

The Power of MENTORING

In virtually all walks of life, people search for the magic combination of teacher and student in one form or another. One willing to pass along the wisdom of experience, another to absorb it. The result of such a blending is a better product, a higher quality of life, and priceless mutual satisfaction.

Such a phenomenon is often observed and experienced between Angus breeders who not only benefit from such an enviable teacher-student relationship, but also establish the equally enviable bonus of a close, lasting friendship.

On the following pages we share a sample of successful mentoring relationships that

have brought out the best in Angus breeders — those young, aspiring and hopeful, and those experienced, tried and true.

Mentoring is a study of mindfulness, observation and teaching. It's a special kind of learning contract between an adult and a student.



An old philosopher was asked what was the greatest joy he had found in life. "A child," he replied, "going down the road singing after asking me the way." That's what mentoring is all about — adults guiding and offering constructive advice so young people can reach their true destination in life.

Angus Breeder to Angus Breeder

Two Virginia cattlemen sharing a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship are Roger Bowles, 45, owner of WRB Angus, Fork Union, and Paul Grinde, 73, Charlottesville, the former owner of White Hall Farms.

Roger and Paul followed different routes to reach their special relationship, but there were common denominators; high among them their admiration for the Angus breed and their desires to make it even better.

Although Roger had grown up around cattle, he didn't own cattle until about 15 years ago, and he admits he was lacking some in his knowledge of the cattle business. "When I was a kid my parents always had a few head on our place. After attending the University of Richmond and University of Virginia, I worked in the public school system for many years. About 16 years ago, I changed careers to become an insurance agent, and it was about this time I decided to buy a few cattle."

When Roger bought his initial group of 10 Angus females in the late 1970s, he recalls that he was without goals or direction. Willing to heed the voice of those with experience in the industry, and in an effort to get acquainted with other breeders, he became a member of the Virginia Angus Association. By attending cattle functions

and sales throughout the commonwealth he not only became acquainted with the breeders, he gleaned knowledge from them.

With more direction for his operation, he made the decision to increase size of his herd by purchasing some females from the White Hall Farms herd in North Garden, Va., where Paul was the managing owner. Over the years Roger became a repeat customer at White Hall, and his friendship with Paul grew.

"From the beginning we were friends," Roger says. "Paul was always good about giving me advice when I needed it. And let's face it, less established breeders need all of the help they can get, especially from a breeder like Paul who has been in the cattle business for a long time."

Paul was well versed in the cattle industry, his background beginning with breeding Hereford cattle in North Dakota prior to serving in World War II. After his discharge he married his wife, Edie, and relocated to New Jersey to attend Rutgers University, where he worked in the university cattle barns.

"It was while working in the barns that I was introduced to the Angus breed. I really liked what I saw," Paul says. "In 1948, my last year in school, I traveled on a limited basis

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"I plant a garden and flowers and spend a lot of time at the golf course," he says. "My wife and I go to Florida every year for seven weeks, so I don't want to be tied down. However, I decided to continue herd consulting with my friends on a non-paying

improvement into the cattle with a concentration on performance and eye appeal. Regardless of whether his cattle are sold to commercial or purebred breeders, strongly believes the animals should have the capability to improve the herds of those customers.

The WRB herd includes what Roger classifies as 40 select registered Angus females, another 35 commercial Angus calves, owned with his brother-in-law and father-in-law, and a few head co-owned with other farms.

The cattle have consistently done well in Virginia shows, consignment sales and bull tests over the past several years. Roger exhibits his cattle at local shows, mostly to promote his herd, but also because his family and Paul enjoy it.

In state consignment sales, Roger had the top selling cow-calf pair at the Heritage Sale in 1994, and the second top selling animal at the same sale

last fall. This spring at the Atlantic National, he has high hopes for a 13-year-old cow with what he feels is an outstanding heifer calf at side.

WRB bulls have also done well at the VCI Bull Test at Blacksburg, Va., producing the high indexing junior bull for the past three years.

