

# Passion for Angus, Leadership and Youth

Sydenstricker Genetics has left a lasting impact on the Angus breed through outstanding genetics and the Angus Foundation.

by Sarah Hill, projects editor

**E**ddie Sydenstricker has been a lifelong Angus breeder, enthusiast and supporter. That commitment to the breed is evident in the storied legacy of Sydenstricker Genetics — a legacy that is alive and thriving today, making a difference in the lives of countless Angus youth through the Angus Foundation.

The Sydenstricker family lived near Paris, Mo., where Eddie's father, Ralph, owned and operated an International Harvester (IH) dealership. In September 1952, Ralph traded a Super C Farmall tractor for two registered Angus cows with heifer calves. This was the beginning of Sydenstricker Angus Farms.

Participating in FFA set the stage for Eddie to become a leader in the ag industry and Angus business. In 1956, American Angus Association (AAA) Regional Manager Lyle Haring and Missouri Angus Fieldman Ed Stout were instrumental in helping form

the first state junior Angus association in the United States. Eddie served as the first president of the Missouri Junior Angus Association.

"Like many people in the Angus business, I learned how to get along with others," Eddie adds. "Showing cattle, I did my own fitting.

Showing encouraged me to raise superior animals to the best of my ability."

In 1960, Eddie became nationally

known after he was invited to participate in the first "An Angus In Your Future" film produced by the Association and promoted by Association Activities Director Dean Hurlbut. In the film, Eddie demonstrates how to prep, fit and show a heifer.

That film, and Eddie's participation in it, set in motion another young man's journey to the Angus business — Manager Ben Eggers, who would eventually work for Eddie and devote most of his life to the

Sydenstricker Angus herd.

Eddie also was active in FFA, serving as Missouri FFA state treasurer in 1957-1958 and receiving his American Farmer degree two years later. By this time, the Sydenstricker Angus herd had grown enough to host its first annual production sale in 1959.

The young Sydenstricker not only had an eye for Angus cattle, but also for tractors. With the help of a young mechanic, Van Botkins, the pair designed a pulling tractor that won every national championship. John Deere acquired the engine from Sydenstricker and used it to develop the 466-cubic-inch (cu. in.) engine that was used in the John Deere 40 and 50 series tractors and the early 8000 series tractors.

## A new chapter

Eddie and his wife, Connie, married in 1961. Their daughter, Kim, was born in 1963 and another daughter, Lee Ann, followed in 1967.

From 1965 to 1976, Ralph managed the 100-cow Angus herd and 200 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat. In 1965, with the help of his father, Eddie opened an IH dealership in Macon, Mo. The following year, Ralph and Eddie had the opportunity to open a John Deere dealership in Mexico, Mo. This was their first John Deere dealership. In 1969, Eddie returned to Mexico to help manage this dealership.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Eddie and Connie took their daughters to junior shows across the United States. One of the highlights of their show careers was in 1984, when Sydenstricker Angus Farms achieved their first Missouri State Fair grand champion female. Kim and Lee Ann also served as officers of the Missouri Junior Angus Association.

By late 1976, Ralph had decided it was time to enlist an expert herdsman for the Angus herd. He invited Wayne Kestler to interview for the position, but Ralph passed away before the interview could occur. Eddie went on to hire Kestler.

In June 1977, Eddie acquired interest in Happyvale Marshall Pride 013G, also known



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SYDENSTRICKER FAMILY

▶ Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker, shown with their family, have been avid supporters of Angus youth and the Angus Foundation while providing leadership for the breed. Pictured are (standing, from left) Lee Ann Sydenstricker, Blake Briscoe, Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker Monte, Chase Monte, Kim Sydenstricker Monte, (sitting, from left) Sydney Briscoe, and Paige Briscoe.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

## Passion for Angus, Leadership and Youth CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

as “Mighty Marshall,” along with Erdmann Angus, Wetonka, S.D., and Jim Baldrige, North Platte, Neb. Mighty Marshall sired the grand champion carload of bulls at the 1978 National Western Stock Show, along with the top-selling pen of heifers at the 1978 Denver Foundation Female Sale.

### Exciting times

Bill and Li Bowman were hired in 1981 and had a significant impact on the herd through 1989.

“We showed all over the Midwest during that time,” Eddie says.

The 1980s were an exciting time for Sydenstricker Angus Farms. SAF Power Fix and SAF Pride Queen 6012 set the record for the highest-selling bull ever to sell at a Missouri State Sale, selling for \$12,500 and \$40,000, respectively.

In 1989, the operation acquired two-thirds ownership in VDAR New Trend 315, the bull that set the tone for the Sydenstricker program today.

In 1990, the farm took a drastic move — selling all but 50 registered females.

