

Angus in Our Environment

Miss American Angus candidates speak up for our industry and their own innovative ideas.

Miss American Angus— Sarah Hill



*Sarah Lynn Hill
Bidwell, Ohio*

When I first say, "Angus in our Environment," the image of a powerful Angus cow quietly grazing in front of a Greenpeace sign appears in my mind.

However, this isn't what the title "Angus in our Environment" really means at all. Rather, it is about the ability of Angus cattle to adapt and progress with the changing attitudes of the cattle industry. The '90s are going to be a time in which

we rediscover the things we have left behind.

At this time, foremost in all people's minds seems to be the environment and conservation. I have a good friend at college who is a strong defender of animal rights. I respect her views and don't try to educate her from the cattleman's perspective. There is a difference between animal rights and animal welfare. Animal rights is the belief animals are on an equal level with humans and should be treated accordingly. Animal welfare is the idea animals should receive proper and humane treatment.

I am a supporter of animal welfare and I think most cattlemen agree with me. Every effort should be made to maintain their physical condition, health and happiness. And it is. No cattle breeder can expect to produce quality seedstock or winning show cattle if they are not given the best treatment. With improper care, carcass value depreciates significantly. And if they don't look good in the show ring, they don't win.

I try to explain to my friend our cattle receive better care under our supervision than on an open range. They are vaccinated and fed as much as they need. And besides, has any animal rightist ever considered what all these millions of cattle will do if we don't care for them?

Interest groups are also focusing on land conservation. They propose farming is not "natural" for the land. Yet, how do we feed the people of the world if we do not farm? Grain, meat and milk do not come directly from the grocery store. Without agriculture, we, as Americans, would be unable to provide for ourselves, let alone anyone else.

I cannot mention the Angus breed without talking about the people behind it. In the 1980s "big business" and big cattle operations were stressed. Now the breed is going back to basics.

We are changing our ideals from quantity to quality and at the same time the family business which has been overshadowed in the past, is being rediscovered. It is mainly because the important ideals of unity, teamwork, dedication and cooperation are being rediscovered. All of these qualities are found in the family farm. These were the things on which the Angus industry began and if we are to progress, then they can't be abandoned. The Angus breed will not go forward if diversity and stability of some kind are not maintained.

For a while it was thought big was better. Now we have realized large operations run as industries cannot compete with the production of small, personal farms because of the care and input found in family businesses.

Just think — if small farms were excluded as unimportant and unnecessary in the Angus breed, such bulls as Pine Drive Big Sky, PS Power Play and New Yorker may have never come about.

When you consider the picture as a whole it seems most of the people who criticize points of the Angus breed are not equipped to make such judgments because they do not have a true understanding. In their minds agriculture is either a business in the strictest sense of the word, or it is unnecessary.

In reality, agriculture is the largest industry in the United States and it is the people within the Angus breed who help to make it what it is.

Heather Hamm— Clarksburg, Md.

Once upon a time, in a land we all know well, ranchers and their cattle were considered upright members of the morally correct community. But in the fast track 1990s cattle are being reported as being morally corrupt. . . just like politicians. Cattle are out to destroy the world. Watch out for the progeny of Old Grannie, they are adding to the greenhouse effect, eating your food, destroying the waterways and even destroying the natural beauty of the prairies.

Of course, we educated Angus breeders know reality. Cattle are not evil beings from a different world. They are black and beautiful. How do we educate the public on the true facts? It's impossible to send them back to school and say — "Look here, cattle are not what you have been told." Therefore everyone in the cattle industry must be ambassadors of the true facts. We must recognize the challenge and work toward improved relations with the public.

Ranching has improved drastically over the years.

However, farmers are not perfect. Only through experience and research have farmers learned the importance of conserving the land for future generations. It is a hard job that only 2 percent of the population is willing to do. The modern rancher has to be knowledgeable in many areas from mechanic, nutrition, to marketing and sales; they put in long hours of mental and physical labor to be rewarded by criticism from those who know little about agriculture but have access to the media.