"The hours are long and the pay is short, but I love every minute of it," Roger says. "I especially enjoy the camaraderie that Paul and I have developed over the years, plus his wealth of knowledge and his reputation. Because he has no axe to grind or no paycheck coming to him, I know I can ask him a question and get an honest answer. This is priceless to me."

Paul has also gained from the mentoring relationship. "This morning he (Roger) bought me a coffee," he says jokingly. "But seriously, we both benefit from our arrangement. I keep several cows here, and he is pretty reasonable with his labor requirements. I see nothing but bright days ahead for herds like Roger's and the Angus breed. I intend to keep on being a part of it as long as they will allow me."

-Janet Mayer



After 16 years, Roger Bowles (left) and Paul Grinde continue their mentoring relationship and desire to breed quality Angus cattle

for the New Jersey Angus Association, taught a meats course at the university and bought my first farm in Virginia, backed by the GI Bill. It was a busy time. After graduation, I worked for the Rutgers University Extension Service as a beef specialist and continued to work some for the Angus Association. I quit those jobs to work in private management at Hoot Owl Farm in New Jersey and later, in 1952, moved to Virginia."

In 1968 Paul and Edie formed a partnership with Bill and Helen Ruddock at White Hall Farms. At its peak, the 10,000-acre farm had a herd of 1,200 Angus cattle that were well known throughout the breed.

Paul spent the remainder of his working career at the operation. After the death of Helen Ruddock, the White Hall herd was dispersed during 1988 and 1989, and Paul sold his last farm in 1988.

Paul and Edie moved to a new home just west of Charlottesville and began life in what Paul describes as the type of retirement where he can have his cake and eat it too.

basis only. so I wouldn't be obligated to go anywhere or do anything I really don't want to do. I enjoy it, and it keeps me involved in the Angus business. Plus, the Angus business has been good to me, and it's a way for me to give something back."

In addition to acting as consultant for Roger, Paul is a consultant for the old established herd of Jane Saunders at Tuckahoe Farm near Richmond, Va., where he spends several days each month. He also is helping a new breeder, Bill Ditmar at Blue Ridge Farm, Afton Va.

"When Paul retired, I thought I might not see as much of him as I did before, but we have continued our friendship," Roger says. "He comes to my place as a friend and a consultant, advising and slapping my hand when necessary. Sometimes he pats me on the back, but only when he feels I deserve it."

With the help of Paul's valued advice and what Roger documents as hundreds of hours of hard work, he feels his cattle are coming nearer to the goals set for the herd. Roger continually tries to breed

Lessons Learned

Angus greenhands George and Jenny Zeller are eager students of Angus cattle. At times they've had to learn from their mistakes, but more often than not, this Indiana family has relied on two worthy instructors, fellow Hoosiers Bob and Cathy Watkins.

LESSON #1

Trust the hired help

The Zellers were hauling hogs one day across Highway 36, a stretch they'd driven many times before, when they stopped at Beaver Ridge Farm near Middleton, Ind. They were anxious to get in the Angus business. Bob Watkins was out feeding when the Zellers pulled up alongside to ask about the herd.

"I didn't realize that an owner of a place like that would be out doing chores, so I

assumed he was a hired hand. He was just so informative and hop-to-it. I told George on the way home, 'boy the owners would really be proud of that hired hand,'" recalls Jenny. That's a day the friends still chuckle about.

They chuckle because neither family has the luxury of employees. Work is done by the family or not at all.

"The Zellers are the hardest working people we know, bar none," says Bob Watkins, "They farm 1,000 acres by themselves, raise hogs, cattle and three boys."

Mutual admiration aside, these families are perfect examples of how a breed of cattle can help forge lifelong friendships. As teacher and student the Watkins and the Zellers have common goals and experiences. Bob and Cathy have been at the Angus business for several decades and are eager to share their wisdom with the Zeller Family.

