

CATTLE CULTURE

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

Building to be Better

Discover why you should aim to be better in the things you build.

Built better. It's a phrase I'm certain you've read many times by this point in the *Angus Journal*. But have you thought about what it truly means?

Does it refer to the foundation of a structure, the beginning of the construction process? Or does the phrase instead focus on the quality of the materials being used to build said structure?

I'm sure by now you've caught on that this theme is quite the metaphor, and the idea of being "built better" can be applied to people, organizations or cattle herds just as easily as it can be applied to the construction of a building.

It's fairly simple for all of us to

understand the highest quality products are created with the best of materials, the loftiest of ambitions, the highest of goals; but what truly makes something better than anything else?

In my opinion, the answer is the search for constant improvement.

Being better, but not best

Oxford Dictionary defines the word "better" as an adjective meaning of a more excellent or efficient type or quality.

What I find interesting about the definition is that it doesn't suggest one is at the top of its class or in possession of a first-place ribbon. It just focuses on quality.

All too often I think we get caught up in the competition of the world. Don't get me wrong — I love a good contest. I think a little healthy competition helps keeps people eager for improvement and helps progress the Angus breed forward. However the key is in the word "improvement".

We all strive constantly to gain new titles, when I think we should be striving instead to be the best we can be. My parents always told me when I was a National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) member showing my Angus calves that it wasn't my goal to win every show. Although, it

should be my goal to make sure that whoever did win that weekend had to work dang hard to beat me.

Even at the age of 9, this mantra, this repeated goal, created a whole new world in the show ring for me. Like many other NJAA members, I would face peers who challenged my skills at jackpots across my home state of California. Since I was not constantly concerned with making sure I ranked above them, our comradery was friendly and pushed me to succeed rather than blinding me with bitterness when I didn't come out on top.

The best part about this goal? It never went away. If you're only focused on placings, eventually there's nowhere else to go. You complete your building on a rocky foundation. Don't believe me? Think of it this way — there's only one supreme champion at each show.

If you instead choose to constantly push yourself to be better than you were the last time, the improvement is continuous.

So as you are building your herd or your future as an NJAA member, don't attempt to build something to win a prize or achieve a new title. Challenge yourself to build something that can continually grow and improve. Build yourself — and your goals — better. 

