

The September 1948 Aberdeen-Angus Journal had this to say about the first Futurity. "Heralding a new era in Aberdeen-Angus shows, the first Breeders' Futurity August 5 and 6 was a tremendous success on all counts. One of the greatest groups of young cattle ever brought out by American breeders paraded the bluegrass at Keeneland Race Course at Lexington, Ky. Before the show ended even the most skeptical visitors and exhibitors, and there had been a few, agreed that the Futurity is a 'natural' and fills a real need in breed promotion."

Filling a need. Freeman Keyes, then of Reverie Knoll Farm, Danville, Ky., felt that need and came forth with an idea. An idea that would pull together breeders from all over the country. He called together a group of Angus breeders in the summer of 1947 and shared his dream about an Angus show similar to horse racing futurities. The word "futurity" means looking into the future and what could have been more appropriate than looking into the future with Angus cattle?

Keyes wanted to incorporate horse futurity guidelines into this new show. In essence, this meant entries were determined from prior "nominations." Accordingly, rules were established whereby the sire and dam were nominated in the fall prior to the Futurity in

an original board member and chairman in 1954.

It proved a great idea as early years depicted it as the grand entry to the show season parade. It earned a position in Angus society as the "coming out" event for many new calves each year.

When the books for the first Futurity were closed, a total of 318 bulls and 2,988 females had been nominated. (Nominations would reach a high in 1951 with 5,920 females and 458 bulls.) One hundred sixty-four head were shown in six classes that first year. Premiums were allocated on a percentage basis with 25 percent going to the winner, (\$880 in cash was paid to the six winners) 17 percent to second, 12 to third, 10 to fourth and so on down to one percent to twelfth place. Besides good premiums, the Futurity began to set other standards.

"The Futurity was the place (show) that originated the three-man judging system. No other breed had used it before the Angus," said Floyd Dievert of Danville, Ky. He was Futurity chairman in 1957, following Robert Williams in 1955 and Dan Warner in 1956. Dievert reports he has only missed one Futurity—when he inadvertently planned a vacation. He comments on their entertainer as a real highlight of that first Futurity.

needed. At that time, Bill McSpadden of Chilhowie, Va., was the American Angus Assn. fieldman for the Southeast territory. The Futurity committee wanted to "borrow" Bill and wife Clara

"What I think is remarkable is when you can get 1,000 to 1,500 people to travel from 40 states and other countries knowing the only thing that they're going to see is Angus cattle."

—Tom Burke

for a year until the position could be filled. Frank Richards, then the Association secretary, granted Bill a one-year leave of absence. That one year extended to 22 years of service from the McSpaddens.

In 1952, the board of directors became the executive committee (with members serving three-year terms). A new board of directors included one director from each state that had cattle nominated to the previous Futurity. Also, at this meeting A.H. (Tex) Spitzer, Pleasant Plains, Ill., was elected chairman for the 1953 Futurity.

"The shows were quite enthusiastic and we had some of the big people of the industry interested in showing cattle, like J.C. Penney and Jay Walker," said McSpadden. Interest has always been strong during the last four decades, but the 1950s tested the strength and future of the Futurity.

Dievert comments, "We thought by moving it around it might help, but it didn't. (The Futurity was held in St. Louis in 1956 and in Little Rock, Ark. in 1957.) It was the Futurity's darkest time." The economy was tough and the show recorded some of its lowest numbers in entries and premiums in those years.

Years to follow would shape and form the Futurity as we know it today. Show numbers have reached as many as 329 head and famous herd sires would step forth time after time from Futurity winners. Influxes of breeders and new exhibitors became more involved every year. The Futurity was upholding its purpose in breed promotion.

In 1958, J.B. McCorkle of Kansas City, Mo., was elected to chair the show. He continued to do so until his



Clara and Bill McSpadden served as the Futurity secretary and manager for 22 years from 1951 to 1973. At left is Robert Williams, the 1955 chairman.