"We're just like everybody else, we've

made plenty of mistakes," says Bob. "What we try to do is steer the Zellers away from those same problems and get them started in the right direction."

LESSON #2

Don't assume you know what you want

On one of the Zellers' first trips to Beaver Ridge they were looking to buy a show heifer for their oldest son Danny. George had in mind what he wanted. "When I showed cattle they were really dumpy, if you had your straw too thick, they didn't even have legs. So I went over there after something that was long, tall and showy," says George. "Bob said, no, I don't think that's what you want, and he explained why we ought to consider more moderate heifers."

Taking the time to explain this business to newcomers is often what makes the difference in their success. For the Zellers those discussions continue to be invaluable. "It's intimidating when you go to somebody's place. You want to act like you know what you're talking about, and I just didn't," says George.

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Mutual respect and Angus breeding knowledge are the rewards reaped by (left) George and Jenny Zeller, who are mentored by Bob and Cathy Watkins.

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"It was a whole new language for us — this cattle speak. But Bob and Cathy didn't try to intimidate us with the technical stuff. Bob would take the time to explain why he liked a heifer, about her pedigree. He just made things simple," says Jenny. "As we made more visits, we grew to understand what they were talking about."

"Those first few visits are crucial to new breeders," says Cathy. "New breeders really need encouragement." Introducing new breeders at Angus functions is also a great way to acquaint them with the cattle business through its people.

Bob says it's important to sell new breeders cattle that will make them money. "We were willing to sell cattle to the Zellers for a little less money to get them started with quality animals."

It's paid off for everyone involved because the Zellers have purchased good cattle and come back for more.

Providing extra service to new breeders is also an important part of the Watkins' philosophy. Bob gives inexperienced customers advice on vaccination programs, explains the details of performance, and follows up with calls and visits to make sure the cattle are working.

Bob would prefer a new breeder buy a less expensive cow in the beginning. "Some people want to buy high dollar cattle to start out with. I'd rather see them make mistakes with a \$1,500 cow than with a \$5,000 cow, because everyone is bound to make a few mistakes. Most people can't afford \$5,000 mistakes."

LESSON #3

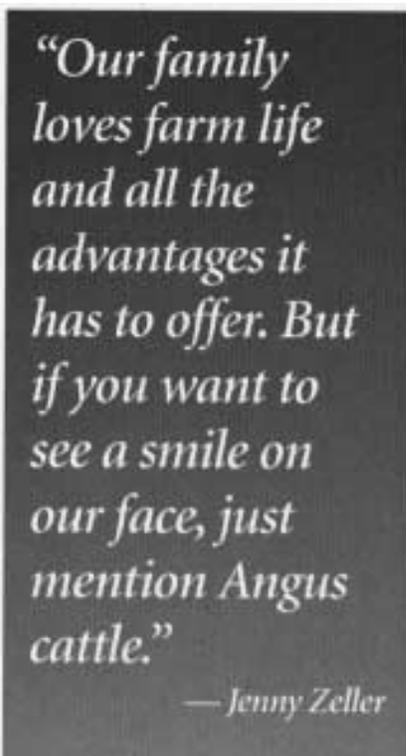
Expect sacrifices

Speaking of finances, the Zellers have learned to prioritize theirs since starting in the Angus business six years ago. "With three kids and a farm to maintain, we have to set aside a certain amount of money each year to build our herd. We're financially limited, so buying quality animals is crucial," says Jenny. "We can go without groceries, but we won't go without a heifer!"

That's amazing talk from a woman born and bred in the city, "I had no farm experience before we were married," says Jenny. "I would have never dreamed I'd be living and working on a farm. I didn't even know any farmers growing up or even knew what farming was. But now I actually love it. It's been a big learning experience."

She had to learn more than her share of new farming practices five years ago when George's father died. "I didn't have a combine driver or anyone to run after parts or work the ground. So I said, Jenny, come on girl, were going to farm," remembers George.

