



## George Wells Meat Co.

### A Meat Product with Identity—It's Working in Philadelphia

by Nancy Ann Sayre

“It's working in Philadelphia,” says Jim Conboy about the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) program. Conboy is president and owner of George L. Wells Meat Company, a quality meat purveyor and CAB distributor for the Philadelphia, Pa., area.

CAB is “working” for the Wells company primarily because it matches the needs of the quality-conscious, customer-oriented business. The American Angus Assn.'s program offers a means to supply demanding customers—the list of 600 clients includes Philadelphia's finest restaurants—with the best beef available.

And it's working because Conboy and his company have made a total commitment to the program. Their commitment, although just over a year old, is extensive. More than \$40,000 has been invested in CAB promotion. The CAB logo is featured with the company logo on everything including meat boxes, uniforms, bills, stationery, hats, T-shirts, etc. And perhaps more significantly, the Wells staff—from management, to sales force, to meat cutters and delivery teams—believes in the product. Their enthusiasm about CAB is unmistakable—and valuable.

But enthusiasm is nothing new to this company. And neither is promotion of a top-quality product. In fact, its reputa-

tion in both areas helped earn it the exclusive role of CAB distributor in the Philadelphia area. The background, philosophies and goals of this firmly rooted business impressed Mick Colvin, director of the CAB program, in his search for suitable distributors.

Colvin did not have to look for Wells, though. The company found the Association's program first. After reading about CAB in Meat Industry, Conboy did some research. And by the time he visited with Colvin and understood the program, he knew it matched his needs—it provided a meat product with identity, consistency.

#### Meat experts

A video tape designed for the company sales force highlights the driving philosophies at Wells, and emphasizes the reasons CAB is compatible:

“At Wells, we believe the customer's success depends not only on the consistency of the product, but on the margin of his profit . . . therefore, we concentrate on helping customers make informed meat-buying decisions . . . the process begins with the selection of quality-conscious suppliers . . .”

The filmstrip goes on to explain how beef is aged carefully for at least 21 days, then custom cut and trimmed to specifications much tougher than requirements of NAMP (National Assn. of Meat Purveyors). Each steak is then individually vacu-packed and boxed for a specific order, and every order is delivered the same day the meat is cut. Every steak is unconditionally guaranteed for quality and an eight-day shelf life.

The customer is first at Wells, stresses Conboy.

That fact is obvious. The efforts of

his staff are aimed at eliminating a customer's work, worry and waste. The Wells staff views itself as the “meat expert” and wants to let its customers concentrate on the business they know best. Restaurants, not meat.

“Others (meat purveyors) may want to buy something and sell it—they want to buy a strip and sell a strip—but we want to cut it up, package it, carve customers' initials in it if that's what they want,” offers Conboy. “We want to work and we want to do things for our customers . . .”

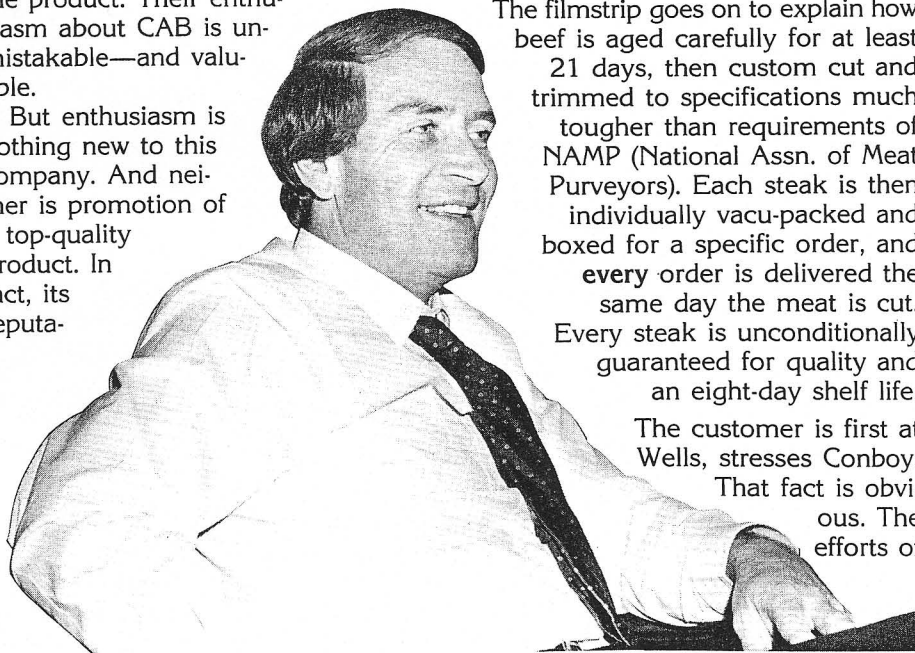
Conboy does not want a restaurateur to have to question quality consistency. Nor does he want a customer to spend time repackaging, trimming or cutting a Wells product (although many excellent restaurants still buy primal cuts and then cut their own steaks). Instead, he wants everything “restaurant ready,” meaning it is cut and packaged to go right on the shelf, then to the oven and customer—with minimum work and worry.

“And if a restaurateur wants 11 steaks, we'll cut 11. If he needs 111, we'll give that to him,” says Conboy. “Others may say there's 24 in a box, but our box holds whatever the customer needs. We eliminate waste for them . . . and that will cut their food cost overall.”