I have the interesting experience of growing up in a rapidly developing area where agriculture is being pushed aside for concrete, sometimes called progress. The County Farm Bureau found it necessary to work for and have a bill passed by our County Council, that gave farmers the "Right To Farm." Now farmers have the freedom to drive tractors or haul cattle when they want and at whatever time they want.

The family farm will always play an important role in U.S. agriculture. Only the family is willing to invest the enormous quantities of time, energy and love into the business of producing high quality products, by being willing to give 110 percent every day. That kind of dedication is hard to give a dollar value. Even though farm size is growing larger, the family farm will remain an important asset to America. This family farm fact is supported by our American Angus statistics because the majority of members have 25 head or less of cattle. The family farm is based on the pure enjoyment of the outdoors, a love of the land and animals. Each new calf is a small miracle that is a result of generations of breeding. Each new year brings new victories and successes shared by the whole family.

The Angus breeder is an expert on animal welfare. No one cares more about the lives and happiness of his cattle. Only a healthy contented animal is suitable for embryo transplant, AI, natural breeding or will produce a high quality carcass. Economically, it is to the advantage of the breeder or feedlot owner to make sure the animals are not distressed. Animals always come first. Many wives and children will agree. I remember as a child always being frustrated on Christmas morning when the animals had to be cared for before the gifts could be opened. I wonder how many family events have been cancelled or postponed because of Angus emergencies!

As Angus breeders we are attune to the demands of the consumer, and are meeting that demand as proved by the popularity of the Certified Angus Beef program. The promotion "Beef, Real Food For Real People" is helping keep our product before the public, and the Heart Association even includes beef in their good nutrition recommendations. We have come a long way, but we can't stop now.

Much of the positive thinking towards beef is because of the hard work of our breed association. The American Angus Association, the largest breed organization, continues to work towards the future by sharing knowledge with members and by having field representatives always ready and willing to advise and assist. To quote Herman R. Purdy:

"Angus cattle produce the best quality beef in the world judged by the factors of efficiency and quality. They do it

better than any other breed."

I challenge you all to be an ambassador of Angus cattle -the No. 1 breed.

Becky Hollis — Bushnell, III.

I am from the heartland state of Illinois and attend the University of Illinois. While in school I am striving to attain the best grades possible. Yet, when I look to grade the Angus business I don't look for A's or B's. I look for the most important letter of all. That letter is a C— because I feel that a caring, committed and conscious Angus breeder has a concern for consumers. These breeders will be the ones who will be able to properly deal with the sociological problems that are threatening the environment of the Angus business. The problems, just like the solutions, are in the C category — communication and conservation.

I want you to sit back, relax and imagine with me. Imagine yourself on a green hillside overlooking your herd of beautiful Angus cattle. The warm sun is touching your face. All is peaceful with you and the nature around you. And then snap, you are back to reality. The reality that you have to get up at the crack of dawn tomorrow and put all the care and effort into your Angus cattle as you possibly can, because you know that the more you put into those animals the better your product will be for the consumer.

Yet, with all the care and work, there is a lack of communication with the public about what is actually happening. Pamphlets and advertisements have been put out that degrade the cattle business and the meat industry. It is our job, as producers, to band together and let the public know that Certified Angus Beef is the best meat out on the market. Without this communication the public will keep on being fed this negative information, and the beef industry will suffer.

This suffering leads me to the second sociological challenge of the C category, conservation. It is extremely important that we communicate the proper information to the public to ensure the conservation of the family-owned, family-run Angus herds. These farms were and still are the backbone of our industry. They are the caring, committed and conscientious people who make Certified Angus Beef an important part of America's diet.

When analyzing the Angus business, the reality is that some people are being misinformed and the cattle business is being misunderstood. The letter C should be important to every Angus breeder in how they relate to the public. Caring for the cattle, committing to the industry and being conscious of the world around you is what it takes to solve these struggles we have with communication and conservation.

These beliefs are not new ideas. They are truths that have been overlooked by the public. We all must inform them that Certified Angus Beef is more than a slice of steak, it is a product from the toil and devotion of the Angus breeders.