When it comes to farming, the Zellers have another advisor and confidant. "In farming it's amazing how much you rely on God to provide good weather, as well as the strength and fortitude it takes to get, through the tough times," says George.



LESSON #4

lose the straw, Dad

A nervous wreck, George knew it had been far too long since his 4-H days. He and Jenny were reasonably sure they had prepared for their son Danny's first show. Then they stepped out of their old Ford pickup at the 4-H fair and saw nothing but mulch.

"When I showed we just used straw," George exclaims. "I thought, well heck, we've got nice, bright straw, it'll work great."

Like many former 4-Hers, George and his brother would bale right behind the combine to get the straw at its cleanest and brightest. "Well, everybody and their brother had mulch and these fancy dividers. We felt a little silly," he says.

While mistakes come with the territory, the Zellers persist so that their sons Danny,

14, Adam, 12, and Casey, 9, can experience the fun and excitement of junior shows.

The amount of equipment and essential gear that goes on the junior show road can be daunting; so the Zellers buy a few things each year as their budget allows. But they've had to be a little creative in the meantime.

They felt reasonably comfortable at their county 4-H fair and decided it was time to venture out to the Indiana Preview Show in Lebanon last summer. Having checked to make sure there would be mulch available, George was a bit more relaxed this time.

"I had a pickup and trailer that looked like heck. We drove in there and two guys came out to meet us. They were just as nice as they could be. I don't know if they felt sorry for us or what," George says.

They looked into the barn this time and noticed everybody had professional-looking fan stands. George's farm-bred ingenuity took over (to his sons' collective embarrassment).

"I took this wooden crate, put a feed sack inside it to weight it down and put the fan on top. I was asked if I was going to get a patent on it," George says with a laugh.

Needless to say, the Zellers had newly-crafted fan stands ready for the 4-H fair.

"While showing isn't our main priority, it's a fun way to meet people. It's also a true family project for us," says Jenny. They have also enjoyed the camaraderie they've found at Indiana junior shows. "People have been so friendly. Nobody acted like they were too good to talk to us and we've been able to learn a lot."

LESSON #5

You never stop learning

"When we started, we were ready to go gangbusters," says George. The Zellers soon realized it doesn't work like that. Raising good Angus cows can be a long, mistake-ridden process.

"The rewards come when you've got a heifer that's really good that people really want. You know then you've got something, because you understand how hard you've worked for it," says George.

Achieving that success is important to these people. Still, the Zellers would tell you that the friendships they've found in people like the Watkins are even more important to them than the cattle could ever be. That's because the cattle business is about much more than cattle. It's also about meeting new friends and building lasting relationships.

—Julie Grimes Albertson

Giving a Leg Up to the Future

Custom haying help and a couple of choice Angus heifers have led to a close-knit, three-family friendship in southeast Missouri.

Senior members of the triad are Elza and Malbyrn Winter, veteran Angus breeders in Newton County, Mo. The Winters lend help and support to Tom and Beth Buford and Jason and Sarah Giebler, young couples just starting to carve their niches in the cattle business.

"We get as much as we give; this is no one-sided proposition," says Malbyrn Winter. "We all help each other. In fact, we have become about like family."

Maybe closer than some families. When Tom and Beth Buford learned they were going to be parents for the first time, in the front line for the news were Elza and Malbyrn Winter. Beth came flying through the Winters' front door.

"We killed the rabbit!" she announced.

But the relationship with the Bufords, as with the Gieblers, grew slowly, nurtured by mutual respect and watered by equal effort on all sides.

"I hope we're doing somebody some good," adds Elza. "Malbyrn and I had a lot of help when we were younger, and we won't be able to take anything with us when we leave this earth."

"A big advantage to us as we build our herd is having someone to talk with who has been there before," says Jason Giebler. "Elza never makes me feel like I have asked a stupid question, even when I probably do. Still, Elza has definite opinions, and when asked, he lets us know what they are."

