



Dean Hurlbut: Mr. Organization

*After 43 years with the Association,
Dean Hurlbut retires as director of activities.*

by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Within the past 43 years, he's logged 1,501,217 air miles and spent 4,777 nights (equivalent to more than 13 years) away from home.

He's worked with 42 Board presidents, 61 regional managers and 57 staff members. He's attended every American Royal and National Western Stock Show held since 1958, and he hasn't missed any Fort Worth or Houston stock shows, either.

Who is this seemingly tireless man who's traveled the world, kept careful track of every mile and contact, and represented the American Angus Association for most of his life? He's Dean Hurlbut, the long-time director of activities who will retire this month to spend more time with his family and indulge in his favorite pastimes — hunting and fishing.

Though he looks forward to retirement, he's still going to miss the many friends he's made in the business through the years.

"Working with some of the best people in the livestock industry has been a truly wonderful experience," Hurlbut says, seated behind his desk at the Association's headquarters in Saint Joseph, Mo. "I've been fortunate to see so many changes in the Angus breed, and I can honestly say that this breed has never been in a better position than it is right now."

Conscientious, meticulous, organized to an extreme, Hurlbut, 67, is the ultimate behind-the-scenes man who makes sure everything from banquets to livestock shows runs smoothly. In his role as activities director since 1973, he's organized and coordinated major exhibitions, Angus conferences and other events that breeders attend across the country. Whether he's talking on the telephone in his office, ironing out final arrangements with hotel staff or working side by side with a regional manager at a state fair, Hurlbut has a firm, knowledgeable handle on whatever he's overseeing.

"Dean's very good at what he does, and he follows up on details," says colleague Don Painter, director of member services. "It's no simple matter to make all those arrangements. Nothing just happens. You have to make it happen."

Prior to Hurlbut's position as activities director, he worked 16 years as director of junior activities. During that time, he made a lot happen for young people interested in the Angus business. In 1967 he established the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest and, two years later, the National Junior Angus Heifer Show, which was the forerunner to the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

"He's nurtured the junior Angus association to become the largest junior beef breed association in the country and the world," says James Fisher, current director of junior activities. "You don't give a child one lesson. You teach and nurture him throughout his life. Dean's done that with the junior programs throughout his career."

Hurlbut's early life

Hurlbut, the youngest of two sons, was born in 1933 to Lester and Mattie

Hurlbut, who owned a small farm near Raymond, S.D.

"That was during the Depression," Hurlbut relates.

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Dean Hurlbut's first 4-H project, an Angus steer named Pepper, won grand champion at the Clark County fair in 1944. The steer weighed 1,200 pounds (lb.) and sold for \$1/lb.



In 1967 Dean Hurlbut established the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest. He is shown here with Sam Wylie, winner of the first national showmanship contest, and Mrs. Beryl Priebe, then president of the American Angus Auxiliary.



During his 16-year tenure as director of junior activities, Dean Hurlbut organized the first National Junior Angus Heifer Show, forerunner to the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), in 1969.



Often first to congratulate others and recognize their accomplishments, Dean Hurlbut has himself been recognized time and again for his contributions to the Angus business throughout his 43 years of service.



“Those were tough times, and we were a poor family. Dad was on WPA, and Mother was a school teacher. In 1946 my father decided to add beef cattle to the operation. That’s when we bought a registered Angus heifer, Rosella A the 4th. She was the beginning of my father’s Angus program.”

Lester Hurlbut’s initial interest in Angus stemmed from his community’s strong attachment to the breed. For instance, Bar Marshall, the 1922 International Grand Champion, was shown by a breeder from Raymond. The senior Hurlbut also played the drums for the Raymond Angus Band, a 15-member group who performed locally. Buying an Angus heifer seemed a natural fit.

The decision proved to be a good one. A half-century later in 1996, Hurlbut Angus Farm — today run by elder son Jim Hurlbut — would be recognized as a Historic Angus Herd by the American Angus Association.

