

STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

The Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association Celebrates Its Diamond Anniversary

by Cindy Folck

Marketing purebred Angus cattle. That's what breeders from Grant County, Wis., set out to do in 1917, and it's the same goal that has helped keep them together for 75 years.

In the years since the group started, many changes and events have occurred. The world has experienced two world wars, a depression, and we have seen the rise and collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

The cattle industry has also seen many changes in 75 years. Long, tiring cattle drives to market have been replaced by gooseneck and pot-bellied trailers. Even the cattle themselves have gone through several type changes.

This year members of the Southwest

Wisconsin Angus Association look at their past and future as they celebrate their diamond jubilee. The association has certainly seen many changes in 75 years, but the remaining strengths are the dedication and comradeship of the breeders. And, like the cattlemen before them, the breeders today still make their living with Angus cattle.

In the southwest corner of a state where dairy is king, the rolling hills and ample creeks and streams provide an ideal setting for cattle. The pasture land is abundant and many fields are dotted with Angus.

When the association began in 1917, with 17 members, it was called the Grant County

Wisconsin Aberdeen-Angus Breeder's Association. It is recognized as one of the oldest regional Angus associations in the nation.

World turmoil of the early years affected the group, especially when a member of the board of directors had to be replaced because he went to fight the war in France.

Even in the early years, the association knew the importance of promoting the area's cattle, so one of the first projects was an annual

sale. That first sale was held on October 23, 1918.

The sales expanded, and Lancaster, Wis., became the home for the yearly event. Breeders from Grant and other neighboring counties in southwest Wisconsin either consigned or bought cattle in the sales. Many of the herds in the area today started from breeding stock purchased in these sales.

"We started in the Angus business in 1943 with heifers bought in the Southwest sale," says Don Udelhoven, Bloomington, Wis. He and his



The Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association board of directors: (front row, from left) Ben Retallick, North Andover, vice president; Roger Kreul, Fennimore, president; Kevin Retallick, Glen Haven, secretary-treasurer; (back row, from left) Jack Mason, Glen Haven; Kristi Hauk, Cassville; and Dick Klas, Fennimore.





father, Kay, have been raising Angus ever since and now have a 60-cow herd and sell bulls to local customers.

Sunnyside Angus Farm, owned by the Melvin Mason family of Glen Haven, Wis., is celebrating 50 years in the Angus business. The family's first purchase was a female from a Southwest breeder, and since then their herd has expanded to 175 cows. Four Mason brothers and their families are also involved in the business.

Many area cattlemen, such as the Masons, became part of the association and started their careers in the Angus business. In order to encourage fellowship among Angus breeders, the association planned summer picnics in addition to their annual sales.

In 1953, the name of the organization was changed to Southwestern Wisconsin Aberdeen-Angus Breeders Association to reflect the expanding membership. Today it's simply referred to as the Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association.

The association's sales continued to grow, as a show and a youth judging contest were added. In the early years of the judging contest, the top ranking individual received a heifer for placing first.

Bae Dixon, secretary of the association from 1965 to 1975, also started in the Angus business through the Southwest sale. However, in the later years of the sale, the association was having difficulty getting people to consign, so they changed to a show-only format.

The Southwest Wisconsin Memorial Day Classic began in 1983. This show allows area breeders to display their cattle and showcases quality cattle from area herds.

The 1991 show was deemed a success as breeders exhibited 75 head. In addition to the traditional Angus breeding classes, the show had classes for commercial heifers, Angus and crossbred steers.

The Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association is proud of the fact that they have



Don and Ray Udelhoven have spent time building a herd of quality Angus cattle. Their herd emphasizes bull performance. They've had the high-indexing bull at several test stations and perform on-farm testing of all bulls they sell.



Roger Kreul, president of the Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association, stands with his youngest son, Edward, at the farm in Fenimore, Wk. The farm, Diamond K, started an Angus herd in 1936.

remained together for 75 years. What keeps this association together and progressing is its promotion of Angus cattle.

These breeders are dedicated to Angus cattle, says Roger Kreul, Fenimore, Wis., association president. "Angus cattle are their livelihood."

Kevin Retallick, Glen Haven, Wis., secretary of the group, says the association is an ideal way for area breeders to interact. "We gather together and get ideas from other breeders," he says.



The Mason family has owned Sunnyside Angus since 1941. Pictured are (from left, back row) Gene, Stan, Tony, Jack (from left, front row) Matt, Mike, Joe, Jean Catherine and Pete. The Mason family has been recognized for their contributions to the association. Gene Mason served as president and his brother Jack is currently on the board of directors. The Masons also promote high quality Angus and, among numerous awards, had the 1991 Wisconsin Show Heifer of the Year.



Kevin Retallick is secretary-treasurer of the Southwest Angus Association. Kevin raises Angus breeding stock and crossbred club calves. Kevin's herd began with breeding stock purchases from southwest Wisconsin breeders. Pictured with Kevin are two of his three daughters, Keela (left) and Kelsi.

Retallick also says the group offers the opportunity to promote cattle as a group. This was done with the sale in the earlier years and presently with the show.

Promotion of Angus cattle and fellowship are the prevailing emphases of the association. A fall tour of area herds is planned to celebrate the association's 75th anniversary.

The tour, scheduled for September 19, will feature prominent breeders in the area and is being coordinated with the Wisconsin Angus Association to promote Angus cattle in Wisconsin.

The fall tour will be an opportunity for people to see a variety of herds, from an area with strong Angus support for 75 years and counting. Several herds have the distinction of national champion bulls, outstanding females, carcass show winners and state champions.

The farms from southwest Wisconsin continue a legacy of quality Angus production. The association is strong because of the strong breeders that are involved with it and their determination to continue promotion of Angus cattle.

"We want to increase the size of our show," says Retallick, who also manages the show. He adds the association is looking forward to growth and possibly more sales in the future.

Over the course of 75 years, many changes have occurred in the Angus breed. The families that make up the Southwest Wisconsin Angus Association have adapted to this change and in turn have contributed to the greater good of the breed.

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