

A Fellowship of Breeders

In 1937 Central Illinois Angus breeders formed Illinois' first Angus association. Still in existence today, its purpose is two-fold: merchandising and fellowship.

by Marcia Chamberlain
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In 1937 a group of Angus breeders got together to form the Central Illinois Angus Breeders Assn.—the first Angus association to be formed in Illinois. Two men played instrumental roles in the success of this association: Sen. Simon E. Lantz and Forrest Lemons.

The following is an excerpt written by Sen. Lantz and taken from the Aberdeen-Angus "Cattle Raising at its Best" booklet. It describes how the Central Illinois Angus Assn. came about.

Back in 1937, a group of young Angus breeders and I made an inspection tour of all of their herds. These new breeders were customers of mine. A number of them had bought their first 4-H calves from me. We gathered in the living room of my home near Congerville, Ill., to discuss our mutual problems.

"You boys have as good Angus cattle as I have seen in many a day. Many of them are qualified to bring top prices in any sale," I said.

"We realize that what you say would probably be true for you older breeders, but how can we, as beginners, find the buyers and get them to come and look at the two or

three animals which each of us has to sell?" they replied.

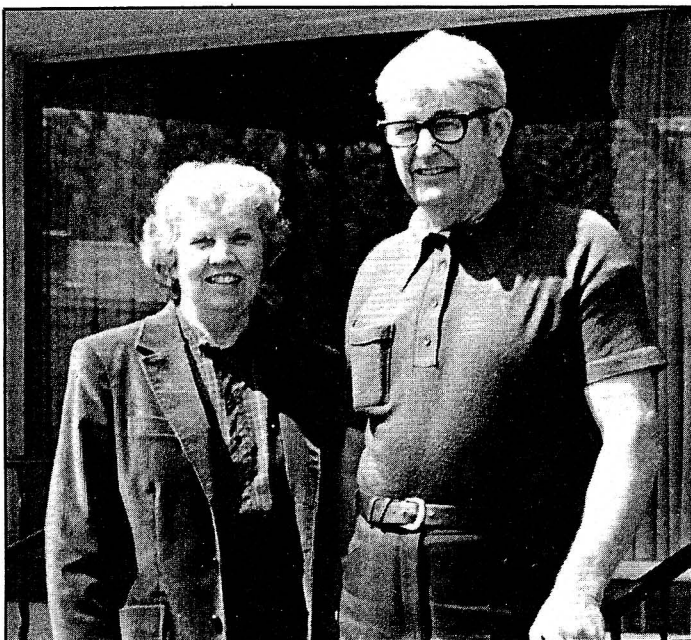
"You boys are right; you must have buyers for your cattle. But I believe that every old breeder of Angus cattle has an obligation to his customers, particularly the new breeders. That obligation is to help them find a market for their good animals. We older breeders of Illinois are going to meet that obligation."

From this little meeting and this conversation in 1937 sprang the Central Illinois Angus Breeders Assn.

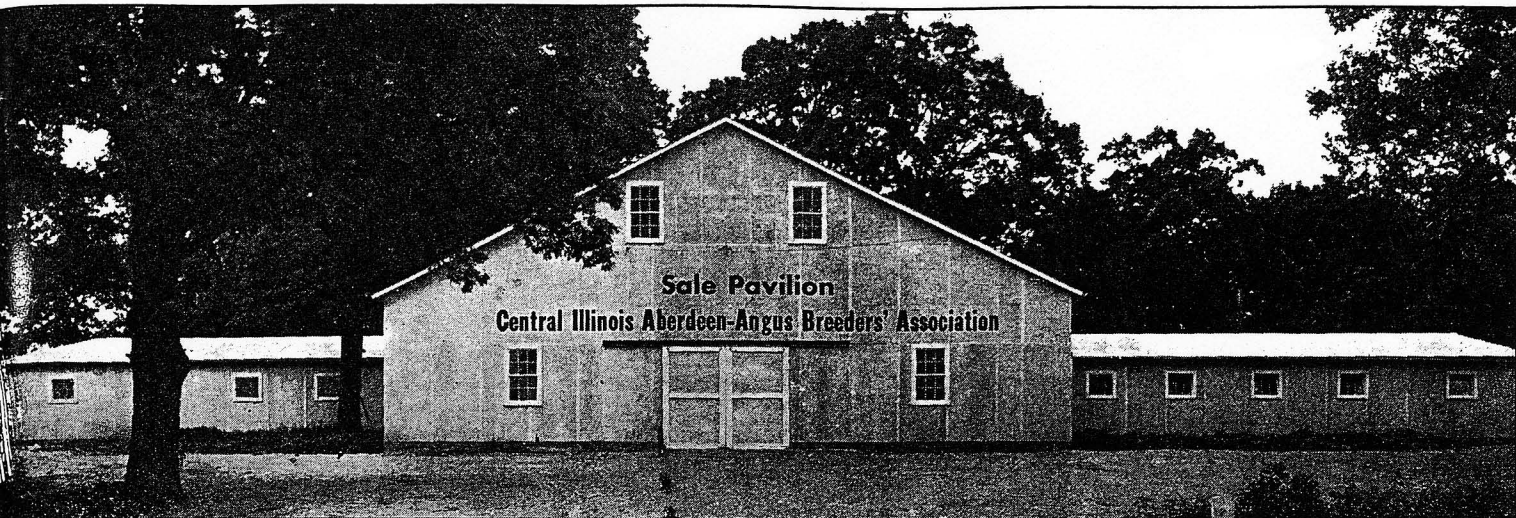
Bill Kuhfuss, Minier, one of the charter members of the association and former president, vice president, secretary and present treasurer, says, "Sen. Lantz was recognized as the voice of agriculture in the Illinois legislature for a third of a century."

