

# CHARLES ANNON

A respect for sincerity  
and determination is a mutual feeling  
between American Angus Assn. members  
and their immediate past president.

by Nancy Ann Sayre

Charles Cannon summed up a few of his thoughts as he stepped down from office Nov. 15:

"Visiting with you breeders during the past year has been a great experience. I am impressed with your sincerity, your dedication and your desire to make the right decision in regard to your breeding programs."

Those words, directed to members of the American Angus Assn., certainly reflect a mutual feeling. Charles Cannon has been respected for those same qualities. Through that he earned the opportunity to speak as president of the Association.

Ask those who know the Flemingsburg, Ky., native—those who have worked with him and realize what he has done over the past eight years—and they will tell you he got to that position through his sincerity, hard work and perseverance. Let them explain further and they will mention his practical nature, his objective outlook, his realism.

## Realism

In the words of Webster, "realism" refers to a tendency to face facts and be practical rather than imaginative or visionary.

The breeding program and management at Stone Gate Farms have been practical since the Cannon family started in the Angus business some 30 years ago. Charles, his brother Jere, and their father Clyde operate adjoining farms as one unit. The 825 acres of northern Kentucky farmland provide pasture, hay and nearly all feed for their combined herds of 225 Angus cows. (Twenty acres of tobacco provides a cash crop for the family operation.)

Three cows got Cannons in the production business while Charles and Jere were showing 4-H steers. Their program really got rolling though, says Charles, with purchases from Dan Wight's Monocacy herd in Maryland and Ken Clark's West Virginia herd. Those two groups formed a strong foundation; the influence of records and several generations of selection pressure let those females go right to work for Cannons. It proved to them that their direction should be based on facts and genetic progress.

Emphasis since that point has been on the economically important traits for which the Angus breed was developed. Calving ease, maternal traits and early maturity are kept uppermost in Cannons' minds. Their goal has been to produce top-notch bulls—mostly for a commercial market.

Buyers insist on bulls they can use on first-calf heifers, so moderate birth weights are a must. Reasons for selection pressure on maternal traits are doubly strong; a cow must be productive to pay her way at Stone Gate and, since replacement females draw breeders to Angus bulls, Cannons must make sure a bull's daughters will work. To cattlemen, early maturity means females will calve at two, bulls will go to work young and steers will produce a high quality carcass at 1,100-1,200 lb.

Selection for weight and rate of gain has zeroed in on gainability, do-ability and frame. It has all been kept in perspective though, by consistent culling of cattle below average in the traits of utmost importance. Charles' thoughts are strong.

"It's very important that Angus breeders remember the things that made our breed as popular as it is. Breeders can't go anywhere else to get the calving ease, great maternal traits, early maturity and superior carcass quality . . . we must not go overboard and sacrifice these things."

Frame size? Breeders can go elsewhere if that is all they are after. Charles lets nature dictate how big his cattle need to be. Selection, he feels, must be on traits that keep Angus efficient. He goes by the records.

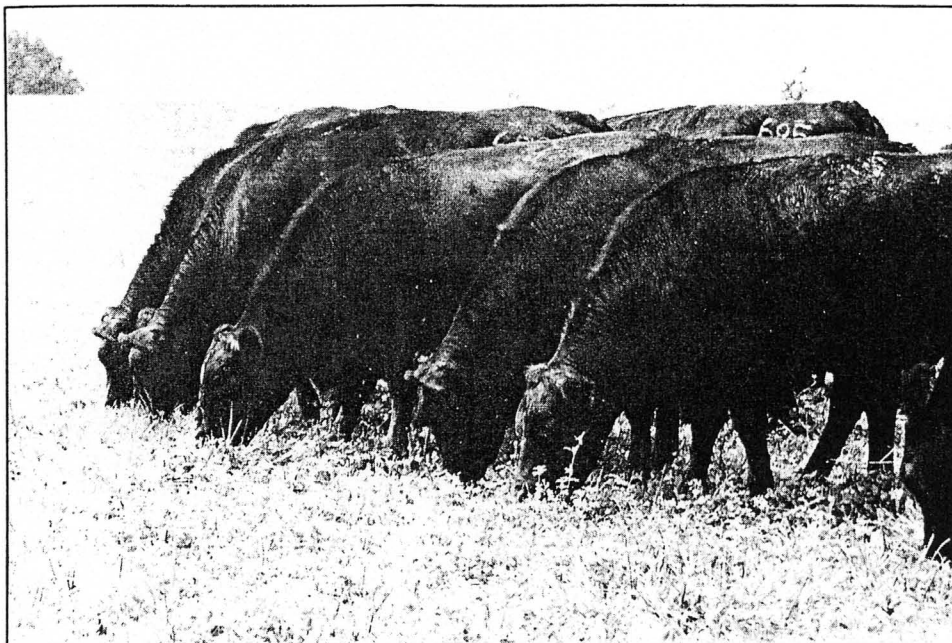
Production measure and selection on that basis has allowed Cannons to make progress with their herd. Their performance program has shown positive results as illustrated by AHIR records dating back to 1968 (they started keeping records through their state university program in 1957).

