

Angus Breeders Take Top Honors Again at BIF Meeting

Angus breeders received two of the most prestigious Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) awards during the group's annual convention held in Atlanta, Ga., in early May.

BIF is a national organization of state BCIA's, breed associations, A.I. businesses and other performance-oriented groups. As usual, their meeting drew leaders from many breeds and areas. The University of Georgia staff, Georgia Cattlemen's Assn., BIF officers and all others involved with arrangements are to be commended for another great event. (See the following BIF Update section for more details.)

LEE NICHOLS Seedstock Producer of the Year

The 1984 Beef Improvement Federation Seedstock Producer of the Year Award was presented posthumously to Lee Nichols, Bridgewater, Iowa. The award was presented during the annual BIF convention in Atlanta, Ga., to Mrs. Lillian Nichols on behalf of her recently deceased husband, who was a partner in the well-known Nichols Farms, Anita, Iowa.

This most unusual and unprecedented presentation went to a cattle breeder of great stature in his home state and across the United States. Lee Nichols' untimely death in August 1982 followed a lifetime of successful cattle breeding and farming and his being named 1982 Iowa Seedstock Producer of the Year by the Iowa Beef Improvement Assn.

Lee Nichols was the quiet, hard-working giant in the Nichols family operation comprised of himself, his wife Lillian, his brother David and his wife Phyllis, and their mother Gladys. The operation continues to produce Angus, Simmental and Polled Hereford seed stock, and also to feed a substantial number of commercial feedlot cattle each year.

Nichols Farms is known nationally for its innovative breeding and merchandising methods. Lee Nichols must be given much credit for the great success of this performance-oriented operation. He was directly involved with the cattle and the personnel, and as a result was probably less visible than his brother Dave.



Dave Nichols and Lillian Nichols, brother and wife of the late Lee Nichols, accepted the Seedstock Producer of the Year Award for Lee. Frank Baker presented the plaque.

Lee had an unbending dedication to produce ever-better seed stock. He never made excuses for his cattle—either in breeding plans or in offering them for sale. He was described as being more critical of his own cattle than he might have been of other people's cattle.

The influence of Lee was widely known although his method was always low-key. He was active in the Iowa Beef Improvement Assn. and served as board member and secretary. He was also very much involved locally as president of his county cattlemen's association and as a 4-H leader. Lee helped provide learning experiences for students from nearby Hawkeye Technical Institute. Since his death, 10 full scholarships to the two-year program have been established through funds provided by friends.

Lee Nichols, along with Dave and their wives, increased the size of the farming operation started by their father, Merrill Nichols, from 240 acres and 40 cows to 3,400 acres and 1,100 cows of the three breeds. Performance testing has been the hallmark of the herd's development. Weaning weights increased from 437 lb. in 1959 to 606 lb. in 1983. Yearling weights increased from 868 lb. in 1959 to 1,136 lb. in 1983. Calves born the first 30 days of the calving season went from 45 percent in 1959 to 87 percent in 1983. Today, a 60-day calving season is employed.

Estimated breeding values are used exclusively in the selection of replacement females at Nichols Farms, and, since the inception of sire summaries, that information also has been employed for improvement in the Nichols herd. Eleven Nichols bulls have found their way into breed association sire summaries, at least three of them as trait leaders. Nichols Benchmark J32 and his son Nichols Landmark L56, both convincing results of the Nichols program, currently rank very high for yearling EPD in the National Angus Sire Evaluation Report.

The Nichols operation produces 350 to 400 performance-tested bulls made available annually as yearlings to commercial producers. Innovative private treaty selling methods were initiated a number of years

ago by Lee and Dave and are still utilized to merchandise the large number of bulls to over 50 percent repeat customers each year.

Lee influenced many and his dedication to performance cattle was exemplified in one of the last questions he asked before he died: "Did Landmark top the sire summary?" (He ranked second for yearling growth in 1982.)

Lee lived his life well and left a legacy of real worth to the cattle industry and the people he touched. His nomination for BIF Seedstock Producer of the Year was made by the Iowa Beef Improvement Assn.



Bob and Sharon Beck accepted the Commercial Producer of the Year Award.

BOB AND SHARON BECK Commercial Producer of the Year

Bob and Sharon Beck, owners and operators of Grande Ronde Angus Inc., Cove, Ore., were named BIF's 1984 Commercial Producer of the Year.

Becks started in the cattle business in 1957 with a herd of 30 leased commercial Hereford cows. Two years later, they bought 20 Angus cows and a bull and have since expanded the land base and cattle numbers. The couple and their family now run 500 cows; 80 are purebred Angus and the bal-

ance is commercial. (Purebred Angus bulls are produced for use in the commercial herd, several other breeds have been incorporated into the crossing program.)

Becks developed an early interest in performance testing, enrolling their Angus in Performance Registry International in 1959 and later switching to the American Angus Assn.'s AHIR program. Since they began weighing and recording commercial calves at weaning in 1972, Becks have realized a 166-lb. increase in average steer weights and a 134-lb. jump in the corresponding heifer averages.

Using BIF guidelines in 1977, Becks designed a record keeping system aimed at helping to improve performance, management and efficiency of the entire operation. Their individually tailored record system now has been adapted to a home computer; their son Rob (a 23-year-old Oregon State University graduate with a background in computers) and his wife have returned home to ranch and he has written specific computer programs for the herd.

Becks also have two daughters, Christi and Tracy. All three children supported themselves with cattle while growing up and were active in 4-H, FFA and Angus association activities.

The family has hosted many livestock tours and field days for juniors, college students and foreign visitors. Along with other area Angus breeders, the Becks helped start the Eastern Oregon Junior Angus Assn. and that group eventually blended with juniors across the state to become the Oregon Junior Angus Assn.

Bob and Sharon were honored by neighboring Union and La Grande FFA chapters for donating a heifer to each chapter, helping members in their projects and speaking to them about the importance of performance records.

For several years, Bob served as an Oregon delegate to the American Angus Assn. annual meeting and as a director of Western States Angus Assn. He was Union County Cattlemen's Assn. vice president for two years and is currently a director and committee chairman. He is also on the advisory committees for the Eastern Oregon Experiment Station and Oregon State University Extension Service, a director of the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show and a trustee for the Pacific International Livestock Exposition. Always involved and offering help, Bob has been honored several times locally as an outstanding young farmer and cattleman.

Sharon is also an active leader in the county and state cowbelle and cattlemen's groups. She is serving her second term on the county planning commission and recently completed a four-year term on the natural heritage advisory council, an appointment by the governor.

Congratulations to a hard-working couple nominated by their state cattlemen's association and extension service.

AJ