The Winters recall how their involvement with the two younger families began. For more than 100 years, the Winter family has farmed land adjacent to the George Washington Carver National Monument just southwest of Diamond, Mo. In fact, Elza's grandfather was a childhood playmate of the famous botanist. Elza and Malbyrn's three children (two sons and a daughter) pursue successful careers outside agriculture.

"About seven years ago, Tom Buford asked me to help him put up hay," Elza calls. "We had met the Bufords before that; they had bought two cows from us."

Neither Tom nor Beth grew up on farms. "But my grandfather ran Herefords," Elza calls Tom. "When I was in high school, my grandfather's health failed and he asked to help out with the cows. Shortly

afterward, he died and my grandmother gave me eight heifers,"

For a few years, Tom pastured his Herefords on his grandmother's farm, then sold those cattle and began an Angus herd, some of which came from Winter Angus. In 1991 Tom and Beth bought a farm of their own and expanded the Angus herd.

A bit later, the Winters' acquaintance with Jason and Sarah Giebler came about in much the same way.

herd. Since Jason and Sarah have bought more breeding animals from Winter Angus.

As the Winters, Bufords and Gieblers became better acquainted, they learned to trust and depend on one another. Tom Buford attended artificial insemination school and now is the official inseminator for all three herds. Jason Giebler has taken over many of the haying chores and helps show and sell cattle from all three operations. Elza and Malbyrn Winter have



Almost like family... standing from left: Tom and Beth Buford; Sarah and Jason Giebler. Seated, Elza and Malbyrn Winter hold Victoria and Sarah Beth, daughters of the Bufords and Gieblers.

"I'm not a farm-raised boy, either," says Jason. "But I spent my summers during school on my grandfather's dairy farm, and I loved it. When I was eleven, my father bought me a heifer for Christmas. I expanded some on rented pastures, then sold the cattle."

When Jason and Sarah were married in 1993, they bought a Limousin-Santa Gertrudis heifer at the Newton County Fair.

"We named her Hillary, but she turned out to be barren, so we had to eat her," says Sarah. "You probably shouldn't name an animal that may wind up in your freezer."

After that disappointing experience, the Gieblers called Elza and asked him to help them pick heifers from the Winter Angus

worked out a sort of "lend-lease" plan to let the Bufords and Gieblers use some top Winter sires.

"That helps all of us," says Elza. "I get progeny data, while Tom and Jason get the use of good genetics in their herds."

And having an established breeder's name on the bill along with a new herdsman doesn't hurt.

"For example, Jason and I jointly consigned the bull he used last year," says Elza.

"We all three refer potential buyers to each other's herds," adds Tom Buford. "When a cowman wants a bull that I don't have, I send him over to Elza's or Jason's place."

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"We've worked out an arrangement on equipment, too," says Elza. "We all use my machinery and share labor. Tom and Jason have never turned me down when I needed help."

Which is saying more than a little. Both younger families work at full time off-farm professions. Tom Buford is a machine designer; Beth formerly taught school. Jason Giebler is director of security at a large department store in Joplin, Mo., and at the same time is winding up a college degree in criminal justice. Sarah is also in college, majoring in elementary education.

To add to their schedules, both the Bufords and Gieblers are parents of two-year-old daughters.

Partly through the urging of their mentors, both Buford and Giebler are active in the Four State Angus Association and Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher program. Tom is immediate past-president of Four State Angus Association. Elza and Malbyrn serve as secretary-treasurer of the association. In that capacity, they put together two association sales each year.

"Tom and Jason typically handle cattle in the sales from all three herds," says Elza. "I usually clerk the sales, so this takes some of the load off of me."

Sitting in the auctioneer's dock gives Elza a chance to watch his proteges in action, too. He recalls at last fall's association sale, Sarah Giebler sat high up in the bleachers, bidding on a heifer that caught her eye. At ringside, and out of sight of Sarah, Tom Buford also was bidding on the heifer. It put Elza in a quandary: Whether to tell his two young friends they were each the other's main bidding competition, or let things run their natural course.

