



Baldwin Angus Ranch's top herd bull, Sampson, was the major attraction for a CAB promotion at a Pantry Pride supermarket in Miami, Fla. Pictured (l to r) are: Richard Noone, Florida Supermarkets Inc.; Glen Ledall, CAB promotional activities director; Joy Baldwin Dunn and Leroy Baldwin.

PHOTOS BY JERILYN JOHNSON

No.1 Promoter

When it comes to promoting the Angus breed and Certified Angus Beef, Leroy Baldwin is second to none.

By Jerilyn Johnson

Leroy Baldwin was once a shy, backwoods boy. He was the type who'd rather converse with his cattle than with an authoritative adult.

Today, Baldwin rubs shoulders with such important people as Miami Dolphins head coach Don Shula, foreign agriculture dignitaries and U.S. beef industry leaders. He has become a leader himself in promotion, performance programs, forage research and developing export markets for beef producers.

Baldwin's dedication and volunteer work in beef promotion have earned him the title of "No. 1 Promoter" by the

Certified Angus Beef program directors. His work in export marketing has earned him the title of "International Marketer of the Year" from the Florida Agriculture Commission. To top that off, his work in production practices and on-farm research earned him the National Cattlemen's Association prestigious "Innovator Award."

Most amazing of all, is this humble cattleman, who speaks in a northern Florida drawl, still finds time to manage a registered Angus operation and be with his family on his ranch near Ocala, Fla.

How does a shy, backwoods boy

become an assertive, innovative-thinking cattleman?

According to Baldwin, it all started with a trip to the principal's office. Baldwin was a freshman in high school at the time.

"The principal asked me a question about a livestock show," Baldwin reminisces. "I couldn't pick up my head, let alone think of anything to say"

When he got back to his agriculture class, Baldwin told his teacher/FFA advisor, Marion Roche what had happened. Roche looked him straight in the eye and told him, "that will be the last

time you ever get up in front of anybody and not be able to say anything."

For the next four years Baldwin participated on the FFA public speaking team. During his senior year, his FFA judging team won the state contest and went on to compete in the national contest.

"It was the most important part of my education," Baldwin says. "Mr. Roche was a true mentor. I have been involved in helping FFA and 4-H members ever since."

During his school years, Baldwin also received an education on raising beef cattle. Like most FFA'ers he started out with a market steer. After losing money on his first steer, a Hereford, Baldwin's next purchase was an Angus steer. It came from Walter Williams, Florida's first Angus breeder. Baldwin worked for Williams during the summer in exchange for the steer and learned a lesson or two about the beef business.

"I knew before I owned that steer two months, that the Angus breed was better, at least for Florida," Baldwin says. "It was then I decided that Angus was going to be my breed"

After serving in the Army, Baldwin made a tough decision and chose cattle over college. It wasn't long before he had put together a productive registered Angus herd.

It comes natural. Over the years Baldwin learned the importance of promoting his industry and breed. When the Certified Angus Beef program came along, this cattleman was thrilled and turned his attention to promoting it to 4-H and FFA groups, other Angus breeders and to the Florida public.

Last year the Baldwin family hauled their herd bull, Sampson, to Miami twice to help with special Certified Angus Beef promotions.

The first time was the grand opening of Don Shula's new restaurant called Shula's Steakhouse. Located at Miami Lakes Inn and golf resort, Shula's serves CAB exclusively, along with live Maine lobster and other seafood. The Graham Companies, owners of Graham Angus Farm in Albany, Ga., are partners with the coach.

During grand opening ceremonies, Leroy and his wife, Sharon, and son, Alan, displayed their bull, posed with Shula for pictures, and informed him about the Angus breed and their operation.

The second opportunity came last November when CAB personnel and the Baldwin family were asked to attend the grand opening of a Pantry Pride



Leroy Baldwin takes the time to help his granddaughter prepare an Angus calf for an upcoming cattle show.

supermarket in north Miami. Part of the Florida Supermarkets Inc. chain, Pantry Pride made Certified Angus Beef a major part of its two-day promotion.

"Marketing CAB to consumers is a lot easier after they've tasted their first steak."

-Leroy Baldwin

Sampson was again the main attraction. CAB officials and Pantry Pride management set up a guess-the-weight contest. The winner received a box of CAB steaks. Leroy's daughter, Joy, and her husband came along this time to help take care of Sampson. All the family members pitched in to set up the display, and give away CAB balloons. Joy has been active in the Baldwin Angus operation and is an excellent herdsman. A few years back, she had a string of top Angus cattle on the national show circuit.

By the end of the promotion, the Pantry Pride store manager reported that their CAB meat display case was sold out and customers were asking for more.

