish, but they're big, broody cows that will push the scales down." Allen found Ken Caryl Mr. Angus an appealing bull, but of the 10 ampules of semen used, nine were bulls with one lone heifer—a modest contribution to the maternal breakthrough hoped for.

There are some favorite cows. One, a Pathfinder cow from the Erlata family, has put five daughters in the herd. Hopes are high too for a cow purchased from the Glacier View



Allen and Audrey Bush with the new ranch sign.

seems to either open a pathway to new progress or raise another new challenge. The Bushes had just completed the demolition of an old barn. "Now, we're busy trying to get a corral built so we can unload cattle easier."

A new stock trailer will help. "Besides showing, we have to haul cattle back and forth between three different places," Allen points out. A familiar note, perhaps, among those breeders raising cattle while renting pasture. "We keep the heifers at home here and the cows down at the 'farm'."

Still there are the rewards alongside the perplexities and imperfections. Some of the satisfactions?

"Going to auction with some really

years, is getting out and meeting other people in the cattle business. It's good to visit other ranches and take an active part in the organization.

"We have met some really solid, down-to-earth people—not just individuals—but whole families."

And if that's an important benefit of this Angus life, try taking Interstate 5 north from Seattle to Burlington, then route 20 to Anacortes and ask where you catch the Guemes Island Ferry. Disembark and head up the hill until you find 232 Edens Road. There, you'll find some folk working with their cattle or down combing the beach and watching for whales... some solid, down-to-earth Angus breeders.

AJ