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# *There's Only One*

# WAYMON

*After 28 years of dedicated service, retirement is just ahead for regional manager Waymon Ashley. He's looking forward to spending more time with his family, tending his Angus cow herd, visiting his favorite fishing holes, and fondly recollecting the experiences of a lifetime career in the Angus industry.*

BY JANET MAYER



*Waymon Ashley at the start of his career.*

**7**his year the month of April holds promise of things other than spring and a new crop of calves for regional manager Waymon Ashley. On April 1, after 28 years, he is hanging up his familiar Stetson hat and retiring.

Friday night, Jan. 27, a grand retirement party in Waymon's honor was thrown by the Texas Angus Association. Family, friends and Angus associates from throughout his territory gathered at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Fort Worth to heartily roast and toast their fellow cattleman.

It's believed that his long unbroken tenure with the American Angus Association makes him overall the senior field representative in the nation's purebred beef cattle business.

As one of 12 full-time regional managers working throughout the country for the Association, Waymon has been involved in promoting Angus cattle, advising breeders on how to improve their management strategies, assisting those wanting to get started in the Angus business, and helping junior members. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, his region includes the states of Texas, New Mexico and, at times, Arizona.

Waymon, who turned 65 last August, frankly admits that he approaches this milestone with mixed feelings. "Throughout the years, I had truthfully not looked forward to retirement," he says with a distinct drawl, an accent revealing the many years of living in Texas.

"I find a lot of people who retire are so busy doing nothing, they can't do anything on the spur of the moment. I sure don't want to be like them," Waymon says.

High on Waymon's list of things to do will be spending time with 3-year-old granddaughter Ashley. "She likes to see PoPo's cows and so do I," he says, referring to the 25 registered Angus he owns. "Working with my cows is some of the best relaxation there is for me. They are really like pets."

Waymon has already had requests from several sources to act as a cattle consultant. "I don't know that this is what I will do, but I'll probably do something within the field of agriculture if my health holds up. I do know that retirement will take some getting used to. I don't play golf, but I do like to fish so, I intend to do some fishing."



*Waymon and Stella Ashley fort Worth, Texas, were inducted into the Honorary Angus Foundation at the 1991 National Junior Show in Milwaukee, Wis. Waymon has been a long-time supporter of the Texas Junior Angus Association and the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). The NJAA Board of Directors presented the Ashleys with the honor. Pictured (l to r) are: Bill Hollis, Lori Cash, Kellie Coonrad, Waymon and Stella Ashley, Cheramie Viator, Bryan Bouldin, and Bill Reeder. The foundation is designed to recognize and show appreciation to individuals who have shown interest and extraordinary support for junior members of the American Angus Association. The Ashleys joined 19 other inductees who have been selected to membership.*

**With that thought in mind**, at a recent cattle sale Waymon announced his retirement to the breeders who were present. He told them he intended to keep on visiting their operations, but only if they had a fishing hole at their place.

Among those in attendance was Tim Williams, an Angus breeder and long-time friend of Waymon. "Actually I have yet to see him wet a hook," Williams says with a laugh. "On my farm near Joshua, I have a great fishing hole with some mighty nice bass, but I have never seen Waymon fish. To be truthful, I don't think he ever had time. Not many people realize just how demanding the job of being a regional manager is," he adds on a more serious note.

Although Williams is a retired engineer, he still owns a small herd of Angus cows and likes to keep abreast of the industry by accompanying Waymon on his visits to breeders, sales, field days and seminars.

"Traveling with Waymon is interesting. Over the years, I have found him to be dedicated to his job, and I know

the breeders in his region find him to be dependable. No matter where he meets with a breeder, or what kind of problems he encounters, Waymon gives it his full attention. Even if he is behind schedule, I have seen Waymon look at every cow and bull on a place because the breeder asked him to."

Waymon's wife Stella should also be commended for her patience and understanding over the years. As the parents of two daughters, Leanne and Stephanie, who are now grown and married, there were occasions over the years when Stella found her husband absent at inopportune times.

"Every time we had a disaster with the girls, he was gone on Angus business," she recalls. "But all in all, it has been a good life. We have made many friends. I know when he retires he will keep busy because he is the type not to sit around, but it will be a drastic change for him. He loves people and he loves to talk."