"They were running the price pretty good on that heifer," he says. "But I try to operate on the principle of not offering advice unless it's asked for."

"We often ask," says Tom Buford. "We have come to value Elza's knowledge and experience, and to trust what he tells us. Some people maybe wouldn't care whether I make it in the cattle business or not. But the Winters are interested in seeing us succeed."

Elza and Malbyrn Winter have few doubts they will succeed. "Cattle savvy alone is not a sufficient measure of success in this business," says Elza. "You need a family commitment, too, and you need to be willing to help other people."

-James *Ritchie*

A Rite of Passage

"If not for Eli, I don't think I'd be in the Angus business today," says John Dockweiler who manages day to day operations for E Bar V Angus Ranch near Wellfleet, Neb. Dockweiler credits E Bar V owners Eli and Bette Votaw for nudging him in the right direction.

"I really didn't know anything about the purebred cattle business before I came to work here," admits John. "Most of what I know now, I learned from Eli. And I don't think I'd been here a month before he suggested I consider starting my own registered herd."

John Dockweiler grew up on a commercial cow-calf outfit in central Nebraska. He sought an animal science degree through the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, graduating in 1989. As a member of the Nebraska livestock judging team he caught his first glimpse of the seedstock business through team tours and practice sessions hosted by Nebraska breeders.

"My dad almost always bought bulls at private treaty, so I'd never even seen a purebred auction," John says.

"I'd shown calves in 4-H but I really didn't know anything about fitting cattle for a sale. I'd never even thought about all that goes into marketing registered cattle."

Dockweiler's first job after graduation is the same one he holds today at E Bar V. It's not quite the same, however, because he now shoulders more responsibility for the production of feed crops and development of more than 200 bulls that the operation merchandises annually. It's responsibility John welcomes since some of those bulls are his own.

His registered herd was founded during his first year at E Bar V. Prompted by gentle persuasion from his wife, Ann, and the Votaws, John took five cows in lieu of a portion of his first year's wages. Presented with the opportunity to pick from some of the best E Bar V females, he says he felt like a kid in a candy store.

"Eli made some suggestions to guide me, but let me decide," John says. "The best advice he gave was telling me to always pick the very best I could afford. He said that life is too short to breed up. I believe that's true."

Another leg-up in the business came through the Votaws' insistence that John meet everyone who came onto the place to look at cattle. He accompanied his employer to area cattlemen's meetings where Eli always made introductions to other breeders and customers.

John calls Eli the best coach you could have when it comes to learning pedigrees, saying, "Eli knows every pedigree for years



John Dockweiler (left) is coached by Angus veterans Eli and Bette Votaw of E Bar V Ranch.

Handing Over the Lead Strap

...and he was always willing to share of it."
From his standpoint as employer and mentor, Eli feels he owes the younger man a chance to build something of his own while he works to improve the E Bar V herd. It's a philosophy he has applied for a long time and John is not the first to benefit from it.

"We've had several young men come to work for us over the years," explains Eli. "I always tried to treat them like I would have wanted to be treated in their position. If you expect a man to give his best, it's only right to share some of the best cattle. John has bought some females that we wanted to keep in the family. We feel we did."

The Votaws' daughters and their families own cattle that run on the ranch too. Their cows and John's run right with the E Bar V herd. Calves are grown, developed and merchandised together regardless of actual ownership. The best are sold through the annual production sale.

"John has sold some pretty good bulls through the sale. In fact, he had the third high seller this year," says Eli. "We consign to some other sales too, and John always represents the cattle well. Our daughters and their husbands accept and respect him. When you can get along with extended family too, you're doing pretty good."

Eli says John seems to enjoy the seedstock business. He calls the younger man a serious breeder with an eye for detail and good recordkeeping. Eli takes considerable pleasure in helping him build an Angus herd.

