



ANGUS HERITAGE FOUNDATION HONOREES

Four inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation for their service to the breed.

by Peyton Schmitt, American Angus Association

To celebrate and honor the contributions of individuals who have gone above and beyond for the Angus breed, the American Angus Association created the Angus Heritage Foundation in 1983. At the 2023 Angus Convention in Orlando, Fla., three couples and one individual were inducted into the Heritage Foundation for their innovation, service and leadership.

During the past 130 years, *The Business Breed* has proven itself

an industry leader. Inductees of the Heritage Foundation define the type of breeders who built this reputation with their drive, ambition and forward-thinking attitudes.

From the start of their operations, these individuals set out on a mission to improve the Angus breed and the cattle industry. Each remained resilient while navigating the ever-changing beef industry and its challenges.

The 2023 inductees include: Phil and Ruth Abrahamson, Lanesboro, Minn.; Jerry and Sharon Connealy, Whitman, Neb.; Ben and Darla Eggers, Mexico, Mo.; and the late Doug Parrett, Champaign, Ill.

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To learn more about the Angus Heritage Foundation and those inducted since its inception, visit www.angusawards.com.



Phil and Ruth Abrahamson

A young boy named Iver left his Norwegian homeland in 1849 to seek a better life in America. After enduring a perilous voyage across the Atlantic, he was met with the fertile soils of the Midwestern frontier — a fresh start. In 1863, inductee Philip Abrahamson's great-grandfather started purchasing parcels of land from the Southern Minnesota Railroad, establishing the farm that is known today as Sunnyslope Angus.

The fourth caretakers of Sunnyslope, Phil and Ruth have had a 50-year career with many highlights.

They joined the Association's Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) program in

1960. They also became the first breeders to work with University of Minnesota staff to develop a method for creating genetic advancement of his Angus cattle through scientific measurement rather than on phenotype alone.

Following in his footsteps are his daughter, Julie; her husband, Keith; and their three children. They help operate 200 cows on 700 acres, striving for continued success of docile, easy-calving animals that grow and grade well.

"We stuck with the Angus breed, we kept on, we persevered, and we've still got the Angus cattle today

after 125 years on the farm," Phil said. "I guess my hope is that's going to be the future."



Phil and Ruth Abrahamson, Lanesboro, Minn., were inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey Theis, 2023 Miss American Angus; Phil and Ruth Abrahamson; and Mark McCully, Association CEO.

Jerry and Sharon Connealy

Jerry and Sharon Connealy met at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduating in 1981, they moved back to manage the family ranch where Jerry was raised, south of Whitman, Neb. While Jerry and Sharon's roles on the ranch have changed and expanded, their commitment to the production of high-quality genetics has been constant.

The Connealy family has hosted a bull sale since 1968, and today markets nearly 1,000 bulls annually through spring and fall sale offerings. Connealy Angus is committed to using the best resources available in all aspects of cattle production and range management.

Dedicated to the betterment of the industry, Connealy Angus

hosts numerous tours at the ranch each year and has been a diligent supporter of the Angus Foundation. Jerry recently concluded an eight-year tenure on the Association Board of Directors, serving as president in 2022.

Jerry and Sharon raised four kids, Jed, Ben, Hannah and Gabriel, on the ranch. Today they are sharing their passion with their nine grandchildren.

"We are continually surprised and shocked and humbled by the fact that we're still here and the fact that we are surrounded by so many good people," Sharon said.



Jerry and Sharon Connealy, Whitman, Neb., were inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey Theis; Sharon and Jerry Connealy; and Mark McCully.

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ANGUS CONVENTION

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Ben and Darla Eggers work side by side at Sydenstricker Genetics in Mexico, Mo.

Ben, the operation's manager, joined the team in 1982. Darla took on her role as office manager in 2010 after serving as executive director of the Missouri Cattlemen's Foundation for more than nine years. Each having grown up showing livestock and active in 4-H, the couple shares a deep-rooted passion for agriculture, and more specifically, the Angus breed.

Sydenstricker Genetics meticulously records performance data, prioritizing cattle that excel in economically important traits and consistently capture Certified Angus Beef (CAB) premiums. The

Ben and Darla Eggers

operation received the CAB Beef Commitment to Excellence Award in 1997 and was recognized as the 2001 Outstanding Seedstock Producer of the Year by the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF).

Dedicated to the beef industry and their community, the duo are active leaders. Darla currently serves on the Angus Foundation's Board of Directors, and Ben is a past president of both the American Angus Association and BIF. Their commitment to improvement and desire to serve others have built their reputation as respected industry advocates.

"Part of this business is getting there as fast as you can — just as important, never back up," Ben said.



Ben and Darla Eggers, Mexico, Mo., were inducted into the Angus Heritage Foundation. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey Theis; Darla and Ben Eggers; and Mark McCully.

Doug Parrett was technically retired from the University of Illinois (U of I), but the emeritus professor never stopped showing up for the agricultural college or the beef industry. He served in many roles during his time at the U of I, including educator, livestock judging coach, Extension specialist, research collaborator and interim department head. Parrett inspired countless undergraduates through his 49-year teaching career, and his teaching talents won him dozens of national and campus awards.

"He was often the first face and first person that our students met," said Dan Shike, U of I Department of Animal Sciences professor and longtime mentee of Parrett. "Throughout that time, he taught [more than] 8,000 students."

Doug Parrett

Parrett's appointment as a faculty Extension specialist put him on the front lines of the beef production industry, where he worked with producers to ensure optimal health and productivity of Illinois herds and the success of the people who care for them. As a longtime livestock judging coach, Parrett guided hundreds of students who went on to become leaders in the animal production industry.

Above all, Parrett was deeply devoted to his family. In 1979 he married his wife, Susie, with whom he raised two children, John and Annie. He was a proud grandfather to six grandchildren and a mentor to many. He passed away unexpectedly Aug. 26, 2022.

Parrett is remembered as a committed educator, father,

husband and friend, whose influence will remain deeply felt for years to come. **AJ**



Doug Parrett, Champaign, Ill., was inducted, posthumously, into the Angus Heritage Foundation. Pictured (from left) are Kelsey Theis; Dan Shike, accepting the award; and Mark McCully.