Stella admits it will be more difficult for her to adjust to having him home than for him to adjust to retirement. Still, she's

looking forward to living a normal married life. "Perhaps now we can eat dinner at a decent time instead of at 8:30 at night, which is the time he often gets home. To travel as much as he has over the years tells you how much he has loved his work," Stella says.

In covering his **territory** as an Angus regional manager, Waymon often drove between 30,000 to 40,000 miles a year. For many events, he traveled with people from the Texas Angus Association as well as other breed representatives

from the Fort Worth area, adding more miles to his itinerary. Add to this the air miles he logged when taking advantage of the cheap air fares offered within his state, along with those accrued when he flew to events in New Mexico, and the total miles Waymon traveled in 28 years would, no doubt, be awesome.

"I always traveled a lot, which was part of my job, but over the years, the biggest portion of my time was spent on the phone," he says. "Sometimes it got to the point where I almost dreaded hearing the phone ring. On the other hand, it's the

way to get the most done because once you know the people, it's much easier than visiting with them in person. From that standpoint, phone communication is a real necessity of the job."

Waymon uses a modern cordless phone and an answering machine to conduct business with Angus breeders across the country and even in Mexico. This is a long way from the old crank telephone at his south-central Oklahoma boyhood farmhome near Wynnewood. And, according to his sister Loreta, that phone was a party line that went only as

## Waymon's Fond Recollections

### 1960-67 — "The Texas Angus Association Years"

*Managing sales and getting advice from Col. Ray Sims and Ronnie Blackwell. Also good times spent with American Angus Association classifiers Fred Francis, Raymond Barton and Bill McSpadden.*

*Fred never did adjust to Texas ranchers using crossbred Brahman bulls. He thought the "issue equipment" for fieldmen should be a pellet gun with sterilization pellets to shoot those bulls with when driving through the countryside.*

*I had the opportunity to work and travel with a great set of Texas Angus Association presidents. All were dedicated and true friends. They include Bill Clark, Stewart Sewell, Alex Licata, Gerald Hartgrove, Dave Ramsey, Woolly Campbell and Ray McCulloh.*

*It was during this period that my two lovely daughters, Stephanie and Leanne, entered the Ashley Family album.*

### 1967-1995 — "The American Angus Association Years"

*Times spent at meetings and programs planned jointly with Jerry Morrow. Classifying cows with John Barton and Charles Crochet, as well as a week in Montana doing the same.*

*Working at Angus Shows, particularly the National Junior Angus Shows, which allowed me to work closely with the likes of Dean Huribut, Jay Penick, Brian McCulloh, Jerry Lipsey and James Fisher.*

*To another sector of fellow associates I carry a great deal of respect and admiration. Among this group is Richard Spader, Terry Cotton, Keith Evans, Lloyd Miller, Lyle Springer, Bill Roche, Doug Wood, Bob Snyder, Lyle Harring and Stanley Anderson.*

*In 1991 the Texas Junior Angus Association, along with Texas breeders, honored Stella and I with a service plaque and an Alaskan cruise. We were sure proud. We found out that cruise life was great.*

*Stella and I being inducted into the NJAA Honorary Angus Foundation at the 1991 National Junior Angus Show in Milwaukee, Wis., was another big highlight.*

*Preparing the beef and beans at Angus and junior events has been a joy and pleasure. To fellow chefs Glenn Grote, Kelsey Grote and Bob Lee I owe my gratitude. Look for us in Louisville at the National Junior Angus Show this July!*



In 1963 Waymon was serving as fieldman for the Texas Angus Association.



Waymon consults Angus breeder Larry Brown at a cattle sale.

far as their neighbor's house.

During Waymon's childhood years, telephones were not the only luxury the family did without. He recalls walking 2 1/2 miles to grade school in all types of weather. His family's home lacked central heat, indoor plumbing and electricity. However, he did learn the basics of farm life on the family farm, which supported a small dairy operation. He helped care for and twice daily milked by hand a herd of 10 to 20 dairy cows.

"When people know that I grew up on a dairy farm, they sometimes ask why I went into beef production instead of dairy," Waymon says. "All I can say is, by the time I went to Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University), I had milked all of the cows I ever wanted to milk," he says with a laugh.