Strict and simple management keeps those figures meaningful; progress is in the genetics. That is passed on. And that sells bulls. Realism.

#### Perseverance

Webster says to "persevere" is to continue in some effort, course or action in spite of difficulty or opposition; to be steadfast in purpose.

Charles comments, "A performance program is a matter of making up your mind and sticking with it. You must be satisfied with what you are doing.



The Stone Gate females are there to produce. Strict selection for calving ease, maternal ability and early maturity ensures that Cannon-bred bulls will work for the commercial or purebred breeder.

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"There are always trends to follow, but we just like to stay with the records . . . I don't think you can make genetic progress if you're going to skip from one thing to another. We're keying in on consistency, predictability.

"You must believe your own thing is worthwhile. And if you breed good cattle, you can sell them. The easiest cattle in the world to sell are the good ones."

Selling cattle is the main business at Stone Gate. And that means knowing what each animal is worth and selling anytime an interested breeder comes in.

Records help here too. If a buyer understands performance records, it is easy for him to find cattle to satisfy his needs. Even if a breeder is not familiar with the figures, Charles finds that the fact he has records available lends validity to his program

and builds confidence in his product.

As Charles sees it, knowledgeable breeders are more specific in their demands now. And many part-time cattlemen are successful businessmen who relate easily to records, facts, figures.

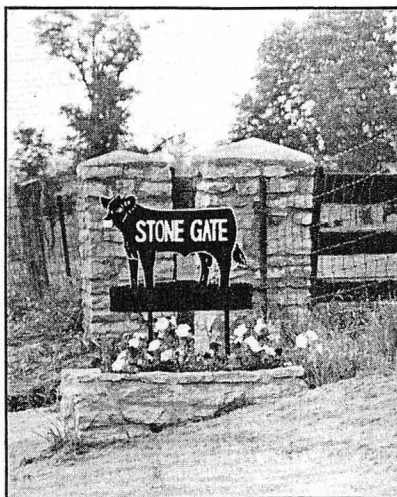
Demand for Stone Gate cattle is strong. Cannons move 55-75 bulls annually. Except for bulls they test in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee stations, bulls sell off the farm from weaning to two years old; Cannon's goal is to market 100. Female demand has always been solid; the top half of each heifer crop goes to work in the herd, about a fourth sell. Cows replaced by younger stock sell easily unless Cannons think they will not get the job done, then they go to market.

Selling good cattle may be easy, but Charles Cannon does not stop there. Follow-up with customers is important, the results can snowball. Repeat trade and word-of-mouth advertising by satisfied customers is one of the best ways to build business in Charles' mind.

#### Those Qualities Carry Over

Practical, sincere, steadfast. Qualities reflected in the Stone Gate operation have made Charles Cannon valuable to the Association. As a member of the board of directors for six years, Association vice president and chairman of Angus Productions Inc. (ANGUS JOURNAL), then Association president, his realism and perseverance were strong assets.

