

# BLACK WITCH

*Eight hours a day, Ed and Wilma Minix can be found in the fast-paced heart of Atlanta, leading a busy city life. But they're not ordinary city folks.*

*By the early morning and evening light, on days off and in most every spare minute, they work with their 14-cow registered Angus herd in the peace and quiet of Black Witch Farm. A herd they built up from scratch and manage on their own. A herd that's produced bulls that have shattered Georgia test station records.*



by Marilyn Barr  
Assistant Director, Communications & Public Relations  
American Angus Assn.

**S**cene 1: It's fast-paced, crowded, hectic. Every day 16,000-30,000 people converge on The Varsity—world's largest drive-in restaurant and an Atlanta landmark since 1928—to down some 15,000 hamburgers, more than 2 miles of hotdogs, a ton of onions, gallons of chili.

In the midst of the throngs of hungry people, Ed Minix, in sport shirt and tie, calmly greets customers and keeps the business flowing. Vice president and general manager, Minix has been part of the hustle and bustle of this huge fast-food business for nearly 33 years.

Scene 2: It's quiet, peaceful, relaxing. Fourteen registered Angus cows with calves, all in top-notch condition, graze on a beautiful 47-acre "secluded hideaway" 16

miles from Atlanta. In faded jeans and boots, Ed and Wilma Minix feed, weigh cattle, heat check, A.I., calve. Or just plain relax and enjoy the cattle and the country.

They lead a double life, but it's a life style that goes hand in hand with two important Minix theories.

One, you don't have to be a big breeder to achieve a lot of things.

And two, you can live in the city, hold a full-time job and still raise cattle successfully.

#### **No Farm Background**

"Neither one of us grew up on a farm," Wilma says, "and we were real amateurs about the whole thing. We've had to learn everything from scratch." That meant gleaned the knowledge of extension peo-

ple as well as attending annual short courses, genetics classes, seminars on cow size, A.I. school. As Wilma puts it, "Anything educational on cattle, we're there."

Fifteen years ago, the Minixes has never dreamed of being in the cattle business. In fact, it happened strictly by accident. After they bought their first cattle, though, it wasn't long till the husband-wife team was drawn to the cattleman's life, and they became as dedicated as any lifelong breeder to raising the best Angus they could.

Their story started about 20 years ago when Ed took up an invitation to go horseback riding and enjoyed it so much that he persuaded Wilma to take riding

lessons (a story in itself!). Five-foot Wilma had problems finding a comfortable pair of stirrups, though.

They set out to buy some special stirrups, then figured they might as well buy a saddle. And why not their own horses? They couldn't very well keep two horses in their Atlanta back yard, though, and the search for a few acres in the country led them to what's now Black Witch Farm.

#### Wasted Pasture

However, grazing just two horses wasted pasture (the farm is 25 acres pasture, 22 acres wooded), so in 1965 they bought six crossbred heifers to keep the grass down. Then a friend's suggestion that they ought to have some "good-looking registered cattle" instead of their multi-colored crossbred assortment got the wheels turning.

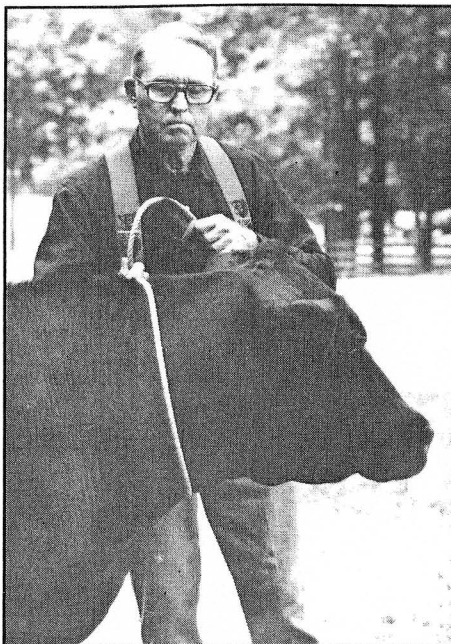
In 1966, with their county agent's emphatic advice to "go Angus," the Minixes bought their first six registered bred cows with calves.

As they became more involved with Angus, the show ring sparked their interest. Their real inspiration to "get serious about showing" came from ringside at the 1968 Great Southland Futurity in Athens, where they watched one breeder sweep the show, carrying off an armload of trophies. And that did it. The excitement of breeding good cattle, competing and winning was in their blood.

