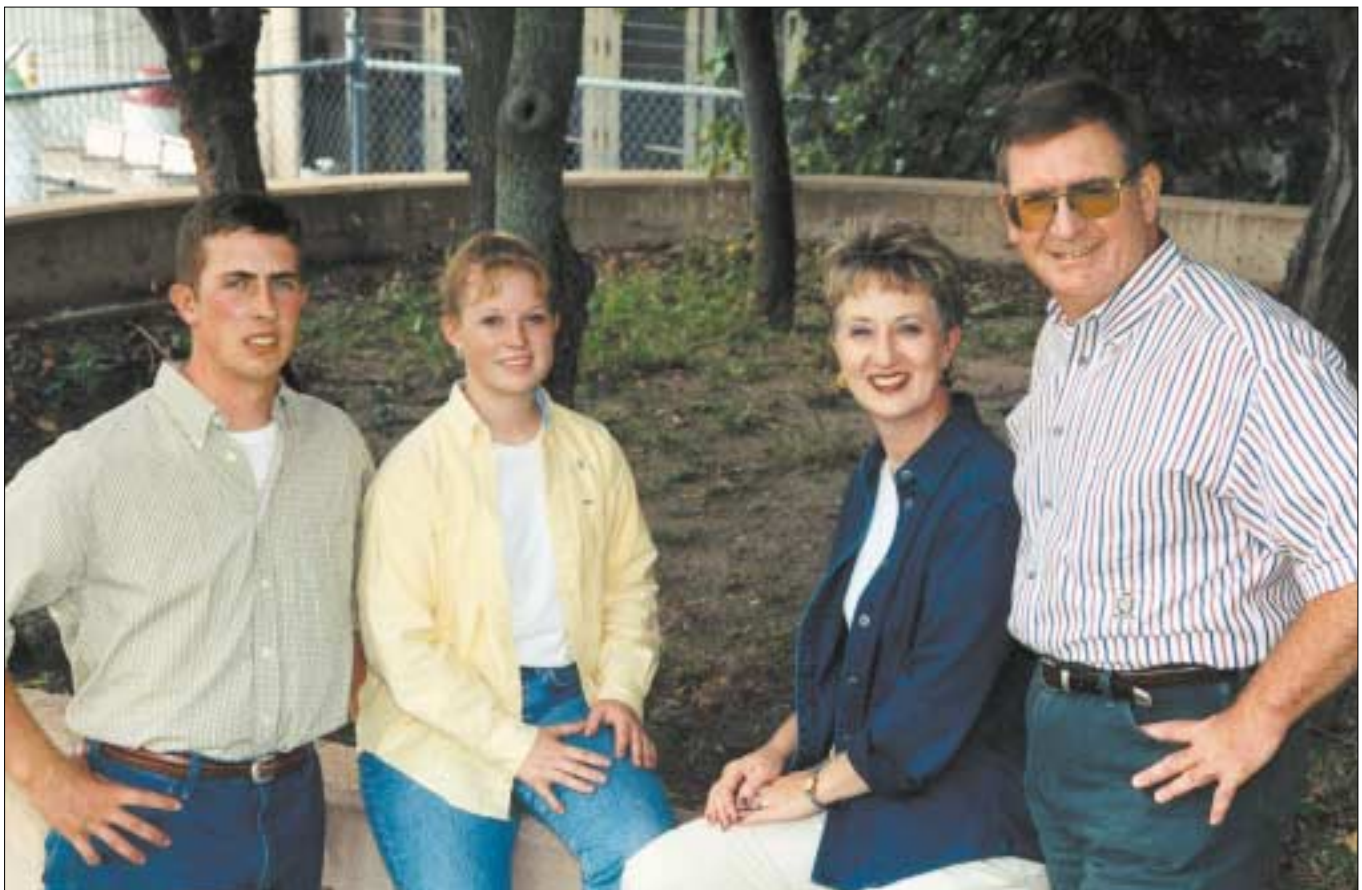


# Success on Life's Journey

BY JAMI STUMP

*Mary McCurry exemplified servant leadership during her term as president of the American Angus Auxiliary.*



JAMI STUMP PHOTOS

Mary, husband Andy, and their children, John and Emily, work together to manage their 125 registered Angus cows on Marands Angus Farms near Burrton, Kan.

**S**tanding on the sidelines patiently coaching, her hands are covered in black paint. She holds a scotch comb. It is from here that she acts as a cheerleader, proudly encouraging her children in the showing.

But she encourages more than her own children. She is an enthusiastic supporter of all Angus junior members and the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) programs that develop them into successful leaders.

With her dynamic personality and visionary leadership style, she is a role model to Angus youth.

Just retired from the highest office in the American Angus Auxiliary, this friend to and leader within the Angus breed is Mary McCurry.

