

Midlife Crisis

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performance program for breeders. The Guide Lines program is used for herd improvement much as a dairy farmer uses his DHIA records. The program entails keeping records of such things as birth weights, weaning date and weights and other data that compares one animal with another.

The Wilkins use artificial insemination and a bull to breed their cows. In recent years, Nancy says, because they have Butt, a quality bull, they have been using natural methods much of the time. Butt, or Dunwalke Somerset, was sired by BTCL Domina 44M out of Dunwalk Victra 75N, a good trophy and doner dam in a prestigious corporate herd.

"Butt has been valued at \$10,000," Nancy states. "He's the most correct (by conformation) and one of the nicest bulls on the farm. His birthweight was 91 pounds and his weaning weight was 750 pounds and he has a 6+ frame."

A couple years ago, Nancy adds, Butt's full sister placed first in her class at the Polled Hereford Association National Sale. At a later farm production sale one quarter interest in her was purchased for \$28,000.

Drew, the Wilkins' son, who is also employed fulltime at Taylor Packing, Inc., is very much involved in the farm. He owns eight or nine cattle within their herd and is the owner of Genie Romino, a cow which recently received a Gold Benchmark Dam award this year from the American Polled Hereford Association. Genie and P.J., also designated a Benchmark Dam, were two Wil-Stock Farm cows among the 814 elite dams winning this high honor for being the breed's most efficient and consistent producing females.

Any day now the cows will begin calving, signalling the start of Nancy's favorite season on the farm.

"I wait for Spring each year. Really and truly, there is nothing more reassuring about the life cycle or more exciting than seeing a cow have a calf," she proclaims enthusiastically.

The Wilkins' cattle calve from middle February to middle April. Then from the first of May through July the bull is turned in the pasture

with the cows.

Nancy explains they prefer the cows to calve in February rather than in June because the calves get a double boost. They are not only getting extra milk from their mothers, but are soon old enough to eat the grass themselves. By the end of October, the calves are weaned from their mothers. An average polled Hereford calf this size may weigh in the neighborhood of 750 pounds.

During the past eleven years the Wilkins have not only added acreage to their farm and increased the number of Herefords they raise, but have worked to increase the individual size, and therefore, quality, of their animals. Their cows now range in size from a frame 4 to a frame 6 which means as a yearling the cow could weigh 1250 pounds. The frame measurement, Nancy explains, refers to the skeletal size of the animal with the larger numbers corresponding to the larger skeletal size of an animal. By way of comparison, Nancy observe, the cows they purchased with the farm were size 3 frames. She feels for their type of operation and for the customers they serve they have almost reached the optimum sized animal.

Since Ron and Drew work full-time, the only crops they raise, according to Nancy, are oats and hay. They buy their corn. Four years ago they went to 3 foot by 4 foot round bales which in combination with a hay rack designed by Ron necessitates feeding their animals hay on a twice weekly basis.

In addition to talking with prospective buyers, raking hay, and spending about an hour daily feeding and bedding the animals, Nancy does all the record keeping. She enjoy keeping records, she says, because she can see the progress they've made.

What is it Nancy likes most about what she's doing?

"Basically, not many people have a job that they like. It was a choice we made on our own. It has provided for us a way of life we enjoy," she replies.

Nancy notes Ron and Drew enjoy working on the farm after a day at the office. Ron finds it a good way to relax.

Concerning what they've learned about farming in the past eleven years, Nancy chuckles as



Wil-Stock Farm offered a new career to the Wilkins.

she relates advice given them by a well-intentioned gentleman soon after they began farming.

"He said, 'Leave the cows alone when calving. Let the bull run with

the herd year around. Make hay the second week of August--that way you get the first and second cuttings together. And if you have any

questions, watch what your neighbors do."

Still chuckling, Nancy notes, "And he was from a city, too."

Bradford County Programs

Tuesday, March 1
12:30-2:30 p.m. Culinary Hearts
Kitchen Course, Extension
Office

7:00-9:00 p.m. Culinary Hearts
Kitchen Course, Extension
Office (Advance registration
required)

Thursday, March 3
7:30-9:30 p.m. Safe Slimming
Leader Training, Extension
Office

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GOLD CITY QT.
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KERSTETTER FAMILY
Shamokin, Pa.



TICKETS: Adults \$8.00 - 6 to 12 \$2.00 - 6 & Under Free
Tickets Sold At The Door - Doors Open 5:00 P.M.

SATURDAY, MARCH 5th - 7:30 P.M.



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Rt. 61, Leesport, Pa.

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LEWIS FAMILY
Lincolton, Georgia

MARKSMEN QUARTET
Murrayville, Georgia

SUNNYSIDE
Limerick, Pa.

TICKETS: Adults \$8.00 - 12 & Under Free - Tickets Sold
At The Door - Doors Open 5:00 P.M.

SATURDAY, MARCH 19th - 7:00 P.M.

McCASKEY HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
Reservoir Street, Lancaster, Pa.

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Madison, N.C.



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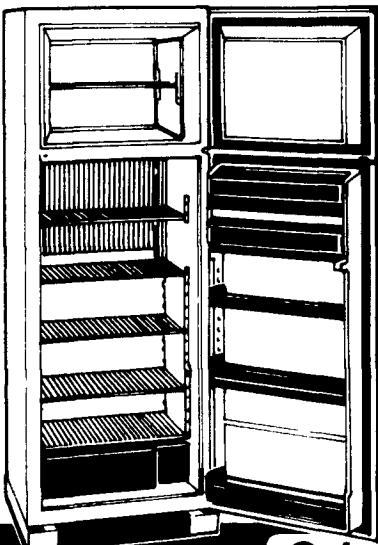
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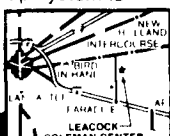
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