Charles mentioned in his closing speech in Louisville that times within the past eight years were often very difficult for the Association. But much was accomplished during those years. He mentioned a few things—a bloodtyping program was established; the



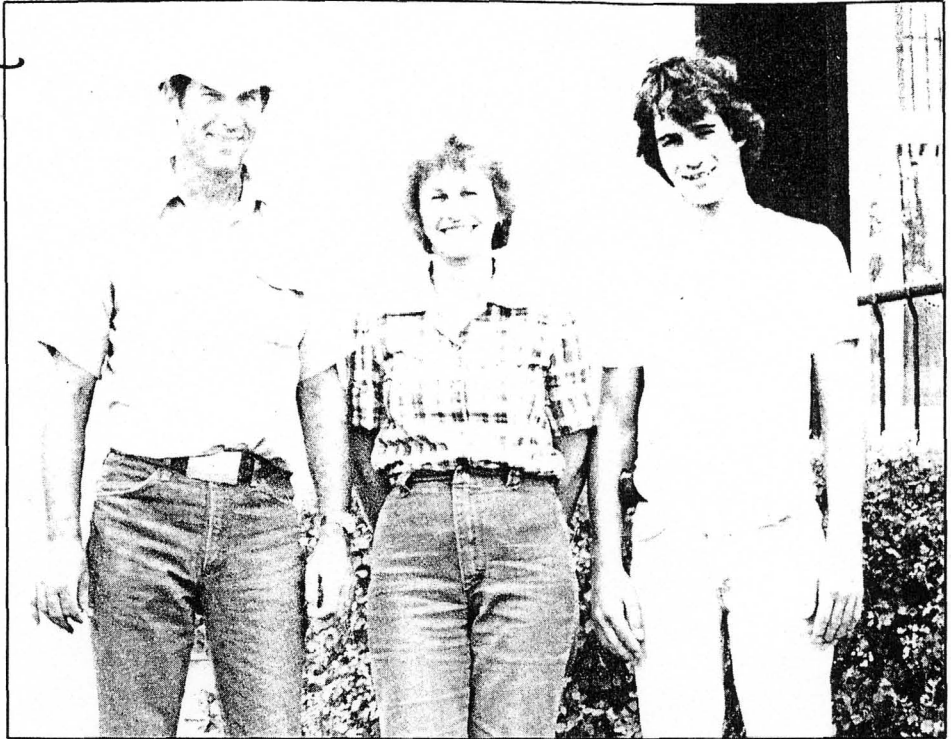
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JOURNAL was purchased; known carriers of genetic defects and foreign blood were published; the National Junior Angus Assn. was founded; the Certified Angus Beef program was started; the AHIR Field Data Report, performance pedigrees and performance registration certificates were developed.

For Charles it has been a rewarding challenge to be a part of the Boards responsible for such progress. Acceptance of the JOURNAL, advancements and increased use of AHIR records, and the general good feeling among members of the Association highlight his reflections.

The people are the brightest highlight, though, especially for his past year as president. He and his wife Frances have traveled many miles.

"I've met so many great people . . . the friends we've made have made it all worthwhile. And when you think back on the eight years, you remember the good times and the progress. Things look really good to me right now . . ."



Stone Gate Farms is a Cannon-family operation. Charles, immediate past president of the Association, is pictured with his wife Frances and son Chris. His brother Jere and their father Clyde own and operate part of the Kentucky farm as well. (Charles and Frances also have a daughter Joy and another son Clay.)

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**"Things were tough lots of times while I was on the board . . . but as I look back now, of any time to serve, these past eight years have been the most challenging."**

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Charles ended his talk at the annual meeting with these words: "We will have to earn every bit of respect and business that we acquire. I'm confident that if we, as Angus breeders, base our breeding programs on facts rather than fantasy and concentrate on those traits that made our breed great, we will find that our greatest days as Angus breeders are yet to come."

Charles Cannon has earned the respect he mentioned. The qualities and beliefs reflected in his remarks tell the story. **AJ**



Charles Cannon has been as objective and practical as president of the Association as he is in his approach to the cattle business. He lives by the facts at Stone Gate Farms—selection and management are geared to performance.