Mary, husband Andy, and their children, John and Emily, work together to manage their 125 registered Angus cows on Marands Angus Farms near Burrton, Kan.

Mary admits her No. 1 commitment is to her family, yet she believes it is also important to serve others.

"My parents always said there are people who are takers and givers," Mary recalls. "Givers are people who are willing to give back to their communities. I believe you need to give back to others and volunteer."

That is why Mary agreed to give three

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years of service as an officer of the Auxiliary. She turned over the president's gavel at the organization's recent annual meeting, which was held during the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky.

■ **Different hats**

Mary's strength is her ability to manage a variety of roles and responsibilities. The many different hats that she has worn include being a committed mother, an Angus junior supporter, a business entrepreneur and the Auxiliary's fearless leader.

Jane Ebert, Lexington, N.C., vice president of the American Angus Auxiliary, says she stands in awe of the many roles that Mary plays.

"Her plate stays loaded, but at no time does she come short of meeting the expectations of herself or the American Angus Auxiliary membership," says Ebert.

She does all of these things with a positive attitude and a contagious smile that spread to fellow Auxiliary members and juniors.

"She is so enthusiastic about helping juniors," says Jamie Meyer, Douglass, Kan., current NJAA Board member. "Mary tries to incorporate new ideas that juniors are going to have fun with and enjoy. She has fun with us, yet encourages and pushes us to the next level."

■ **Angus ties**

Mary's enthusiasm for the Angus breed started at a young age. She began showing when she was 10. It was then that Mary and her two sisters learned to be responsible for themselves and for the cattle they were showing.

"Dad believed that if you were going to learn anything, you were going to have to learn it on your own," recalls the Jackson, Tenn., native. "He took us to the shows and gave us some general directions, like that we needed to feed and water, and then he would leave. We learned to think for ourselves. It made us very independent."

Her involvement as a leader within the Angus breed began in 1969, during the developmental years of the Tennessee Junior Angus Association (TJAA). That year she served as its secretary/treasurer. She proceeded to hold several of the offices in the TJAA.

In 1971, during her freshman year at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, she was crowned the National Angus Queen. That year opened Mary's eyes to many of the opportunities in the Angus breed.

"Those ladies, in their own unique way, exposed me to a national level of cattle and experiences," says Mary. "They opened their arms and homes to me."

Mary received her bachelor's degree in food technology and science in 1975. She then took a big step and moved to Manhattan, Kan., to attend graduate school in meat science at Kansas State University.

During her college years and right up to when she married Andy, she was a Tennessee delegate to the American Angus Association Annual Meeting in Louisville. At that time her father, John Smith, was serving on the Association's Board of Directors.

"Dad was an officer during some difficult times in the Angus breed," recalls Mary. "He was on the Board when the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program was evolving. There were so many great thinkers on the Board at that time. They had a vision for the Angus breed."

She married Andy McCurry in 1977 and worked as a county Extension 4-H agent while he finished his final year of college. Together they went back to her family's farm in Tennessee for two years before deciding to strike out on their own.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WICKI PENNER

Mary's boundless enthusiasm, professionalism, leadership and dedication have left their mark on an energized American Angus Auxiliary.



Mary, a true cowgirl, can handle any task, no matter the size, says husband Andy. "She works cows, feeds and gets show calves ready. She has even pulled a calf in a dress. If it needs to be done, Mary will do it."

"In 1980 we moved back to Kansas without having a place to live," laughs Mary. "We wanted something with fences, water, maybe a barn. Andy really didn't care if the house was a sod hut."

What they found was a "little fixer-upper," but it soon became the home that they still live in today.

■ **Business professional**

Once Mary and Andy had a place to hang their hats, Mary began the search for a job. She spent 13 years with the nation's largest pizza-topping manufacturer, Dorskocil Companies, now owned by IBP.

"While with Dorskocil I was able to develop in a very entrepreneurial setting, which most people do not get when



working for a corporation," says Mary. She started out in quality assurance, but within six months Daskocil started construction of a research and development department. Mary served the new department as its head for the next 12 years.

"The companies we supplied, like Kraft and Pillsbury, looked to us as their source of protein and, as such, they expected us to do the meat research for them," explains Mary. "We listened to what they wanted and needed and then developed the product to fit those needs."

In spring 1992 she was recruited by Excel Corp. She went straight to the corporate headquarters, was given a staff of 22 employees, and headed the research and development division.

Marcine Moldenhauer, manager of value-added procurement programs for Excel, speaks highly of Mary and of the difference she made while with the company.

"Mary brought a well-rounded focus to what was really going on in the outside world related to the livestock industry," says Moldenhauer. "Everyone at Excel respected her for her enthusiasm. It was catching. She really sought out to find consumer solutions by listening and communicating effectively. People connect to Mary."

