

# A Tribute to our Beloved B. J.

*After 14 years of service to the Angus Journal and to you, our subscribers, it's retirement time for circulation manager B.J. Walkup. She's a special lady who deserves recognition and one last praise of "job well done!"*

*by Jerilyn Johnson*

**N**ot all phone calls to the circulation desk sound quite this desperate. But over her 14 1/2-year career at the *Angus Journal*, B.J. Walkup has handled them all with professionalism, patience and a reassuring voice.

The *Angus Journal* staff works hard to publish a quality magazine that meets your information and advertising needs. You see our story bylines, photos, and editorial and advertising layouts in each issue. Behind the scenes, however, was a circulation manager whose role was even more important — making sure your magazine is delivered to your mailbox each month. And B.J. fulfilled that role to the best of her ability.

**Betty Jane is her real name.** She came to work for the *Angus Journal* in August of 1979, soon after the American Angus Association purchased the magazine and set up a publishing shop at its headquarters in St. Joseph, Mo.

The nickname, B.J., came from Betty Schirmer, a co-worker at the *Angus Journal*. "She thought there were too many Bettys in our office, so she started calling me B.J. and it stuck," B.J. says.

Working on the original staff during that inaugural year was a real challenge. The magazine's transition from the original Webster City, Iowa, office to American Angus Association

*Hello, get me the circulation department!*

*Hello, this is B.J. How may I help you?*

*Where's my Angus Journal? I always get it by the 10th of the month. I've been waiting by the mailbox every day. My neighbor got his. Do you think my postal carrier is reading it again? I can't survive without my Journal!*



*B. J. Walkup*

headquarters took time and effort. A new general manager/editor had to be hired along with a staff of 12 people.

"Most of us were new to the magazine publishing business," B.J. says. "So we had a lot to learn."

She and her co-workers persevered and soon found they could produce a magazine and do it well. Mike Sweet, the *Angus Journal's* first general manager/editor, noticed B.J.'s hard work. When the position of circulation manager was created, she was his first choice.

C.K. Allen, Association executive vice president at the time, along with the Board of Directors, set high goals and standards for their newly acquired publication. Expanding circulation to 40,000 subscribers was one goal set, but unfortunately, never met. It was the start of lean years for the American Angus Association and beef industry. A depressed farm economy, cow herd dispersals, along with the influx of exotic cattle breeds reduced registrations and membership. By the mid-1980s, *Angus Journal* circulation dipped below 15,000.

B.J. and others on the magazine staff worked hard to sell subscriptions during the early years. With membership numbers declining, however, they switched gears and concentrated efforts on providing quality, speedy service to subscribers. Before

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she retired this month, B.J. did have the satisfaction of seeing *Angus Journal* circulation rise to almost 20,000 again.

Carrying out the daily duties of taking subscriptions, sending address labels to the printer, distributing mail around the office, fielding postal service complaint calls, and handling *Angus Journal* billing kept B.J. busy over the years. Still, she was never too busy to call out a cheerful "good morning!" or bend an ear for customers and co-workers who wanted to share a story or concern.

B.J. was known for her acute accounting skills, grandmother brag books and down-to-earth Nebraska farm girl nature. Here in the office, she was also famous for being frugal. She kept careful inventory of the extra supply of *Journals* shipped to the office each month and hated to see anything go to waste.

"I never could figure out why she was so stingy with each month's edition of the *Angus Journal*, but she was. She guarded them with her life," says Dean Hurlbut, director of activities for the Association.

B.J. carefully delegated the magazines to Association and *Journal* staff members

so enough books were left over for Angus events, special requests and reference. Meeting these needs was a constant challenge to her.

**What did she like most about her job?** "It was the people," B.J. says. "It was always interesting to talk with the breeders about their business and families. The friendships made along the way are special." She affectionately calls those Angus breeders who frequently wrote letters, her "pen pals."

B.J. had the patience and good humor to put up with an occasional prank from co-workers, but never let it go too far.

Take, for example, the time former regional manager Jeff Windett called B.J., disguising himself as Cecil Snodgrass of Rabbit Ridge Angus, Snakes Navel, Kan. "Cecil" asked her to find out why he wasn't getting his *Angus Journal*, giving her a fictitious member code and zip code. Satisfied he had caused B.J. enough frustration for the day, "Cecil" asked her to transfer him to another staff member.

"But B.J. soon realized who the

practical joker was, tracked me down and got back on the phone. Boy, did I get a scolding!" Jeff says.

This Cornhusker gal has truly been a grounding force for all of us at the *Angus Journal*. We'll dearly miss her and all her Erma Bombeck-like qualities. Happy retirement B.J.!

### *Fond Recollections*

"B.J. rode with me to work over the past 14 years. In this length of time we have become good friends and know one another pretty well.

"There were several days we would have preferred to drive right on by the Angus Association front door and head for Kansas City to shop. Several times I thought we were going to have to do some emergency shopping as she often misplaced gloves, umbrellas or her purse.

"We have shared a lot of good times and I'll always remember B.J. in her caring way. Thanks B.J.!"

— **Carol Waller**

"From Leprechauns to nail clippers, from swapping recipes and grandchildren stories, B.J. and I have covered it all. My experience with her goes far beyond co-workers. We have worked in adjoining offices for eight years and have been each other's confidants. A truer friend I couldn't ask for."

— **Marlene Pierce**

To pick out one anecdote from our 14 years together is hard. A lunch table conversation that bursts into gales of laughter because of one of her nonchalant comments on the topic of the day, comes to mind.

"For so many who have come and gone from the *Angus Journal* staff, she was a real friend and mentor."

— **Cheryl Oxley**

"She's a delight to be around. In the office, she was always good for a smile and friendly greeting."

— **Susan Shoup**

"She is a survivor!"

— **Dean Hurlbut**

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