Taking a year off from hosting a production sale gave Sydenstricker Angus Farms time to bring in fresh genetics. The females added in the early 1990s included the maternal ancestors of SAF Focus of ER, SydGen CC&7, and SydGen Trust 6228, all influential sires in the Angus breed.

Throughout the 1990s, the operation emphasized the commercial side of the industry, stepping up carcass evaluation of herd sires and supplying more and more useful performance data to customers. The farm also published its first herd sire directory in 1993. Eddie credits Eggers with being the driving force behind adding more expected progeny differences (EPDs) and information to the sale book.

“We provide more information than most,” Eddie says. “The information we provide is very detailed. Our sale catalog has approximately 67 reference sires.”

The commitment to carcass evaluation and performance data paid off. In 1997, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) honored Sydenstricker Angus Farms with its Seedstock Commitment to Excellence Award.

The new millennium brought another

change to the farm — this time, a change in name to Sydenstricker Genetics, with a prefix: SydGen.

“My biggest goal was to raise performance bulls that breeders would want to use in their herds,” Eddie says. “We’ve been very successful at accomplishing that.”

### Lasting impact on the Angus industry

Bulls from Sydenstricker Angus Farms have certainly left their mark on the Angus breed. VDAR New Trend 315 paid for himself through semen sales in his first year on the place.

“He dominated the Angus breed,” Eddie adds.

A bull called “Fame,” who was a grandson of 315, also made a lasting impact on the farm’s legacy: His return on investment was to the tune of \$1.8 million — 67 times his purchase price.

Both 315 and Fame have the distinct honor of being buried on the Sydenstricker Genetics farm.

SAF Focus is yet another bull in the impressive Sydenstricker history. Although Focus died at an early age, a lot of Angus cattle today can trace their lineage to the bull.

2000 and 2001 saw more calves recorded at the Association sired by SydGen herd sires than sires from any other breeder, with 10,102 calves registered in 2001 alone.

In 2001, the first bull that sold with the SydGen prefix, SydGen Refocus, broke his full brother’s record to become their top-selling bull ever at a price tag of \$100,000.

### Continued leadership in the breed

Eddie served as Missouri Angus Association treasurer for many years and served on the Association Board of Directors from 1981 to 1984. He was serving on the board when CAB launched.

“He was a huge proponent of supporting CAB,” Eggers adds.

Eddie was honored with the Livestock Person of the Year Award in 1995 from the University of Missouri Block & Bridle and was honored again in 2017.

In 2001, SydGen was also awarded the Seedstock Producer of the Year Award, the most prestigious award in the seedstock industry, at the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) meeting.

“Receiving those awards meant that we’re

doing a good job,” Eddie says. “It’s a feeling of accomplishment. Very rewarding.”

A decade ago, Sydenstricker Genetics joined forces with a few other Angus seedstock breeders to found ORIGen Inc., based in Huntley, Mont. The artificial insemination (AI) company’s primary goal is helping breeders merchandise and utilize high-quality Angus bulls.

“As a founding member of ORIGen Inc., it’s been very rewarding and successful,” Eddie says.

Eddie was also awarded the Missouri Angus Breeders Pioneer Award in 2014 and the Allied Industry Award from the Missouri Cattlemen’s Association in 2015.

### ‘What I wanted to do’

At age 12, Eggers had been motivated to get involved in the Angus business by watching Eddie in the “An Angus In Your Future” film. Having grown up on a dairy, and active in 4-H and FFA, he was no stranger to hard work. His father and grandfather bought him his first commercial Angus cow in 1962, with his first registered Angus cow two years later.

Eggers can still recite multiple statistics on that registered cow, Queen Betty 30 3740384, including birthdate, birth weight, pedigree and more.

“I learned everything I needed to know about the Angus business at age 12,” he quips. “You sell them by the pound and make sure they taste good.”

A National Merit Scholar, Eggers completed two and a half years of a math degree at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Mo. However, a life in academia was not to be — he started working for Angus breeders near home, and in 1978, moved to the Macon Angus Ranch, owned by Sylvester Wieberg, Macon, Mo., meeting Eddie through the connection.

Eggers joined Sydenstricker Angus Farms in 1982.

“Ben has seen it grow, and worked hard to make the operation what it is today,” Eddie says.

“This is what I wanted to do — breed Angus cattle,” Eggers says.

Eggers was elected president of the Missouri Cattlemen’s Association in 1993 and in 1998, was also elected to the Association Board of Directors, serving as president in 2006. Eggers served on the BIF board for eight years, serving as president in 2011. He was awarded the BIF Continuing Service Award two years later.

“Thirty years ago, shows determined the value of purebred cattle,” Eggers says. “There’s

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**— Eddie Sydenstricker**

been a dramatic change to get to where we are today with EPDs. That's the biggest change I've seen. Value, as defined by EPDs and indexes, is the driver, not the showing."

