

More than Memories

Marg Dreesmann's 54 years working for the American Angus Association have passed in a flash, but she remembers each day with a smile as she approaches retirement.

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

It was the familiar quiet town of Saint Joseph, Mo. The foundation of the office building was the same. But the technology of today was absent, and the workspaces were littered with pens and papers rather than computers and phones.

A small black and white television, known to feature soap operas during lunch breaks, sits in the break room where the faint smell of pizza lingers in the air. Down in the basement a group of co-workers gather to exercise. A smile adorns the face of a young woman who runs around barefoot, searching for the shoes hidden from her by a co-worker and friend during her workout.

She may have been 21 years old when she first started working as a software engineer for the American Angus Association's Information Systems (IS) Department, but Marg Dreesmann can still recall a flood of memories from the start of her career with the Business Breed.

The faces around her, office style and technology have changed over the past 54 years she has spent in the Association office, but as Dreesmann retired in January 2021, she says the one constant during her career has been the passion in her heart.

Back to the beginning

"It was really good luck," Dreesmann says, looking back to those early memories in Saint Joseph.



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—Marg Dreesmann

With a single recommendation from a mentor, Dreesmann went from being an assistant to a buyer for junior clothing in a department store to a member of the IS department at the Association.

"I was a complete novice — I didn't have any education in computer science or programming," she says. "It was my luck that I was thought of and my boss was willing to take a chance on me. It all came together for me."

Dreesmann says the new opportunity intimidated her, as she had no background in the agriculture industry, let alone the Angus breed.

She says the closest she had even come to a cow was passing a field on the freeway.

After a tutor was brought in to acclimate Dreesmann to the new position, she says she was hooked on the Angus breed and the work.

"I enjoyed the class so much," she says. "It was detail and handling numbers and data storage and data manipulation. I seemed to catch on pretty quickly, and I had a feeling it was going to be a good place for me."

From punch programs recorded on columned cards to handling numbers, Dreesmann spent her time learning all she could about her new world. That quest for knowledge never wavered throughout her career at the Association.

Between her first day in the office to her upcoming retirement day, Dreesmann says she has watched the world and the cattle business develop, and she has done her best to soak up every opportunity and piece of information possible.

"Programming has changed a lot over her 54 years at Angus," says Lou Ann Adams, one of Dreesmann's co-workers and lifelong friends. "Marg never declined a challenge."

This can-do attitude is what allowed Dreesmann to become such an influential individual at the office, Adams says. From projects within the IS department such as rules and validations to registrations and

transfers, Adams says many in the department considers Dreesmann an “Angus encyclopedia.”

“We call her the Performance Queen around here because of her vast knowledge of the AHIR (Angus Herd Improvement Records®) performance programs and the software for those programs,” Adams says.

Dreesmann credits this knowledge to the great mentors from her past. She says she has been able to work with a variety of people who were willing to share their knowledge with her. Another component of her wisdom came from the experiences her Angus career provided.

During her first years at the Association, Dreesmann went on her first airplane ride, flying to Boston for a users’ group meeting with another Angus employee. She says beyond the thrill of the computer work, her job helped her experience new places and things, providing her with more worldly opportunities than she had ever initially anticipated.

Angus always

Smart, kind and passionate are just a few words listed by Adams to describe her friend. The duo met through the Association when Adams was hired out of college. Adams says Dreesmann was the only other programmer employed at the time, and she served as both a mentor and office companion.

“You could never say enough nice things about her,” Adams says. She adds she has the highest regard for Dreesmann and her work ethic — a mindset shared by all in the Saint Joseph office since Dreesmann was first hired.

Dreesmann considers herself lucky to have worked around such talented individuals. She claims



Dreesmann, left, retires after five decades working for the Association’s IS department.

everyone she has worked with throughout her career have been kind, intelligent individuals. She says the IS department strives to work as a cohesive team — a team she feels blessed to be a part of.

“It’s so much fun to work with smart people,” she says with a smile, “and I like to think a little bit rubbed off on me — they have made me a better person.”

With a stream of projects, old mentors and even new co-workers, Dreesmann says the Association has consistently brought excitement and creativity to the workplace.

While her friends and fellow Angus employees are excited for this new chapter in Dreesmann’s life, all can admit life at the Association will not be quite the same without her. Adams says she is unsure what her time at work will be like without Dreesmann by her side at the office.

“She has been with me from the beginning, and she is a lot of the reason I have stayed at Angus for over 35 years,” Adams says. “I am sad beyond sad for me, but very happy for Marg.”

It seems the same emotion is found in Dreesmann herself. She says she struggles to find the words to describe her thoughts on retirement.

“I’ve been going to that building

for almost 54 years,” she explains. “It hardly seems real that I won’t be doing that anymore.”

However, with the promise of friendships stretching beyond the office walls and enough memories to last a lifetime, Dreesmann says she can look forward to the upcoming years with a smile.

With plans to adopt a cat, anticipation of mornings spent sleeping in and even tentative plans to visit the Grand Canyon, Dreesmann’s days will still be filled with activities that bring her joy. Any lingering sadness is squashed by the knowledge that while she may not be spending every day in the Association office, she is not losing her place in the Angus family.

“Working at Angus has allowed me to make a good living in a wonderful environment, make good friends, and work in a clean, well-lighted place where I felt safe, comfortable, valued and respected,” Dreesmann says. “That is a wonderful thing, and I am very grateful for it. My life would’ve been so different without the American Angus Association or the people in it.” **AJ**