"But there is a downside to helping an employee get into the business," Eli says. "If a man is ambitious and serious about building his herd, at some point he gets enough cattle to want to go on his own. Then, you lose him. That's just the way it is. You can't let it keep you from trying to help a man get started."

At least for now, John Dockweiler harbors no plans for striking out on his own. He's happy as the E Bar V ramrod and grateful for the opportunity to build a quality herd.

"Ann and I will breed 100 pretty good Angus cows this year," John says. "Every time I breed one I'll hope she has a heifer calf. We appreciate what we have here, so we're just quietly building and trying to do a good job."

— Troy Smith

A good number of Angus breeders are among the graying population of America. But two Idaho breeders are doing something about it, and it's not by using Grecian Formula. They are working with Idaho youth to encourage them to explore the Angus world.

Ken Hopkins, who is 62 years old, and 42-year-old Dennis Boehlke were both born in Nampa, Idaho. Hopkins now lives near Star about 20 miles from Nampa. Together they have joined efforts in mentoring a young man who aspires to be an Angus breeder. That young man is James Jackson. His family moved less than a half mile from Hopkins a few years ago. Jackson is 21 years old.

When James was about 10 years old, his mom took him to Hopkins' ranch to get a steer. They had always lived in the city. When they moved to the country, his mom started raising Morgan horses. He liked cows not horses. For the first three years he showed registered Angus steers.

"Ken and Dennis were always at the shows, so I hung out with them and Darwin Schweitzer who lives close to us too," James says. "I never won a thing for the first four or five years. In showmanship I was always dead last. I knew nothing about cattle. Boy, did they educate me!"

He got his first heifer from Hopkins with what he calls his "junior discount." One of Ken's cows had died and left a three-month-old heifer. The next year James' grandfather took him to Boehlke's place to buy a heifer.

James later bought a heifer, 4S Gem, from Schweitzer at the Gem State Classic Bull Sale for \$1,100. Except for 1995, when she received reserve champion honors, she won champion in the cow-calf division at every junior show.

James' mother, an emergency room nurse, and father, a physicist, have entered him in a private Catholic college prep school. He was in the National Honor Society and named in the top 10 in the nation of Who's Who among high school students. He also played hockey in high school on a team that won every state

championship. One summer he played in Canada and tried out twice for America's Olympic Hockey team.

James has two majors at Albertson College of Idaho in Caldwell— biology and chemistry. He carries a 3.5 GPA and will graduate in 1998. He recently returned from seven weeks on an island in Mexico doing research on endemic species, specifically a mouse.

"That little mouse has taken me a lot of places," James says. His research report has been published and he participated in the Academy of Science at the University of Idaho. He and another student won the undergraduate division of the Idaho Academy of Science in 1996.

This summer James has a paid internship working with a veterinarian. They will be studying cattle viruses for the University of Idaho Cane Veterinary Clinic.

When Ken Hopkins was 18, he worked for the National Guard as a full-time employee. In 1974 he transferred to the Bureau of Land Management at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise as a computer system analyst. His wife, Rozella, also worked for the Fire Center. Ken retired in 1990 and Rozella in 1995. They have four grown children.

Ken started raising cattle in 1970 when Boehlke's father encouraged him to purchase Angus. He put together a herd of 35 cows and began using artificial insemination (AI) and expected progeny differences (EPDs). His marketing program includes consignment sales as well as participating in state, county, and Angus Association shows and activities. Last year Ken decided to sell part of his herd, lease out 16 head and retire from the Angus business.

Dennis Boehlke and his brother have 70 head of registered Angus cattle under the name Bell Key Angus. They farm the homeplace and other rented land raising hybrid sweet corn, Lima bean seed, Idaho spuds, alfalfa, wheat, oats and silage.

Dennis' participation in Angus activities began through the National Junior Angus Association in the early 1970s. When he was 21 years old he became a member of the board of directors of the Idaho Angus

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Association (IAA). At the time, members were concerned there were no active young people.