As an adolescent, Dean Hurlbut joined the Raymond 4-H Club. “My first project was an Angus steer named Pepper,” he recalls. “He was grand champion of the Clark County Fair. He weighed 1,200 pounds, and I got a dollar a pound for him. That was big money back then.”

Throughout his teen years, Hurlbut and his brother continued to show Angus heifers and steers in 4-H shows. When Hurlbut neared the end of his 4-H membership, Mattie encouraged him to enter college. “She told me that if I went to school, she’d give me half her check every month, which wasn’t much.” Hurlbut took his mother’s advice and enrolled in South Dakota State College. He continued his education and earned an animal science degree from what is now South Dakota State University.

True to her word, Mattie faithfully shared her meager teacher’s salary — \$180 a month — with Hurlbut for more than four years.

While at the university, Hurlbut was named “Best Aggie” of the Little International, an honor he received for capturing top wins in the beef cattle, poultry and potato divisions. In 1955 he was a

member of the livestock judging team and in 1956 the meats judging team. While at SDSU, he was also a member of the student body Board of Control, the Block and Bridle Club and the Ag Club.

In December 1956 he graduated and accepted a job as the assistant county agent in Brown County, Aberdeen, S.D. "I was in charge of the 4-H program, which was the beginning of my work with youth," he says.

Meanwhile, Duane Clark, a long-time family friend and Angus producer who was also an Association Board member, attended a regular meeting in June 1957 in Saint Joseph. While there, he heard of a job opening with the Association — director of junior activities.

"So he called me and asked if I'd be interested, which I was," Hurlbut says. "I came to Saint Joe and interviewed in July. I was on the payroll by August 1."

The new position also meant a big raise for Hurlbut — from \$4,800 a year as an assistant county agent to \$6,000 with the Association.

"I got here on a Sunday, and the next day I was on my way to Lexington, Ky., with (then assistant secretary) Lyle Springer," he adds. "We went to a herd classification clinic, then on to fairs across the Midwest. I was gone so long that my belongings were put in storage."

On the job

That first extended trip away from Saint Joseph was the beginning of many more to come during Hurlbut's long career with the Association. Almost constantly, he was either on the road or in the air, traveling to fairs and shows, visiting with youngsters, and meeting with regional managers.

"My first challenge was to organize state junior Angus associations across the country," Hurlbut says of his start with the Association.

Assisted by regional managers across the country, including his mentor, Lyle Haring of DeWitt, Iowa, Hurlbut accomplished his goal.

Next, he helped mark another important junior milestone. In 1967 director Bob Hicks from Kentucky came up with the idea of organizing a national showmanship contest for juniors.

"And we did," Hurlbut says. "Unfortunately, he died before the show was held. I've been organizing it ever since."

Two years later, Hurlbut organized the National Junior Angus Heifer Show [forerunner to the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS)] in conjunction with

an annual Angus conference. "Today it is the largest single activity that the Association puts on," he says.

He made another contribution to junior activities when, in 1980, he helped establish the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) in Wichita, Kan., during the NJAS. Hurlbut oversaw the junior association until 1998.

All of the many junior programs are important, Hurlbut says, because they "promote the breed and leadership skills within members. It's the greatest thing we have for building on the future of the Angus breed. The activities create enthusiasm among our 11,000 junior members and encourage them to get into the Angus business and stay there."

Of the young people he's

The little black book

Need some livestock show statistics or someone's phone number? Chances are, if you ask Dean Hurlbut for the information, he'll open a small datebook that's always within reach, no matter where he happens to be.

Gloria, his wife, calls it his "Little Black Book."

"I use it almost as much as he does," she says. "I walk into his office and get it so I can check a date and see if he's going to be here if I'm trying to plan something. He's had one of these every year since he's worked for the Association. It's like his Bible."



The cover of the pocket-sized book, bound in black leather, bears Dean's name and the logo, "Angus — The Business Breed," all embossed in gold letters. A wide rubber band, wound around one side of the book, marks the day's date. It also holds a collection of business cards and photos of his granddaughter, Kaitlyn.

