

Tommy Porter built his triple livestock operation from a tiny herd and an irrepressible desire to farm.

STORY BY TANNER LATHAM /// PHOTOS BY JEFF AMBERG



Tommy Porter chokes up when he talks about the land.

As he tops a hill, he leans on a young oak tree. Eyes misting. Cheeks flushing. Spring green hay fields and cattle pastures roll out behind him.

Porter owns these 600 acres and another 308 down the road. He raises beef cattle, poultry and hogs, but he subscribes to the belief that he's a borrower, a steward.

"The bank and I may hold this property, but we're here for a short time," he says. "To be able to tend to part of God's creation, that means something to me."

Just 30 miles to the southwest sits the glass-and-steel, corporate skyline of Charlotte. It's North Carolina's largest, most metropolitan city. Here on the outskirts of the town of Concord, however, Porter has carved out his peace.

From Scratch

After returning from WWII, Porter's father had been a dairy farmer, but was forced to give that up because of too little land and too many regulations. The elder Porter instead made ends meet as a welder and a pipe fitter, a path his son took as well, working in nearby nuclear and fossil fuel power plants. He even built houses.

But from a young age, his desire was farming, and he only began to satisfy that by working his father's land.

By the late 1970s, he and his wife, Vicki, a vital part of the farm from the beginning, were ready to chase the dream and started their cattle herd with five cows. In the mid 1980s, they bought 200 acres of corn and soybeans, and converted them to pasture. >>