August; this was, of course, before the calf was born. Additional fees were required to keep the calf eligible up until the show. These fees provided much of the premiums.

Besides the novelty of horse racing futurity guidelines, the first board of directors wanted this show to stand apart from the rest.

"One idea of it (the Futurity) was to have a show before any other state fairs—before the cattle had been shown at all that year. They would be fresh," said Joe Keefauver, Jonesboro, Tenn.,

"Red Skelton (long-time radio and TV comedian) was at the Futurity and for pictures he was standing in the middle holding the champion bull and heifer on either side of him. Someone yelled for Red to move the heifer back a little, and he replied, 'Well, I know something you don't.' She was standing on Red's foot," chuckled Dievert.

Freeman Keyes was chairman for three years and the committee would elect Jay P. Walker of Tulsa, Okla., as its second chairman when Keyes stepped down. A manager was also

death in 1972. Also in 1958, for the first time one judge was used and the show returned to Keeneland Race Course. Division championships and get-of-sire classes were added to the Futurity in 1960 to give the show a standard classification and qualify the cattle for the American Angus Assn.'s Sire of the Year.

Sales were a part of the Futurity from 1949 to 1957 (no sale was held in 1956). The high average of \$1,635 was posted on 39 head in 1951. Since 1980, embryo auctions have become a popular event of the Futurity. The 1984 tallies hold the current record on nine embryos at a \$16,500 average.

The first National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest was held in conjunction with the Futurity in 1967 and remained there through 1973. Thereafter, it became a part of the National Junior Angus Show. Sam Wylie III, Nottingham, Pa., won the first contest.

New decade, leaders

The McSpaddens worked with every chairman over the years, but most of them were spent with J.B. McCorkle.

"J.B. was a promoter. After all, he was in the promotion business and was good at it," said McSpadden.

Tom Burke of Smithville, Mo., current Futurity chairman, was elected to the chairmanship after McCorkle's death in 1972. The McSpaddens retired the following year when the Futurity was moved to the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville. In 1974, McSpaddens were honored for their service and the McCorkle Challenge trophy was established to recognize the best bull and female shown together and owned or co-owned by one exhibitor. Also at this time, Joe Bill Meng of Bowling Green, Ky., was hired as manager of the Futurity.

Futurity rules today

Even though the idea of the futurity concept is no longer a part of the Angus Breeders' Futurity, the event remains very much the auspicious show dreamt up by Freeman Keyes. Nominations became inconvenient for entries, and were difficult for many to understand.

"It was a nomination of a planned mating," explains Burke. "Since the breed started moving faster with the introduction of fresh genetics, by 1970 it was felt that a change in the rules and regulations were needed."

He adds that the preliminary nominations got so complicated that people weren't taking the time, nor wanted to



The first Futurity board of directors were, from left: Bill Barton, Tex Spitzer, Joe Keefauwer, Francis Poindexter, secretary; Jay P. Walker, Bob Green, J.B. McCorkle and Freeman Keyes.

fully understand the system. Three years ago, nominations turned to a one-time entry fee.

Attendance increase

"The biggest boost that got attendance climbing was in 1976 when the Futurity was held in conjunction with the National Junior Angus Show," says Meng. "To that point and for some time after, it was one of the more exciting Angus events that I'd ever been a part of. It brought in a lot of small breeders with juniors involved that probably had never seen the Futurity. Once exposed to it, it became a regular part of their routine to attend every year."

Enjoying the show's steep tradition, and at the same time keeping up with present trends is a main objective of the Futurity, according to Burke. He credits the Futurity executive committee and board of directors for instigating standards such as measuring hip and shoulder height; the sliding scale of dividing classes after the cattle arrive at the show; showing group classes first; and calf get-of-sire class.

New classes have been added over recent years to more fully recognize the contributions of sires and dams. Produce of dam, cow-calf pairs with natural and embryo calves are also shown along with the newest class, best udder, added in 1984.