Dennis served as the first non-paid secretary to the association for 7 years and has been an active leader in the Western States Angus Association (WSAA).

Dennis is also past president of the Boise Valley Angus Association (BVAA) and has been advisor to the Northwest Preview Show. His family received the Idaho Family of Year Award in the 1980s.

In 1992 the Hopkins Family received the same award. The IAA gave Ken a lifetime membership to the American Angus Association because of his work with junior members. He is on the board of directors of the WSAA. He served on the boards and as president of the BVAA and the IAA.

Some of the most significant contributions Hopkins and Boehlke have made to the industry are through junior programs.

In 1983 Ken initiated the junior show in Boise when he was president of BVAA. Held in conjunction with the Western Idaho Fair, it's now the largest junior show outside of Reno.

At the annual Twin Falls Bull and Heifer Sale, junior members can win up to \$100 in the judging contest toward the purchase of a heifer from the sale. To encourage youth to participate, there is a jackpot show buyers can enter the next year. James won the show two years straight.

"The junior shows are what gets them started and keeps them interested," Ken says. "I encouraged James to join 4-H and show a registered steer. By doing that he could join the American Angus Association." Ken then sponsored his membership to the National Junior Angus Association.

Ken Hopkins has helped other youth get started in the Angus business. He sold Christy Saari a cow-calf pair. She was able to sell the calf at the Twin Falls Bull Sale for \$2,800.

Another protege of Ken's was Scott Higer. He started him showing even though Scott's grandfather had been in the business for years. Scott participated in a National 4-H Exchange Program and spent time in Thailand working with farmers and cattle producers. Scott later became a veterinarian.

Dennis Boehlke worked with his two



"I love you, man!" (l to r) Dennis Boehlke, James Jackson and Ken Hopkins share a lighter moment at the Western National Angus Futurity in Reno.

nieces who are roughly the same age as James. He hauled their cattle, taught them to show, spent time with them at the county, state and association show.

Mark and Carla Malson from Parma have three sons who Ken and Dennis still work with and encourage. The Malsons are showing a heifer they bought from James.

Today, James has four bulls, three heifers, and 11 cow-calf pairs. His cattle have paid for more than half of his college education. He artificially inseminates his cows with help and advice from his mentors, as well as Schweitzer and Malson. He bought cows from all of them and values their opinions.

"When I came into this I was really a novice," James says. "If it wasn't for these guys I wouldn't have cattle. I owe them so much adhesive and black spray paint."

More important than loaning fitting supplies are the exemplary lessons they taught him. James has learned the history of the breed and associations from a standpoint that you cannot get from a book. He has learned to manage a business — from bookkeeping, to buying feed, registering cattle and selling bulls.

"They taught me responsibility," James declares. "I remember at the Boise Fair when I was running around an hour before show time. Ken came around the corner, grabbed me and said 'Listen, this is no game!' That's something you don't forget."

This young man has learned to accept competition as something to help make himself better. He learned instead of ridiculing the competition, to raise himself

to the level of whoever is winning.

"We try to teach the kids there is a time to have fun, but there is a time to work," Dennis says. "They also learn that winning isn't everything. It's the competition and the involvement."

Ken, Dennis and James have gone to the shows and worked together for years. It's a mutual benefit society. They haul James' cattle, give him a room and dinner. He helps fit, feed and clean-up. Ken taught James how to weld and helped him build a chute.

These days, because Ken is retired, James is traveling with Dennis, who thinks it is nice to have an extra driver.

"In the future I'd like to do what Ken did," James says. "Keep about 30 head, show them, participate in consignment sales and have a job to pay the bills. I would like to be a veterinarian or do biological or chemical research for the cattle industry."

As for Dennis and Ken, they want to continue to help junior members experience the gratification of raising Angus.

"We hear so much about how bad kids are today, people are afraid for the future of our country," Ken says. "In the Angus business, it's different. We see so many promising young people. We know there is hope and that our country's future is bright."

-Barbara Labarbara