**Waymon started his career** of showing livestock while attending high school at Wynnewood. He belonged to both 4-H and FFA, raising sheep, hogs and steers as his project animals. After earning a college degree in animal husbandry, Waymon went to work as a herdsman at an Angus operation owned by Dr. Armand Hammer called Shadow Isle Farms near Bed Bank, N.J. Waymon never really planned on entering the Angus business; it just came about that way.

"My first job happened to be with an Angus operation because a friend had worked at Shadow Isle, and he told me about a job. But once I found out how good the breed was, and how much I liked the cattle, I decided to stay with the breed. Except for my time in the Navy, and some work with the Brangus breed, I haven't worked with anything other than Angus since 1951," Waymon says.

Throughout the 1950s, Waymon changed jobs and locations a number of times. After the position in New Jersey, he returned to Texas and worked with the M&L Angus Ranch at Burnett. After a two-year stint in the Navy during the Korean conflict, he returned to Texas and joined the Mecom Angus operation at Houston. The dispersion of that registered Angus operation led to Waymon's move to Menlo, Kan., and the Bill Ljungdahl operation.

After that herd was sold in 1956, he moved to San Antonio, Texas, working for Ljungdahl's brother, Les, at the Essar

## *... And a Few Unforgettables*

*On a trip south of the border with Milt Miller, Milt landed his plane on the strip belonging to the President of Mexico. We could tell that was a mistake when the armed soldiers ran out of the brush onto the runway. It was sure nice to get out of there!*

*Back when bloodtyping at the shows was at its height along with mouthing, we had one breeder who gave us a particularly bad time. Delivering, or attempting to deliver, the official notice of an ineligible animal to this breeder proved futile. He could spot show and Association officials from a long way off. He would dart out the side doors and just disappear. I can still see Buck Hughes, the Houston Stock Show Angus superintendent, running through the Angus barn, hollering for this guy to stop.*

*"These two incidents show up well on my recall screen," says Waymon.*

Ranches. The herd, which ran Brangus cattle in addition to Angus, was under Waymon's management for two years. He later managed the Essar feedlot at Carizo Springs for another two-year stint.

After leaving the Essar Ranch, Waymon joined the Texas Angus Association as secretary/fieldman in 1960. In 1967 he was hired as fieldman for the American Angus Association, and he chose to maintain his residence in Fort Worth.

"I really believe I gained a lot of practical experience working the different jobs when I started in the cattle business. I feel it helped me become a better fieldman," he says.

During his career with the Angus Association, Waymon has seen many changes in the breed. "Back in the 1950s, the breeders would dig a hole for an animal to stand in to be photographed, piling straw around their legs to make them look shorter. They didn't have much leg to begin with, and they covered what there was. Ten years ago, we photographed the big, tall cattle from our knees to make them look taller and bigger, which they already were.

"But when they bred the cattle to go from short to big, the breed lost natural thickness and fleshing ability. This really was bad for the commercial industry. Although the breed is coming back down in size, most cattle today are still too big for the real world. Realistically, they couldn't exist on native grass without assistance," he says.

Through his job experience, Waymon has come to believe that a lot of the registered breeders really don't have much conception of the feedlot and beef

cattle industry, or what it's all about.

"Commercial producers have a much better feel for the industry," Waymon says. "It's kind of sad. Some of the registered breeders have been in the business for as long as 10 or 12 years and don't know what they are doing and probably never will know."

This fieldman believes good management and good records are the key to a successful breeding operation. "Some of the best managers in the cattle business I know are former dairy people," Waymon says. Why do they do so well? "Well, the difference is records. Dairy people know the importance of performance and keeping records. These things go hand in hand."

To sum up his 28 years as a regional manager, Waymon says the most important aspect is to enjoy working with people. "I like people. If I didn't, this job would have driven me crazy," he says.

Waymon feels the average regional manager is not as prepared to work with people as he should be. "You need a lot more psychology than I've ever had in order to work with people and understand them without causing yourself problems," he says. "I've said this many times, and I truly believe it. I'm not so sure that a psychology major with a short course in animal science wouldn't be better training for our job than an animal science major without any psychology."

All in all, Waymon says there is no way of putting a value on the friendships he has generated over the years. "They are some of the greatest accomplishments in my life," he says.