



JEWELYN JOHNSON PHOTOS

ANDY AND KATHY STARR FOCUS ON GOOD MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND HARD WORK TO KEEP STAR DUST FARM A FAMILY FARM BUSINESS.

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

*When it comes to leadership, Andy Starr speaks softly
but carries a strong stick-to-it attitude.*

BY JERILYN JOHNSON

"Speak softly but carry a big stick."

Theodore Roosevelt made this quote famous during his tenure as 26th President from 1901-09. It not only reflected his strong, sensitive character, but became the motto of U.S. foreign policy for years to come.

Through Roosevelt's leadership, challenging projects such as building the Panama Canal and establishing a national park system and the U.S. Forest Service were accomplished.

This adventurer, known for his big game hunting and world-wide travel, was also a cattleman. He owned a ranch in western North Dakota, where he spent much of his free time developing a productive herd of beef cattle.

It would be hard for any man to live up to Teddy's spirit of adventure, but when it comes to leadership, Andy Starr follows in the Rough Rider's footsteps—he speaks softly but carries a big stick—in the form of a stick-to-it attitude.

Starr is serving as the 1992 American Angus Association president. Like his Angus breeding program, his leadership skills developed over time through hard work, determination and thoughtful insight.

Starr's farm, located in northeast Tennessee's Appalachian foothills, was started from scratch. To Andy and his family it was a dream come true—hence the name, Star Dust Farm. During the early years dairy cattle, a few head of Angus cows and corn crops were the main enterprises. Starr made a complete switch to registered Angus in the late '60s and has never looked back.

"Angus cattle are our livelihood," Starr says. "They're the reason we've worked hard over the years. But it's been worth every effort. We really enjoy the cattle and people connected to this breed."

The son of a minister, Starr attended the University of Tennessee and served in the U.S. Army before starting his farming business. He first pursued leadership roles at the regional and state level, serving as president of the East Tennessee Angus Association and then the Tennessee Angus Association.

By 1984 fellow Tennessee breeders had gained enough respect and trust in Starr to nominate him for election to the American Angus Association's Board of Directors. Starr won a seat on the Board and began what he calls "a real education

process." He served two terms on the Board—a total of six years. He gained enough support during his directorship to be elected vice president for 1991. Last November in Louisville he was given the nod to lead the 24,000-member Association for 1992.

The Starr family has also been active in farm management and Association activities. Andy's wife, Kathy, is president-elect of the American Angus Auxiliary and an active partner in the farm. His son, Andrew III, helps manage their herd of 200 cows as well as the forage and corn crops. Kathy's son Billy Reeder, who is seeking a job as a county Extension agriculture agent, was a National Junior Angus Association director and helps exhibit cattle for Star Dust Farm.

Because Starr brought himself up from the grassroots, many in the Angus industry believe he has a deeper appreciation and understanding of his leadership role.

"Andy is not only knowledgeable about the beef industry, he's sensitive to the needs of breeders and the industry," says Dick Spader, Association executive vice president. "He's comfortable talking with any breeder—new, experienced, small or large."

Like Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, Starr is truly a representative of the people. He treats breeders and Association staff with respect and doesn't promote his own cause. Perhaps his best leadership quality is the ability to listen. Whether he's in the board room, conference room, show arena or farm pasture, Starr can be found carefully observing, listening and contemplating new ideas and actions.

Starr's acceptance speech to the national delegates in Louisville reflected his years of listening as well as his humbleness, wit and wisdom. It also gave a hint of this cattleman's strong-willed determination as he vowed to carry out the Association's long-range goals and progressive programs that would benefit breeders most.

After reviewing a follow-up report on the Association's long-range goals at the June Board meeting in Virginia, Starr is more confident than ever that the Association is on the right track.

"It blows my mind to see what has been accomplished since the first long-range planning session in February 1991," Starr says. "I'm especially pleased at the progress made in the effort to expand carcass EPDs to identify high marbling sire lines. The most current sire summary lists 616 sires with EPDs for carcass

"Angus genetics are not a toy or play thing. Breeders should strive to bring out their cattle's best balance of traits."

— Andy Starr

merit; 189 of those are bulls currently in use throughout the industry. This is the first step to increase our Certified Angus Beef supply down the road."

The addition of IBP as a Certified Angus Beef packer will also have great impact on the Angus industry. Starr admits he was a little apprehensive when the IBP proposal was first made. His first concern was, "Will IBP come in and learn our CAB customer base, then dump us in a year or two?"

However, after conferring with Mick Colvin, CAB Program executive director, he came to accept it as a risk worth taking.

"If you're going to keep up with today's competitive beef industry, you have to take on challenges," Starr says. "You can't just sit there and say, no, we can't assume this risk. Because two or three years down the road, if someone else is successful with it, you look back and wish you'd taken the risk."

Starr's second concern is, "Can we provide enough supply to meet IBP's demand?" Again, that is a challenge he hopes breeders and the industry will meet through improved genetics and carcass sire identification.

Of the Association's top long-range goals, only one area has been met with resistance. "We still have some selling to do on making the show ring more educational," he says. "It's a big area of debate. Right now, the Association is making a concerted effort to establish a set of guidelines for performance shows."

Other important beef industry issues have been addressed by this leader. In a report published soon after the November 1991 Board meeting, Starr communicated the Board's viewpoint of changing beef grading standards:

"Beef grading changes that reduce the importance of marbling or dilute the USDA Choice grade are strongly opposed by the American Angus Association," he says.

After careful consideration and much input from directors and breeders, the Board adopted a resolution calling for no grading changes that would lower the marbling requirements for the Choice grade, or would reduce or eliminate marbling as a factor in USDA beef grading. It specifically opposed changes incorporating all or most of the current Select grade into the Choice grade.

The National Consumer Beef study shows there are separate and distinct markets for USDA Select and Choice beef. "It's foolish for the beef industry to ignore this important market research, just because there are too many cattle today that cannot be efficiently fed to Choice, or can't make the grade no matter how long they stay in the feedlot," Starr adds.

"We are firmly convinced that Angus cattle will maintain their position in the beef industry, regardless of what is done or not done with the USDA grades. However, we are just as firmly convinced that to lower the grade quality, or to make any move to dilute marbling value in determining beef quality, would send the wrong signal to beef producers. It would also result in increased consumer dissatisfaction with beef and reduced demand."



Roosevelt's walk softly but carry a big stick"

philosophy was most effective in foreign policy Starr, too, found it useful when he traveled to South Africa in early April to attend the 75th anniversary celebration of the South African Angus Society. Along with a tour of Angus farms and studs, the society hosted an educational conference. Starr gave a presentation that outlined the American Angus Association's role and its goals. He also extended an invitation for South African breeders to attend the World Angus Forum to be held next year in the United States.

Starr heard a lot of positive responses and interest in the Association as well as the World Angus Forum. He believes the stage has been set for improved communication, information sharing and marketing.

Starr had a chance to visit with breeders from South Africa, Scotland, England, Ireland and Argentina during the conference. Many of the South African breeders shared their thoughts and concerns, so he was able to gain further insight into breeding and marketing programs. Although they have a strong bull market, South African breeders have expressed an interest in buying more frozen embryos from American Angus breeders.

Bringing together countries with vast distances and differences is a major accomplishment. Starr says there's no reason our U.S. beef industry can't work better together, too. It's a problem that must be solved if the beef industry wants to stay competitive in the food marketplace.

"We have become so segmented that out here in the country seedstock producers and cow-calf producers are not aware of what packers want or what the end product looks like," Starr says. One segment says they want one thing; another segment says something else. "We really need to get together if we are going to continue to make a living at this beef business."

