

Thanks, Barbara

After more than 40 years of service, Barbara Kelly has retired. She shares her memories of the Association and the changes in data processing.

BY LANCE ZIESCH



PHOTO BY SHELIA STANNARD

"I value the long-term friendships I have made over the years," Kelly says. "A lot of us have worked together for more than 20 years. We are like a family. We have been through good and bad times together."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA KELLY

From typewriters to the World Wide Web, Barbara Kelly has seen it all.

One of two remaining original Saint Joseph staff members, Kelly retired from the American Angus Association after 44 years of service. She had been on the Association's payroll since it opened its doors in Saint Joseph on June 25, 1956.

Kelly, who retired in October 2000, supervised the Association data-entry personnel since January 1969. In her more than four decades of service, she witnessed many changes in the way information is processed at the office.

Starting out

It was a notice in the Saint Joseph newspaper that started Kelly on her career at the Association. To publicize the approaching relocation, the Association began advertising in area newspapers that it soon would move its organizational headquarters from the Chicago Union Stock Yards to Saint Joseph, Mo. Interested persons were asked to reply to a local employment agency if they desired an interview. Their applications were then sent to Chicago for the Association decision-

In September 1956, the Association encouraged its employees to don Western duds in support of the Saint Joseph city rodeo. Among the office participants were Kelly (left) and a coworker, Jo Harris.

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making. Applicants being awarded interviews were notified by mail. Kelly was one of those applicants.

Recalling her interview day, Barbara described the scene. It was a brand-new building, still under construction, with workers finishing up various details. There were rows of filing cabinets and boxes everywhere. All Association work had ceased during the weeks of the move, so there already were piles of work stacked up, she says.

The office now occupied by John Crouch, director of performance programs, served as the interview room. Rows of chairs were set up outside, and the applicants waited their turn, much like patients do at a doctor's office.

The interviews started in the morning and continued until evening. The jobs that applicants were given depended on when they interviewed during the day. As soon as the interview was over, the applicants knew whether or not they were employed. In one day, the Association had filled most of the available positions, person by person and department by department.

Since Kelly interviewed in the afternoon, she was given a job in the Herd Records Department. She had wanted a job on a billing machine, but by the time of her interview, that position was filled.

"We had work stacked everywhere," she says. "I just looked at it and thought, 'Are we ever going to get all of this done?'"

In spring 1957, Kelly was asked to transfer to the IBM Keypunch Department.

Changes along the way

In those days, daily office work was handled much differently, Kelly admits. A lot of tasks were done by hand. Instead of a computer database with handy search features, like today's system, the Association had numerous filing cabinet drawers crammed full of 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ -by-3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch IBM punch cards.

Each 80-column Keypunch card contained the information of one animal, owner or breeder. As the data was entered into the Keypunch machine, the cards were fed into it and punched. Through a series of repeating columns of numbers, an animal's statistics could be recorded by punching out little square holes (or chads) over the corresponding numbers.

After another employee (working the IBM Card Verifier) checked the punched cards for errors, they were then fed through a second IBM machine in order to print out the certificates of registration.

Hundreds of thousands of registrations were processed in this manner, card after card, punch after

punch. Thus, the registration process continued virtually unchanged until the late '60s and early '70s when the first computers were purchased.

After the arrival of the first computer, the extensive filing system for herd cards was phased out, and the herd records were stored on a mainframe. However, the punch cards for individual animals still were fed into the computer to generate the certificates of registration.

With each additional piece of technology, more steps were removed from the process. But fewer steps also meant fewer employees.

"Technology changed our way of entering the work," Kelly says. "Each time we got a new computer, we needed less people, and that is when we became more like a family.

"I liked working for an association that valued their employees. I think that is why many employees have been there such a long time."

For her friends at the American Angus Association, and those who come along in the future, Kelly offers a few words of advice: "Do the very best job you can because the experience will help you later on. Enjoy what you do, and try to put a smile on your face every day."

