



He is first caliber.

BILL ROCHE

A statesman within the field of fieldmen.

by Lori Riffel

Bill Roche. Honesty. Integrity and dedication. A professional.

Bill spent 30 years with the American Angus Assn. as the West Coast regional manager and, more recently, as western director of regional managers. He is perhaps most respected for the professional image he has maintained for many years through many different aspects of the Angus business. Never a dull moment for Bill, he made many herd visits; attended shows, field days, meetings, sales of purebred and commercial Angus, and seminars; did some consulting work; and was a guest lecturer for many years at most agriculture colleges and universities in Califor-

nia. He gave top-notch advice to new regional managers and helped coordinate efforts of the field staff.

Henry La Franchi of Calistoga, Calif., says of Bill, "In our Angus breed, with the variety of people that it encompasses, Bill has been able to extend the same profile to small breeders with a few cows as he did to large breeders or investors with high-dollar operations."

Bill's personality enables him to fit in with all walks of life, to be an adaptable professional—a trait so important to the demographics of the western area of the United States. He provided no disappointment to any person he knew.

Bill accepted the Association position in 1954, and he and his wife Joyce and their two children, Kris and Steve, moved to Lodi, Calif. (at the base of the Sierra Mountains). They were located in the heart of wine country, quite a change from the Iowa landscape familiar to them. Within a 10-mile radius of Roches, there were 30 wineries. Years later, Bill and Joyce moved to Galt, Calif.

Working up and down the Pacific coastline, his first delegated area included the states of California, Hawaii, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Later it was narrowed to the first four states mentioned.

Bill became very involved with the business right away and one of his first projects was to become a part of the Western National Angus Futurity.

"I saw it grow from practically nothing to become one of the major shows today. It's been a pet of mine," says Bill. The WNAF began one year before Bill took his position in California. After a few years of moving around, the WNAF has settled now in Reno. (Bill has also been a part of the ladies' day extravaganza for all but two years.)

Bill easily conveyed his openness to assist at any time and one of his first herd visits was in 1954 to the newly-formed Lettunich & Sons Angus in Payette, Idaho.

"Bill was the one we could always call on to get the straight scoop on anything we ever wanted to do," said Ed Lettunich, partner in Lettunich & Sons. "He was very knowledgeable, and informative in the fact that he always knew what was going to be the next good breeding bull. If you called him and asked 'do we need to use this bull?' you could bet if he said yes you needed to do it."

Always interested in youth

Bill worked closely with California Poly Technic at San Luis Obispo for the most part of two decades, assisting with the annual bull sale and lecturing to the beef classes on an annual basis.

Bill has watched generations turn around in the junior organizations. He helped start the California Junior Angus Assn. and has seen youth go from junior projects to their own developed herds. Bill also assisted in chartering the California and Utah adult associations.

"The juniors have been the most interesting because in 30 years time I've seen juniors then that are now raising their own children and getting them in the business," said Bill.

Walk of the stars

Bill was accessible to come in contact with distinguished national figures and well-knowns in the entertainment business. And of course, such meetings always were connected with Angus cattle. Bill was efficient in taking care of his Angus breeders, whether they operated their programs as a hobby or depended on Angus for their entire livelihood.

Bill's span of territory (900 miles of coastline in California itself) could provide for a fast change of scenery and environment, as well as types of breeders. While the snow may be blowing in Utah or Washington, the sun could be shining on the southern coast of California or the beaches of Hawaii. One day Bill could be up north, clad in coveralls and buying bulls on order for a commercial breeder, and the next day could find him in southern California in a short sleeve shirt viewing cattle owned by a movie star.

"I've had many diversified experiences with people just because of the area," says Bill. One was with actress Ann Southern.

"Ann was in movies and had her own TV show, and she also had a herd of Angus. She always leased her land and the place she had at the time I met her was Lucille Ball's. She wanted me to look at the herd, so they picked me up at the airport in her Rolls Royce complete with chauffeur. It was in that same car we spent half a day bouncing through the pasture," chuckled Bill. He

Bill was honored at many events for his retirement. Here, he and his wife Joyce get a good laugh from the comments of Ralph Clark at the California Angus Days.



The auction ring force at the second Hawaii bull sale in 1965. From left, are: Monty Richards of Kahua Ranch; John Chohlis; Bill and M.H. McDonald.



No, it's not Roy Rogers, but our own statuesque Bill Roche taking part in a three-day cattle drive from Smith, Nev., to Fish Lake, Calif. in the mid-1960s.

marked it down as another very pleasant and memorable experience in the Angus business.

Bill also became good friends with Fred and June McMurray. (Fred is most noted for his TV series, *My Three Sons*.)

"Fred had an Angus herd for some 20 years. He has since sold the cattle but still has the ranch. I got to know him really well," comments Bill.

As if knowing movie stars wasn't enough, Bill got in on the action himself, along with entertainer Leroy Van

Dyke, veteran auctioneer Ray Sims, and the Association's Keith Evans. This distinguished group of cohorts were part of an auction scene in the movie, *What Am I Bid?* cast in 1966. Bill was also in charge of acquiring cattle for the part. In addition, he served as a technical advisor on the set for another movie.

To the islands and abroad

Bill traveled from the mainland to Hawaii on several occasions.