Later that year, they made their debut in the ring at the Gwinnett County Fair. They topped a heifer class but stood at the bottom with a bull. They took it in stride, though, and with visions of those trophies, they went away determined to come back with the kind of cattle that would put them in the winner's circle.

#### Quality Improvement

The Minixes put their enthusiasm to good use and set out to build up a quality herd. First they sold the cattle they had, then traveled to Burch Angus Ranch in Mill



As Ed Minix demonstrates, all Black Witch cattle are halter-broken.

Creek, Okla., where they bought four bred heifers that formed the foundation for their present herd. Those four bred heifers produced four heifer calves, and the next year they went back to Burch and bought five more females.

And in 1977 their dreams of the winner's circle came true. They went back to the Great Southland Futurity and took the supreme championship with Black Witch Emulous TN 512, a son of "Ned" (Black Witch Emulous TN 26, the first herd bull ever raised at Black Witch) and a grandson of Emulous TN 500. They also showed the heifer calf champ out of both a home-raised dam and sire.

While the Minixes were concerned with breeding show ring champions, another

side of their operation started moving to the forefront. Performance.

In 1970, they enrolled in the Georgia BCIA and American Angus Assn. AHIR programs—a move that proved to be a turning point for the Black Witch operation. They soon realized the value and potential of performance information, Ed says, and started leaning toward cattle that measured up in performance tests.

#### First Tested Bull

They sent their first bull to a Georgia test station about 10 years ago but soon found they had a ways to go when he couldn't sell in the station's sale because he didn't meet frame size requirements.

But they took this in stride, too, and set some new goals. A 700-lb. bull at weaning, 1,200 lb. at yearling and a ton mature bull. They went to work, using performance records (including hip height measurement), enrolling bulls in test stations each year to help measure their progress. And each year they watched their weights and frame sizes increase.

Just 10 years later, they not only surpassed their goals but produced two bulls that wiped out previous Georgia station records—Black Witch Corbinaire 95, "O.G.," and Black Witch Corbinaire 94, "Randy," half brothers by Wagner Graham Corbinaire 624.

O.G. was the high performing bull at the Calhoun test station and broke 22-year state records with his weight per day of age, actual 203-day weight of 760 lb. and 1,322-lb. actual yearling weight. He was the tallest Angus bull ever to come out of a Georgia station, too, standing 51½ inches at the hip as a yearling. Lemmon Cattle Enterprises, Woodbury, Ga., have since bought half interest in O.G., and he's leased to Select Sires. He's also enrolled in the National Sire Evaluation program this fall.

#### Top Tifton Bull

Randy was high performing bull the same year at Tifton. He broke station records with his 708-lb. adjusted 205-day weight, 1,216-lb. adjusted yearling weight, 3.32 weight per day of age and 50½-inch yearling hip height. And he tore down the station's sale record, going for \$16,100 to Cherokee Plantation, Yemassee, S.C.

The Minixes plan to continue taking all bull calves that qualify by age to test stations (except the lower end that they market as steers).

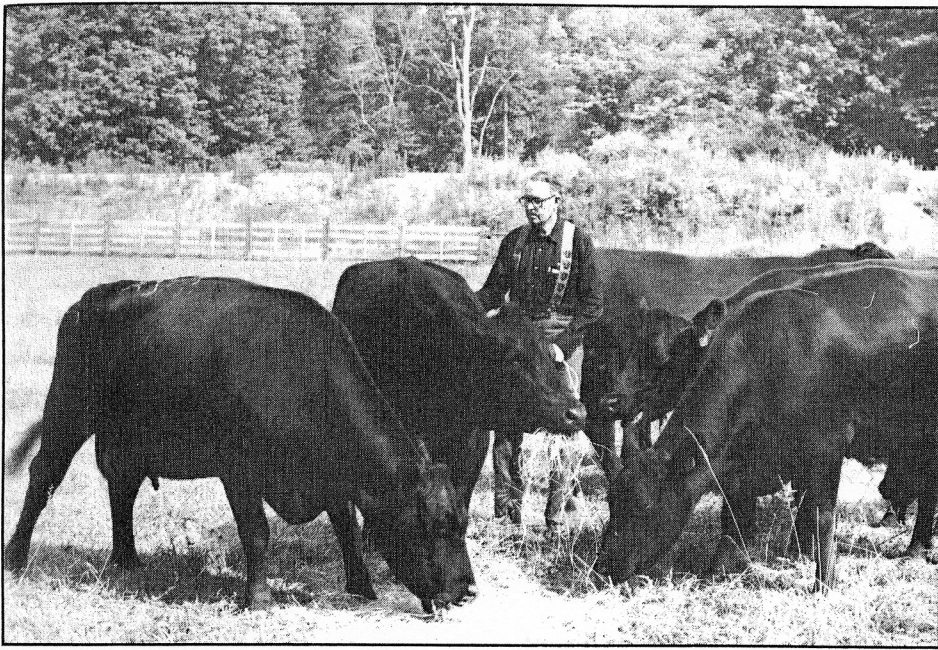
By now, they're staunch believers in performance-proven cattle and this year qualified for the American Angus Assn.'s AHIR Herd Recognition Program award.