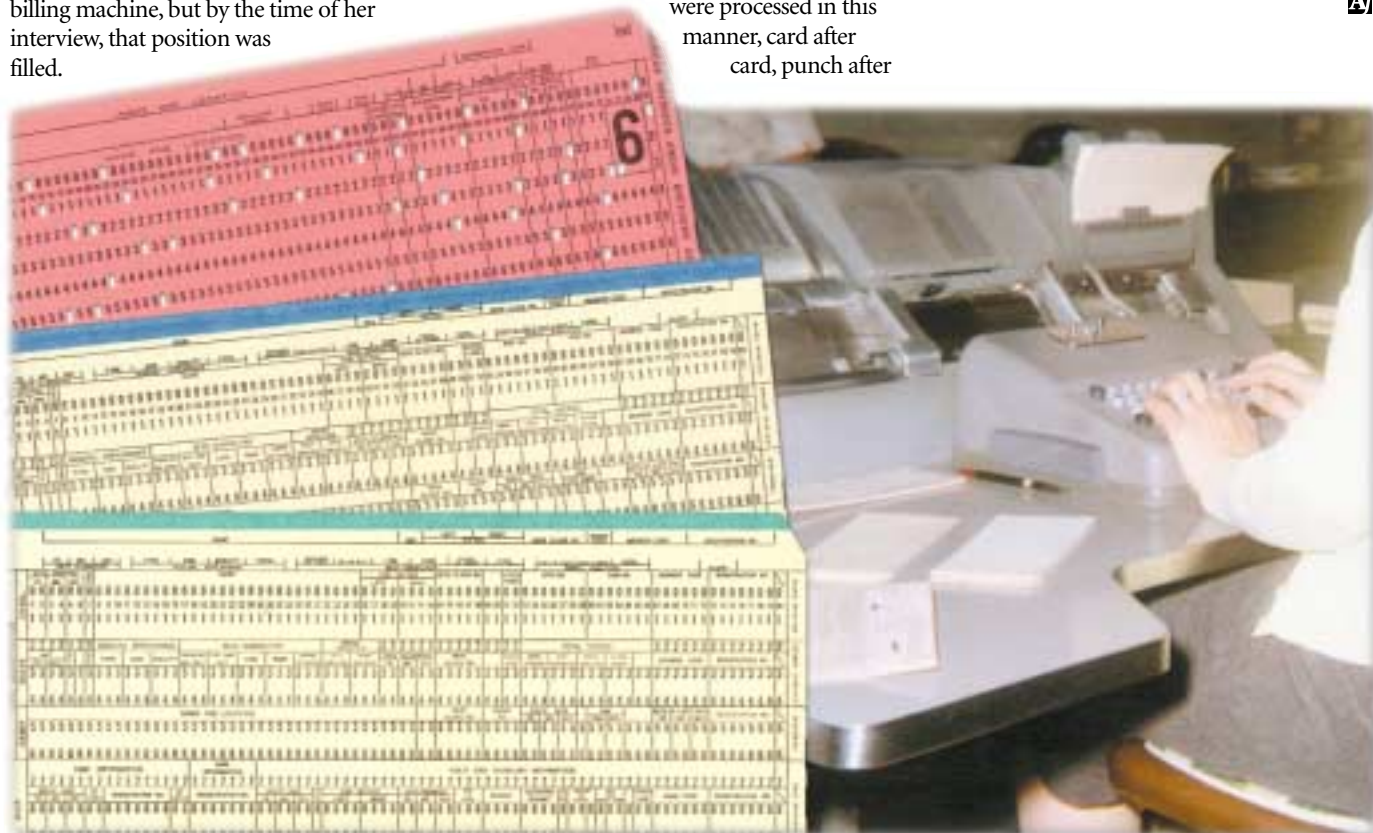


PHOTO AND KEYPUNCH CARDS COURTESY OF BARBARA KELLY

In spring 1957, when Kelly was transferred to the IBM Keypunch Department, animal records were stored on 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ -by-3 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch IBM punch cards. Each 80-column Keypunch card contained the information of one animal, owner or breeder.