In fall 1997 Mary found that the Angus cows and her family were calling her to be at home full-time. That was when Mary quit making the commute to Wichita to stay home to raise Angus cattle and her children.

"It is nice to be home now because if Andy calls and says, 'I need to have a bull taken to the vet to get semen-tested because a bull buyer is coming tonight,' I can load him up and take him in to the vet," she says.

Mary focuses most of her efforts toward the 125 head of Angus cows on Marands Angus Farms. Andy says she can handle any task, no matter the size.

"I have seen her do everything around here," Andy comments. "She works cows, feeds and gets show calves ready. She has even pulled a calf in a dress. If it needs to be done, Mary will do it."

In what free time Mary has, she sells Mary Kay cosmetics, an enterprise that allows her to set her own hours. Her client list has grown to approximately 200.

#### ■ Visionary leader

In fall 1996 she received a call from Anne Patton Schubert asking if she would be willing to serve as an American Angus Auxiliary officer. A three-year commitment on Mary's part would be needed.

Schubert, Taylorsville, Ky., was a member of the Auxiliary's nominating committee.

"It was very special when Mary said yes," remembers Schubert. "She possesses boundless enthusiasm, is extremely bright, dedicated, and for the Auxiliary and Mary this was the best time for her to serve as an officer."

The nominating committee also hoped that Mary would encourage younger women to join the Auxiliary.

"We need to appeal to more younger women who have new, vivacious ideas," says Schubert. "Mary proves that women who are busy and have children who show can become involved."

After being elected, Mary jumped right in and started making a difference. She started working on several projects to move the organization forward.

During her term as president she saw the Crystal Awards implemented at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). This new award recognizes juniors who participate in contests other than the cattle show at the NJAS.

"The Crystal Awards that were initiated this last year were a great addition to our junior event," says James Fisher, director of junior activities. "Mary and the Auxiliary recognized the need to honor those juniors who participated and excelled in the numerous non-showing events at the junior show. The award was a great success."

Mary's professional attitude and business sense have been real assets to the Auxiliary. Ebert compliments Mary for her obvious visionary and professional leadership style.

"She brings a quality of vision for the American Angus Auxiliary — both from the organizational and financial viewpoint," says Ebert. "She understands volunteer organizations and brings style to the Auxiliary."

This past year she emphasized updating the organization's bylaws and making sure that all of the Auxiliary's funds were secure and safe. Her next goal is to see a long-range planning session budgeted for the upcoming year.

"I would like to hear what is on the minds and in the hearts of the ladies in the organization," says Mary. "I think that can really move us forward. We need an atmosphere where we can let our creativity flow and have open communication."

Other activities with which Mary has been involved as president include working with Frank Murphy on a print to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the American Angus Auxiliary and assisting in establishing a Web page for the organization.