"I believe the time will come when a breeder will hardly be able to sell cattle without performance records," Ed says. And since they more than met their goals last year, they're going to set some higher ones.

But the Minixes still believe the show ring helps maintain the breed's eye appeal and the excitement of raising purebreds, Ed

Ed and Wilma Minix enjoy their 47-acre "secluded hideaway" just 16 miles from Atlanta.





Both the Minixes and their cattle benefit from the extra TLC lavished on Black Witch cows.

says, so they strive to breed cattle that combine the best of performance and eye appeal.

When selecting herd bulls for their own use, Ed says, "We rely heavily on performance, then narrow it down on conformation. You have to like the way they look."

#### Herd Bulls

This year, most of the Black Witch cows are bred to O.G. Their herd sires last year included Black Witch Dynamo 42 and Black Witch Corbinaire 84 by natural service and Wagner Graham Corbinaire 624, Walbridge Milestone and Earl Marshall Legend by A.I.

Since buying their Burch females, the Minixes didn't buy any cattle until 1978, when they brought home the Great Southland Futurity's supreme champion heifer Wil We Burgess 225.

Each year they sell one to three of their cows, replacing them with home-raised heifers. Black Witch cows are mainly Emulous- and Wye-bred and average 1,200-1,250 lb., with a few passing the 1,400-lb. mark. Heifers that aren't kept for replacements are entered in state or local association show-sale events.

Their cow herd number suits the Minixes just fine, and they don't plan to expand.

"We don't want to get to where we can't do all the work ourselves," Ed says. And their work includes halter-breaking every animal, keeping close track of cows' weights to determine how much to feed, plus recording birth, weaning and yearling weights and hip height measurements.

Their double life style suits them, too. Although it means keeping some pretty early and late hours in addition to a 40-45-hour work week in Atlanta, they contend that one life style complements the other.

#### In a Hurry

"I'm in a hurry to get there and look at the cows and see if they're all right and feed them. I think you take better care of them if you're not with them all of the time," Ed explains.

In addition to giving each animal its fair share of TLC, the Minixes nickname every one, usually naming the bulls for the owners of their sires. For example, O.G., Randy and their 1980 half brother Odell are all by a bull owned by Odell G. Daniel and his son Randy of Colbert. And Ned is by Emulous TN 500, who was owned by Ned Biffle of Allen, Okla.

Minix involvement in cattle goes well beyond their own herd, though, and they're solid supporters of the cattle industry.

Ed's been a delegate to the American Angus Assn. annual meeting for the past six years, is a director of the Georgia Angus Assn. and is serving as president of the Northeast Georgia Angus Assn. for his third term. Both Ed and Wilma are on the state board of the American Angus Breeders' Futurity and are members of the Piedmont Beef Cattleman's Assn., of which Ed is a former director.

The Minixes may not have been born cattlemen. But one step into their house filled with Angus pictures, posters, ceramics—even a huge painting of Ned on their coffee table—proves they're as proud of the breed as anyone in the country. And a visitor would be hard pressed to converse with the Minixes for long without hearing a mention of the Angus breed.

They started from scratch. They have what some would call a small herd and are part-time cattlemen. But they've sure made it work. How? Determination, hard work, pride in their cattle.

And an emphatic "We like it." 