Lantz was the first secretary of the Central Illinois Angus Assn., then later was a director and president of the American Angus Assn. and had one of the first four purebred Angus herds in Illinois.

Sen. Lantz was a great promoter and booster of Angus cattle. According to Kuhfuss, many Angus herds in central Illinois trace back to Lantz' own herd. He says Lantz was known among Angus breeders nationwide.



Mr. and Mrs. Bill Kuhfuss (left) and Mr. and Mrs. Ken Coulter (right), Central Illinois Angus Assn. members, recall the early days of the association. They remember people from all over the United States attending special auctions sponsored by the association.



Central Illinois Angus Assn. members purchased the ground for this building in 1946. Members built the barn and held sales there from 1947 until it was sold in 1978.

The second secretary of the association was Forrest Lemons. He was as good of an Angus promoter as Lantz and as well known, says Kuhfuss.

"These two men were a good team. They were what made the Central Illinois Angus Assn.," he adds. "Both men wanted to help breeders—especially smaller ones—to promote and sell Angus cattle."

"These two men can be credited for pioneering Angus sales in Florida. At one time, Florida Angus breeders purchased 200 bulls from Central Illinois Angus Assn. members."

Because of promotion, membership grew and grew for a number of years. When formed, membership was small, but over the years membership grew to over 350 members. And these members were from all parts of Illinois—north, south, east and west.

When the Central Illinois Angus Assn. held its first sale in 1938, it was at Sen. Lantz' place. As reported by Sen. Lantz in the Aberdeen-Angus "Cattle Raising at its Best" booklet, "The receipts from that sale (1938) amounted to \$10,827.50. In 1946, the receipts from our association's sale were \$169,400.00."

"Some of the first sales averaged \$250 to \$300 with 50-head consigned," says Ken Coulter, Congerville, member and past secretary-manager of the Central Illinois Angus Assn. "This even followed the depression."

As more members joined, the number of consignments grew. Up to 100 head of Angus were sold at a sale.

In 1946, the association purchased some ground for \$200 per acre from Sen. Lantz.

Coulter tells how the association got enough money to take a mortgage out on the ground. "Members of the association sold enough memberships at \$100 apiece that we had the money to put down for the mortgage. Once the association purchased the ground, members got together and built the barn. We used raw oak to build it."

All the sales the Central Illinois Angus Assn. held after 1946 were at the sale barn.

"The last sale was in 1978," Coulter says. "Then the association sold the barn and ground that same year."

These sales had a good reputation, adds Coulter.

This association held the first club calf sale (heifers only) ever in America, according to Coulter. Later steers were included in the sale lineup.

The Central Illinois Angus Assn. is still in good shape financially. When the barn and ground were sold, the organization received a large sum of money for it. "The money or the interest from it, is used to promote Angus cattle," explains Coulter.

When formed, membership was small, but over the years the membership grew to over 350 members.

Each year the association donates money or furnishes the Illinois Junior Angus Assn. members with something from the money they have. The interest from the principal is also used for preview shows, field days, or whatever else members of the association voted to use it for.

Field days were a big activity of the association. They began at the sale barn with demonstrations on type, hoof trimming, fitting show and sale cattle, plus other events. Dinners were included also, and soon such a large number of people attended the field days that they had to be moved to Forrest Lemons' Timberline Farm at Goodfield.

"There were as many as 2,000 people who attended these field days," says Kuhfuss. "People from all over the United States came to this event."

This association accomplished another feat. Its members were the first from an Angus organization to take a load of Angus bulls from the Midwest to the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

In 1943, as a representative of the Central Illinois Angus Assn., Coulter rode the train to Denver with these bulls. The association exhibited the first place group of five Angus senior bulls at the National Western.

"Before we took our first load of bulls out to Denver, they were not in demand," says Coulter. "However, after this championship, Angus bulls became more popular and were in demand."

The Central Illinois Angus Assn. also had a show herd. "Members would transfer their cattle to the association and themselves. Then these cattle would be shown under the association's name," Coulter explains. This situation was good for members who had one or two Angus cattle they wanted shown, but did not have the time to exhibit them.

The association did a good job showing the members' cattle and winning; it became quite popular. "After awhile, some people didn't think it was right for the association to do this. So a rule was changed where animals had to be in a member's name only and not the association's," explains Coulter. "So the association quit showing members' cattle."

Association members continued to exhibit their cattle individually, and many of them quite successfully. During the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago, a number of junior members of the association exhibited grand champion steers. Also, other members have led their Angus bulls and females to national grand championships throughout the years.

Membership of the association has decreased, but there are still a large number of active members, and always will be.

Coulter says, "Fellowship is what has made our association. This is what has kept us going and this is what will keep the association going in years to come." AJ