The beef value (\$B) and weaned calf value (\$W) indexes both came out during Eggers' time on the Association board.

Eggers' wife of 30 years, Darla, joined the operation as office manager in 2010.

"We swore we'd never work together," the couple laughs.

### SydGen today

The most recent decade has seen Sydenstricker Genetics serve as a tour stop on the National Angus and BIF tours.

The tractor dealership has grown and expanded through the years, with 11 locations covering 41 counties and 350 employees across northern Missouri in Chillicothe, Curryville, Dutzow, Hermann, Kirksville, Macon, Mexico, Moscow Mills, Palmyra, Rocheport and Tipton. Eddie has received John Deere's highest award, the Managers' Club Award, many times, and in 2013, *Farm Equipment* magazine named the dealer network "Best-in-Class Farm Equipment Dealership."

"My dad always said, if you surround yourself with the right kind of people and managers, you'll be successful," Eddie says. "People buy from people, so you have to take care of your customers. If you don't, someone else will."

Today, Sydenstricker Genetics has 900 cows. Forty percent of the herd calves in the spring, with the other 60% calving in the fall. The two herd segments have different breeding goals. The spring herd is mated to produce calving ease sires with birth weight EPDs of +2 or less, while the fall herd is bred to produce big-framed, stout, growthy performance bulls.

"It works good that way," Eddie says.

Sydenstricker Genetics owns 3,700 acres within a 10-mile radius of Mexico, Mo. All but 300 acres of corn silage is pasture and hay ground. They also rent an additional 500 acres.

Eddie has continued to be active in the Association, serving as a voting delegate.

Connie plays a key role in the operation, as her passion is managing hospitality efforts during SydGen sales. She's known for her cooking, as she oversees the preparation of 80 gallons of chili, Angus burgers, hotdogs, green beans and CAB strip steaks for 350 to 375 guests each fall.

"She's the glue that holds the family together," Eddie says.

Both Kim and Lee Ann are involved in



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

► Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker of Sydenstricker Genetics, Mexico, Mo., were inducted into the Honorary Angus Foundation. Pictured (from left) at the presentation are Milford Jenkins; JanLee Rowlett, 2012-2013 NJAA chairman; Kim Sydenstricker Monte; Chase Monte; Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker, recipients; Blake Briscoe and Megan Ahearn, 2012-2013 NJAA Foundation director.

the equipment dealerships. Kim works at the Mexico location, focusing on public relations, while Lee Ann does marketing for the entire dealer network.

Eggers states that Eddie is proud of his community and home.

"We are the face of agriculture when people drive into Mexico, Mo.," he says. "We're the first thing people see."

The next generation has now entered the Angus showing and ag industry. Kim's son, Chase, has shown at the Missouri State Fair and several National Junior Angus Shows, winning grand champion carcass steer in 2014 and grand champion bred-and-owned carcass steer in 2016. His bred-and-owned heifer was named reserve grand champion female at the 2017 Missouri State Fair.

Chase served as president of the Mexico FFA Chapter and graduated in 2017 from Mexico High School. He started this fall at the University of Missouri, pursuing a degree in agricultural business.

### Longtime Angus Foundation support

Eddie and Connie have always been huge supporters of youth. Sydenstricker Genetics hosted the 2011 Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference. In 2013, the Sydenstrickers were inducted into the Honorary Angus Foundation for their support of Angus youth.

Sydenstricker Genetics is the only single family donor ever to have donated two elite heifers for the Angus Foundation Heifer Package — in 1993 and most recently in 2012. The 1993 Heifer Package sold for \$10,000 to Belle Point Ranch, Dave McMahon Family, Fort Smith, Ark. and 4D

Angus, New Ulm, Texas. The 2012 Heifer Package sold for \$65,000 to Briarwood Angus Farms, Curtis and Ann Long of Butler, Mo.

Eddie served on the Angus Foundation Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus Leadership cabinet, helping to raise more than \$7.6 million for education, youth and research for the advancement of the Angus breed that means so much to him. He currently serves on the Angus Foundation Resource Development Committee.

"We're interested in helping others, especially youth," Eddie adds. "It's important to give back. The Angus Foundation has provided a lot of scholarships to kids. They're the future of the business."

"Eddie and Connie have helped in all facets of the Angus Foundation," says Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president.

In fact, Eggers was serving on the Association board when Jenkins was hired.

"We really tried to launch the Angus Foundation," Eggers adds. "There's no doubt that it's done well!"

Eggers says that Eddie and Connie support agriculture and youth-oriented organizations across Missouri, but that the Angus Foundation provides a unique opportunity for them to impact youth on a national level.

"Eddie is passionate and very devoted to the Angus breed and future of agriculture," says Darla.



**Editor's Note:** For more information on giving to the Angus Foundation, visit [www.angusfoundation.org](http://www.angusfoundation.org).