"We sell quite a few Angus bulls to Hawaii every year and most are used commercially. One year approximately 90 bulls were purchased from mainland breeders by the Parker Ranch, a long-time Hereford operation," said Bill. He helped generate business for the breeders in all parts of his territory, and served as a constant advisor in many decisions.

Bob Neumeyer, Bonners Ferry, Idaho, was secretary-manager of the Western States Angus Assn. for three and a half years and comments, "when I first took the position as secretary-manager of the WSA, Bill was very helpful in introducing me to key people, giving me past history of events and really helping me through my first year. I'll always feel grateful to him for his help."

Bill was responsible for coordinating a sale of cattle to Japan and Okinawa. He included many western breeders' herds for the selection of cattle. He also worked with Angus trade in South Korea, Phillipines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand.

Upon the return from a world trade fair in Japan on one trip, Bill was asked to present his slide show to a Rotary Club in Las Vegas.

"... the Rotary Club always meets in the showroom of the Flamingo hotel and a crowd of 200 people were in the audience. I was introduced and left standing alone on this huge stage. I carried the presentation off well, but the whole time I felt like I should have been wearing feathers in my hair," grins Bill.

Bill was noted for being able to carry off any situation, and always in good taste. As one colleague describes him, "he's got class, class, class."

Over the years, Ed Lettunich and many others would turn to Bill for his sound advice. One time provided a trip back East to look at President Dwight D. Eisenhower's herd of Angus at Gettysburg, Pa., in 1966.

"One of the generals under Eisenhower during the European campaign was also the ranch manager," says Ed. "He showed us the cattle, and later that day Bill and I had a visit with President Eisenhower in his library and discussed the cattle. He was impressive." And the man that put this trip together has also been impressive.

Ed adds, "... and Bill, he was a super statesman for the Angus business—he could have worked for the foreign service and been a high mark statesman for the country."

Always a leader

A man of leadership and guidance, Bill developed those qualities early. Early, Iowa, is his birthplace and Iowa State University his alma mater. Upon graduation from ISU and a successful judging team career, Bill worked for the extension service six months in Iowa's Benton and Tama counties before entering the service in 1942.

During World War II, he started as an Army meat inspector in packing plants



In his cavalry days during WWII, one of Bill's duties was to train 300 mules and 75 men for pack troops at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas.

and next received a commission in the Quartermaster Corps. He and one other officer were in charge of training 75 men and 300 mules for pack troops at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas. It was at Fort Bliss that Bill met Chilly Peery (now editor-publisher of the *Angus Topics*) who also was training pack troops. They would later become reacquainted in the cattle business.

Bill then took part in four campaigns in the China-Burma-India theatre. In China, he was a ration purchasing officer for their armies and was in charge of an American and Chinese staff.

"I trained the Chinese staff to be able to take over when our units were ordered to pull out," said Bill. He was discharged after four years of service with the rank of captain.

Back to homeland and career

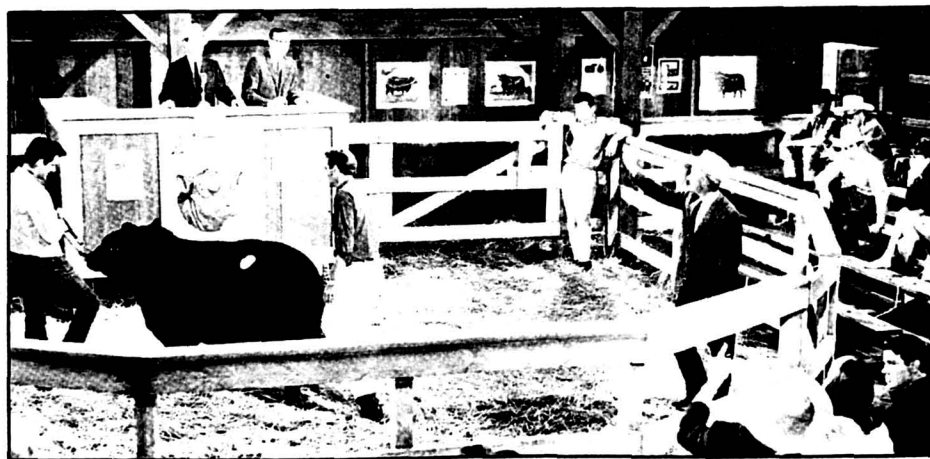
After the war, Bill met his wife Joyce, also a native Iowan, and went to work for three years with the Chicago-based *Drovers Journal*.

"I worked the East Coast, actually the whole area east of Chicago," says Bill. He then returned to Iowa to farm for a period of five years. During this time he worked occasionally as a "freelance ringman" for the old *Aberdeen-Angus Journal*, *Hereford Journal*, *Wallace Farmer* and other publications. In 1954, he began work for the American Angus Assn.

Bill has never been an idle man and part of his plans now will be to continue on with his own Angus herd and to pursue his oil painting more intensely. He has been honored with several testimonials for his retirement from Angus and cattle industry organizations. One plaque appropriately described regional manager Bill Roche:

"Bill knew his job, he was fair, he was honest. He was always there when we needed him."

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The movie makers. "What Am I Bid?" was cast in 1966 in the Samuel Golden studio, Culver City, Calif. Bill worked the ring (right), entertainer Leroy Van Dyke also was a part (upper right corner of ring) and Ray Sims (on the block) auctioneered while the Association's Keith Evans clerked.