Futurity run differently

While most breed shows are part of a total livestock show, the Futurity stands apart in that it is governed exclusively by Angus breeders. The board of directors are still state representatives and are appointed by the chairman. The board formulates ideas that are passed on to the 19-member executive committee, who are elected from within the board and serve three-year terms. They in turn elect the chairman and hire a manager each year. While the Futurity is run by breeders, it is also totally financed by breeders.

"It has the uniqueness and design that attracts the attention other shows aren't able to create," says Meng. One remains the fact it is an opening act for the fall shows to follow.

"It's the most revealing show and I think it's the most difficult show to judge. For one thing, at this show the cattle are all shown slick (short hair) so they're all at the same advantage or disadvantage. The cattle haven't ever been shown together or for such a long time—maybe since Reno or even Denver—that the judge can't look at previous show reports. He has to judge the cattle for what they are that day," says Meng.

Both Burke and Meng agree in believing the Futurity show sets a precedent, meaning that Futurity champions will more often than not make repeat performances in the purple at later shows.

The Futurity has always been more than just a show—it's a social event, a gathering of sorts after the long summer. The Futurity today provides a relaxed and spacious atmosphere for the spectators, exhibitors and cattle in the air-conditioned exposition center at Louisville.

The next Futurity is a short four months away and the goal is to have over 200 head show, according to Burke. Dr. Bob Kropp will serve as the judge and part of the program already includes Baxter Black and Senator Gary Hart (both, incidentally, of Colorado).

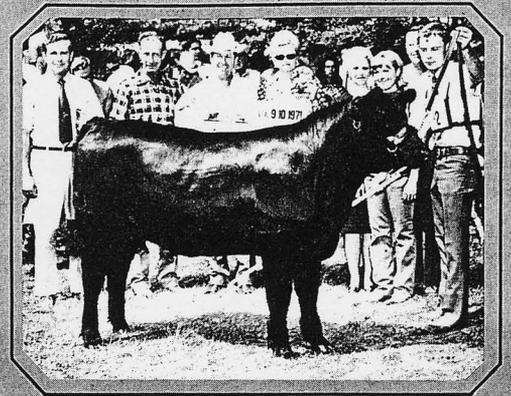
The original purpose

The Futurity today still "fills a need" as expressed at the conclusion of the first Futurity in 1948. Generally recognized as one of four major Angus shows, it continues to set standards and create excitement and predictions for the show season. And most of all, it is a valuable promotion tool for the Angus breed.

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All-American Futurity

Gallery



Supreme champion of the 1971 Futurity was HMM Blackcap Lucky Lady 43.



1978 grand champion bull Ken Caryl Mr Angus 8017.

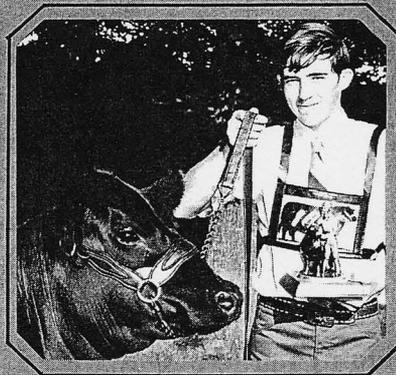


The Robert L. Asher Memorial trophy has been awarded to the top herdsman for several years. In 1980, Bill Avery (left), of Premier Angus Inc., Cloverdale, Ind., won the award. Also pictured are, from left: Dr. & Mrs. James Asher, Dave Richmond (second place) and third Jim Ward.



Keefauver Brothers, Jonesboro, Tenn., showed KB Eileenmere 182nd to the supreme championship of the 1957 Futurity.

Bill J. Conley (now of Clarksdale, Mo.) won the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest in 1972.



Greg Krueger leading Kruegers Scaara of Sayre into the ring which would lead to the champion heifer title at the 1981 show.



The late Jerry Litton, Missouri Congressman, was guest speaker in 1975 before the Top 25 Sale (which was held for two years, also in 1976).



1979 supreme champion PS Power Play.