And to do that, Wells must obtain a consistently superior product, then package it for handling ease and shelf life, and deliver it the day it's cut.

The CAB program takes the worry out of the vital first step.

Bob Haller, production manager, summarizes it this way: “Twenty-five to 30 years ago, meat buyers went to the slaughter plants to select the carcasses they wanted for their customers. Each rib eye was exposed, the buyers would go down the line and stamp the ones that suited. Hotels and restaurants had their buyers looking for the nice marbling and conformation . . . now this is actually what the Angus program is doing for us. It's taking the cream of the crop and selling it to us. That's why it's ideal for us.”



For Wells president Jim Conboy, it has always been quality and customers first. CAB now allows him to offer many fine Philadelphia restaurants consistent quality.



Production manager Bob Haller runs a tight ship. He has to, for he encloses an unconditional, eight-day guarantee with each steak order. "The Angus program is taking the cream of the crop and selling it to us . . . that's why it's ideal for us," he comments.

## WELLS' WARRANTY



These steaks have been freshly hand cut by our Journeyman Butchers from aged Certified Angus Beef. They have been skillfully trimmed to our own rigid specifications to insure maximum yield and consistent uniformity for our customers. In addition the special wrapping insures the product a maximum shelf life, without freezing, of eight days under proper refrigeration. Consequently, these steaks are unconditionally guaranteed by the George L. Wells Meat Company.

Sincerely  
James Conboy, Pres.

SINCE 1908

It may be ideal, but it is a new concept in the meat industry, and therefore involves some education.

"Our Prime customers are the easiest to convert," says Bill Moroney, vice president of the company and salesman in the historic area of the city. "We can lay a CAB strip next to a customer's Prime and visually show him a difference . . . we can show that it's as good if not better and that it's more economical . . . that's the easy sale.

"But trying to upgrade Choice customers takes more effort," he adds. "We point out that it's worthwhile to pay a premium for consistent quality rather than the hit-or-miss of today's Choice."

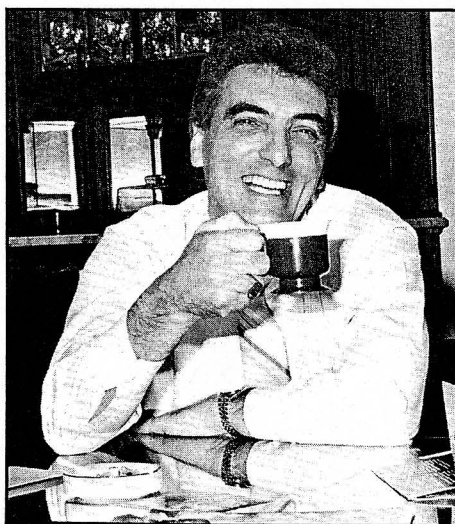
### Breaking tradition

Education. Information. They make the selling easier. And salesmen are well versed in the advantages of a quality product. With 12 salesmen in the field and five in-house, each customer's account is served by both an "inside" and an "outside" salesman. ("We know these customers personally," says one salesman, reflecting a common feeling.)

A difficult step, says Moroney, is breaking the price-per-pound attitude among even the best customers. The end results at Wells—individual servings—are more accurately gauged than beef priced before it is trimmed and portion-cut. And accurate pricing

of each serving should help restaurants manage their bottom line, summarizes the vice president.

Educational efforts spread to the consumer level, too. The staff meeting room in this expanding headquarters is designed for lectures and demonstrations. Haller hosts meat-cutting demonstrations and informative meetings on a regular basis for college, community and business groups. CAB, of course, is emphasized in each session. Every bit of consumer education helps, stresses Moroney. Such an approach explains the company's investment in



"We've made a total commitment to this program," says Bill Moroney, Wells vice president.

a National Restaurant News ad, and its hopes for similar efforts on a cooperative basis by CAB distributors and the Association.

In its most recent effort to introduce CAB to the public, the Wells staff spent \$15,000 to feature CAB at a food show in Valley Forge, Pa., and capitalized on the drawing power of a live Angus bull (see CAB Update).

The extra efforts and expenses in promotion and education may seem extravagant, but in Conboy's mind they come with the commitment. They represent a long-term investment.

### Deep roots

Such philosophy is well-rooted. The company started as a quality meat purveyor in 1908. Consistency and quality have been touted as trademarks ever since. Conboy started with Wells as an apprentice butcher when he was 16; it was his first job. He moved up through the ranks of journeyman butcher, salesman, manager and finally bought the company. His timing coincided with what is now dubbed Philadelphia's "Restaurant Renaissance" (400 new restaurants have opened since 1971), so his concentration on customer convenience and packaging were well received by innovative new restaurant owners.

The basics remained the same, though—quality and customers first.

By providing the only meat product with identity, CAB fits well with the company's requirements.

And yes, its products—from CAB to the finest in veal, pork, fish, fowl, pâtés, truffles and other gourmet items—are expensive. But the customers are willing to pay for quality as long as it's consistent.

"Yes, we're expensive," confirms Conboy, "but you get what you pay for. We don't worry about the competition—we just do better."

CAB has enhanced such a position. With an exclusive distributorship, Wells offers customers the best beef.

"It's like being the only game in town," summarizes Moroney. "Once our customers know CAB is the best beef available, they have to come to us.

"I've been in this business 12 years and CAB has really made a difference. It's made my job a lot easier," he adds.

It's working in Philadelphia. 