Richard Noone, director of meat merchandising for Florida Supermarkets Inc., Pompano Beach, Fla., attended the CAB promotion with the Baldwins and

Glen Ledall, CAB promotional activities director. He said he wasn't surprised by the CAB promotion's success.

Noone, who was a speaker at the 1989 National Angus Conference in Athens, Ga., says that all his uncertainty about the Certified Angus Beef program disappeared after joining the program last year and seeing firsthand the consistent quality of CAB.

"I didn't realize how the company's frame of reference for quality had deteriorated over the years," Noone says. "We previously had been on a USDA Choice program and didn't notice how much variation was built into that product. CAB allows my firm to be unique and sell a higher quality product. People just prefer the taste of CAB."

Baldwin knows firsthand how difficult it is to win retailer and consumer acceptance. "So many branded beef products have been introduced over the past few years, but only a few have survived," he says. "CAB has taken the ball and ran with it. Its consistent quality and good taste is helping us win back customers."

Baldwin, who has volunteered his services and Angus beef at numerous banquets and barbecues over the years, says he's found that marketing CAB to someone is a lot easier after they've tasted their first steak.

Promotion of his industry doesn't end there. Thanks to his efforts as Florida Beef Council's Checkoff Referendum co-chairman, Florida cattlemen passed the 1988 referendum with a 96 percent "yes" vote. This was the highest percentage in the country

Production practices important.

Baldwin began performance and production testing in 1960 to increase weaning weights, average daily gains and milk production. He knows the importance of good breeding, nutrition and recordkeeping in producing consistent quality beef.

"Not using performance records is just like buying a pig in a poke," Baldwin says.

A Baldwin-bred bull, Emulous Pride 135, who has earned "Super Herd Sire" recognition from the Florida Beef Cattle Improvement Association, serves as the Baldwin's genetic base. This bull has produced 19 "Super Cows" and 10 "Golden Super Cows" as designated by the FBCLA.

Baldwin Angus Ranch currently has 146 broodcows and markets 75 to 80 bulls each year. A few replacement heifers are sold, but the best go back into the herd.

An active member and leader of the

Florida International Agricultural Trade Council (FIATC), Baldwin also knows the importance of expanding export markets for beef producers.

"We have the best farmers and ranchers in the world," he says. "Unfortunately, so many times we do such a poor job of marketing. If you don't know marketing, you can go hungry."

Baldwin has been able to attract a number of Angus bull customers in the Caribbean, Central America and South America. Recently, he completed an export sale agreement with a cattle producer in Brazil, the first U.S. Angus breeder to do so.

It was for these efforts that he was named "International Marketer of the Year" by the Florida Agriculture Commission.

Match cattle to environment. This is just one more important lesson Baldwin has learned during his years as a rancher. He doesn't go for extremes in cattle size. He carefully manages his coastal Bermudagrass and clover pastures to prevent overgrazing or under-utilization.

"Protecting the environment is important to me," Baldwin says. "We do

all we can not to abuse the land and protect the water."

Forage management is equally important to Baldwin. He has done some experimenting with legumes and grasses on his ranch, with successful results. "It was more or less out of curiosity," he says.

In 1956 Baldwin started planting coastal Bermudagrass on his ranch to improve forage quality. It wasn't long before he was planting it commercially and harvesting hay for a cash crop. This grass became popular and in-demand by Marion County's Thoroughbred horse farms and dairy and beef operations. He still sells a few tons of hay each year to area horse farms.

In 1977, Baldwin experimented with another method to improve forage quality. Frustrated with Bermudagrass' loss of quality and unpalatability in its later stages of maturity or after frost damage, he came up with an idea.

Baldwin decided to make Bermudagrass haylage and then inject anhydrous ammonia into it. The anhydrous ammonia would increase the haylage protein content and break down the fiber to make it more palatable. He also experimented with corn and sudex silage.

"When I talked to scientists at the University of Florida about it, they all thought I was crazy, that I would probably kill my cattle."

Baldwin's idea did work. It wasn't long before those same Florida scientists, as well as other universities, were experimenting with it and then recommending it as an economical practice.

To allow easier handling of haylage and provide weather protection, Baldwin began using plastic bags to store the ammoniated haylage in. He also came up with a novel idea to make feeding easier: he designed a self-feeding gate. This gate is put on the end of the haylage bag when it's opened. The cattle push it back as they consume the haylage.

In recent years, Baldwin has developed a new crimson clover variety that is drought resistant and early maturing. The University of Florida recently released this new variety, called "Flame."

It's easy to see why he earned NCA's "Innovator of the Year" award in 1986.



A newborn calf is brought to be health checked by Alan Baldwin. The Baldwin Ranch has a fall calving program.