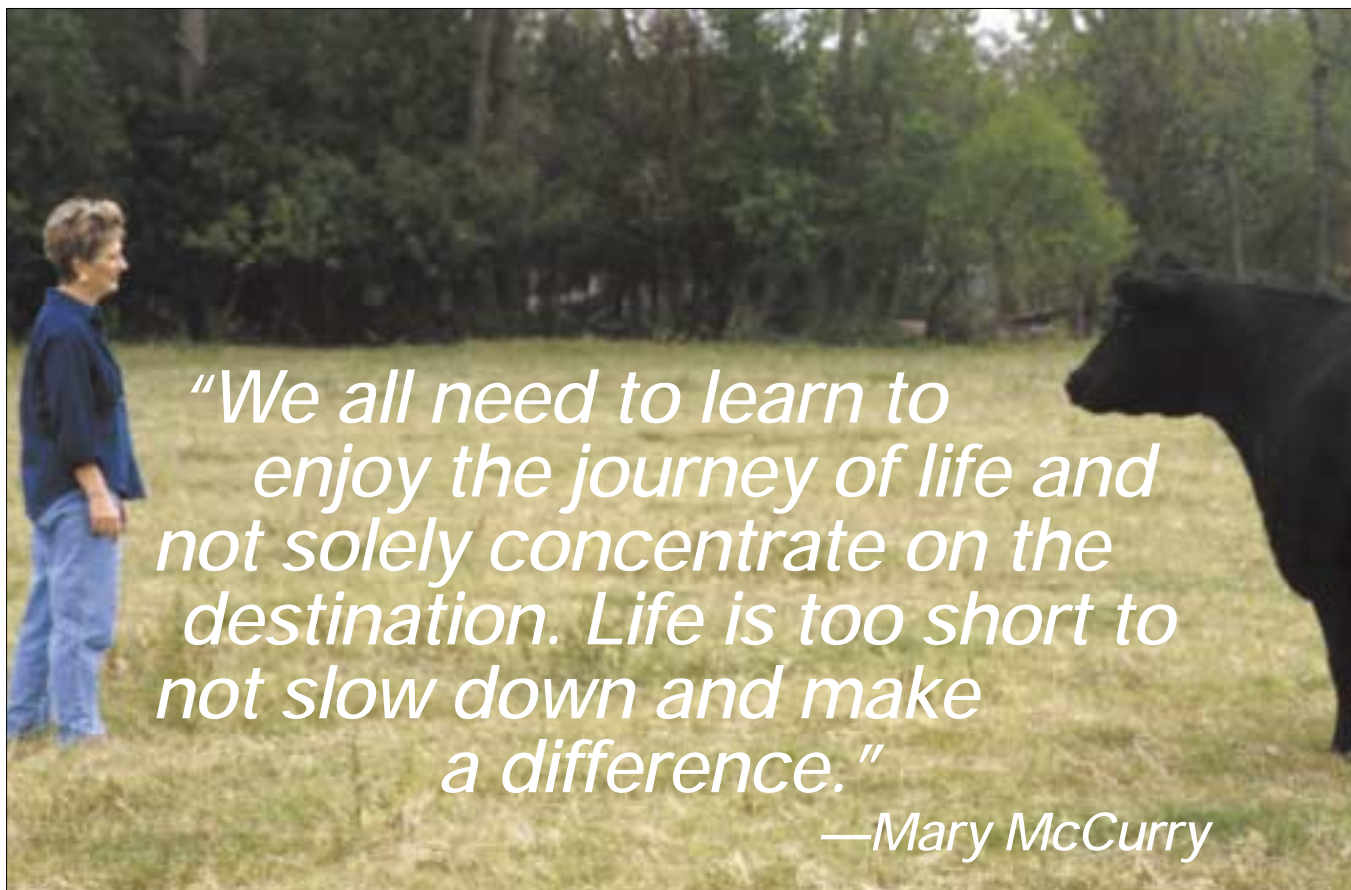
All of these improvements are the result of servant leadership.

"Her love for others comes from the heart," comments Schubert, who says Mary has a genuine interest in the people with and for whom she works. "Mary's credibility is never doubted because you know that she only wants to do what is the best for



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*"We all need to learn to enjoy the journey of life and not solely concentrate on the destination. Life is too short to not slow down and make a difference."*

*—Mary McCurry*

Mary left the corporate world in fall 1997 to devote her time to her family and their herd of Angus cattle.

everyone. She has set a positive standard for the Auxiliary."

#### ■ New challenges

What's next for Mary? Her involvement with the Angus breed did not cease after the NAILE. At the NJAS last July she was named the new Auxiliary representative to the NJAA Board advisory team.

"To know that someone thought of you, voted on you and wanted you to work with the kids is just the ultimate compliment," says Mary with a smile. "I am thrilled and excited about working with the national juniors."

Rhonda Nida, Red Rock, Okla., past NJAA Board member, believes that Mary will be a caring, honest and supportive advisor to the NJAA Board.

"She was nominated and elected to this position because of her fairness and eagerness to help junior members," says Nida. "Juniors look to her as a source of information and for assistance. They also look to her as an advisor and friend, someone they can relate to and count on in any situation."

Lindsey Trosper, Hamilton, Mo., NJAA Board member and communications director, seconds what Nida says about Mary.

"She is genuinely concerned with the success of the organization and the continued development of NJAA programs," adds Trosper. "Mary is someone who will stand strong in her opinion while being open-minded in her communication to Board members."

#### ■ Life's journey

The Angus breed has played a special role in Mary's journey through life. But what has been even more exciting for her and Andy is to be able to watch their children become involved in the Angus breed.

"The tools that young people learn, including the ability to communicate with people and the nurturing of qualities of leadership, are so very important," says Mary.

Watching her children be involved in Angus activities has had its ups and downs. Lessons have been learned, and memories have been created. Mary and Andy both

remember the time when Emily's heifer Baby got away in the showring at the NJAS in Kansas City. The second time the heifer got away, Emily and Baby were asked to leave the showring. At that point, the pair was in second place.

"I will remember forever and ever how Baby playfully got away from Emily," says Mary. "She came up to me and said, 'Mamma, my heart hurts. Baby got away from me.' It's hard to watch your daughter go through something like that, but it has made her stronger. These are the lessons we learn in life."

Mary has found that life is all about the journey. She lives by the motto on her desk that says, "Success is a journey, not a destination."

"We all need to learn to enjoy the journey of life and not solely concentrate on the destination," says Mary. "Life is too short to not slow down and make a difference."

The Angus breed has certainly benefited because Mary chose to include it in her journey through life.

