

# Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president



## Longevity contributes to success

On May 1, two longtime employees and close personal friends of mine will retire from the American Angus Association. That's the day Don Painter, director of member services, and Donna Holmes, assistant director of member services, step down from their respective positions. It marks the end of an era for these devoted employees and the culmination of a combined 88 years of service to the Association.

Don Painter started with the organization when the doors opened in Saint Joseph on June 25, 1956, and Donna Holmes was close behind when she started in 1958. They've seen a lot of change in their day and have been a big part of most of it.

Don likes to talk about the fact that he has worked for five of the nine breed secretaries or executive vice presidents since the Association was formed in 1883. Those five were Frank Richards, Glen Bratcher, Lloyd Miller, C.K. Allen and me. He'll lighten your day with stories about all of us. Likewise, Donna worked for all five.

Don and Donna in many ways are representative of numerous employees of our organization — men and women who have devoted the better part of their working lives to the American Angus Association and the *Angus Journal*. Their importance to the smooth operation of our business often goes unnoticed, but I consider them the heartbeat of this organization, second only to you, the members.

**The importance of employee longevity** was brought home to me recently when I prepared a talk for a business meeting about the Association and employee management. Little did I realize, until I looked into our records, that the average length of

employment at our organization is 16 years.

That kind of commitment works to your advantage every day as employees help conduct Association business — registrations, transfers, memberships, Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) and public relations, to mention a few. Our long-term employees understand their areas of responsibility and the work you do as cattle breeders. Their work is second to none in the industry. They are the best team in the livestock association business.

The Association has developed specific departments through the years to address

various issues and segments of our business. A great deal of time and effort is expended in each of these areas to offer the best services to our members. It is no accident, for example, that ours are the only breed

association members in the world who enjoy a one-day turnaround for registrations and transfers.

We can thank Don and Donna and a number of other support staff for seeing that this service is up and running every workday of the year. In the near future, you also will be able to register Angus cattle online. When that service is available, you can submit your registration applications 24 hours a day, seven days a week — a service we know that members will enjoy.

**As important as they are**, I also know that dedicated employees are just one part of the success of a business. You, the members and junior members, are the reason we are here and are who we serve in our respective positions. Many of the ideas and recommendations for improvement in all areas come directly from the membership.

For example, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) grew from the interest of a group of Angus breeders in promoting high-quality Angus beef to consumers. Member input is vital to both the short-term and long-term growth of the Association.

I encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with directors, staff or me. That's the sure way to see that our programs and services continue to expand and to improve to meet the needs of members today and in the future.

**We're at a time in our business** when we can't coast. Anyone breeding and selling Angus cattle knows how challenging it is to stay competitive. But it is this competition that has driven the Angus breed and the Association to their present positions in the industry.

Because of this, the Angus breed is in demand, and successful Angus operations of all sizes can be found in every state, county and locale in the nation. It's an exciting time in our business, and we look forward to even more exciting times in the future.

The level of Angus business nationwide is a true barometer of the breed. Like many large companies with sales offices and dealers throughout the country, the Association and its more than 30,000 adult and junior members are much the same.

You as breeders are marketers on the local and state levels serving new registered Angus breeders, established breeders and commercial bull customers. It's our job as an Association to maintain strong and viable programs, and it's your job to improve your cattle and to market Angus in your trade area.

It's that kind of cooperative effort on the part of dedicated members and employees that will keep us in a leadership position in the beef industry.

And to Don Painter and Donna Holmes, we simply say *thank you*. They deserve a relaxing retirement.

*Richard J. Spader*



Don Painter and Donna Holmes