On daily-calendar pages, Dean marks down business meetings, scheduled trips, livestock shows and personal appointments. He also notes statistics on previous year's shows for quick reference when he's traveling. And in an alphabetized log at the back of the book are the penciled-in names and phone numbers of more than 250 people, information he meticulously re-enters in every new little black book.

Whether he's on the road or at his desk, Dean always keeps the datebook close. He's even been known to drive back to the office when he's forgotten it there. And when, on the rare occasion that he can't find it, Dean frets more than just a bit.

"He gets frantic," Gloria says. "When this little black book gets misplaced, the whole world stops. Nothing else is done until we've found it. It's worse than losing the checkbook."

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

worked with, Hurlbut says, "I've watched them grow. The ones who started then are now in their own professions, and it's been fun to see them grow and take on leadership roles. The future of the Angus breed is going to be in good hands."

Richard Spader, executive vice president of the Association, agrees with Hurlbut but gives his colleague credit for steering young Angus breeders in a positive direction.

"The junior program is a great investment for the American Angus Association," Spader says. "Any time you invest in your young people, you invest in your future. Dean was on the ground floor of getting that started. It's not the end of the journey; it's the trip we're on."

Marriage and family Hurlbut's own journey

through life took a different turn when, in 1958, he met Gloria Pittman, a young woman who came to work in the Association's Public Relations Department after graduating from high school.

"Dean would come to our office, and everybody got to know everybody," Gloria remembers. "He and I were friends, and he dated other friends of mine until he gave in and dated me."

The two married in October 1960. Gloria quit her job when the couple adopted the first of their two children, Stacy, in 1964. They adopted Tracy in 1968.

Hurlbut's frequent traveling was hard on Gloria and the girls, but they adjusted. Most of the time, that is. In 1970, after Hurlbut returned from a six-

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After 43 years with the Association, Dean Hurlbut (shown here with granddaughter, Kaitlyn Jenkins) will retire this month to spend more time with his family and indulge in his favorite pastimes—hunting and fishing.



Combined, Dean and Gloria Hurlbut have devoted 64 years of service to the American Angus Association. "We're as close to our Angus family as we are to our own family," says Gloria.



The Hurlbut family: Tracy Hurlbut, Dennis, Stacy, and Kaitlyn Jenkins; Gloria and Dean Hurlbut.

week trip to Japan, 2-year-old Tracy didn't remember her father. Still, "it was such a way of life that we didn't know anything else," Gloria says.

Summer vacations usually meant family trips to national junior Angus shows and other Angus-related events that Hurlbut oversaw.

After their daughters were grown, Gloria returned to work at the Association in 1982. Today she is head of the Performance Programs Department.

"It is totally our lives," Gloria says of her and her husband's combined 64 years with the Association. "We're as close to our Angus family as we are to our own family."

Director of activities

The walls and bookshelves in Hurlbut's office display numerous mementos and awards he's accumulated largely during his last 27 years as director of activities.

Plaques and framed certificates commemorate such honors as "1998 Marketeer of the Year," his 1991 induction into the American Angus Association Heritage Foundation, and his "1993 Dr. Newel Hicks Visions Award," given by the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE).

On a wooden bookcase, souvenirs from his many trips abroad include a stuffed toy koala bear from Australia, a small replica of the Eiffel Tower in France, a plaid ceramic mug from Scotland and a carved wooden bear from Japan. Four large frames exhibit more than 260 pins and badges Hurlbut collected from his college years as a judging team member and his long involvement with major livestock shows, such as the American Royal, Houston Livestock Show and the NJAS.

The show badges are a reminder of Hurlbut's topmost task: to organize and coordinate dozens of shows, conferences and major events in which the Association participates.

Explaining his role at the shows, Hurlbut says he organizes a work schedule for Association employees attending the show. Once at the show, he oversees that the jobs — from

"The neighbors accuse Dean and [me] of trying to outdo the other when it comes to mowing our lawns. I don't like him to get ahead of me. If I see him mow, then I go mow because I don't want my yard to look ratty next to his. He usually waits until dark to mow, too. I've asked him, 'When you retire, is the night mowing going to stop?'"

—Richard Guy, long-time neighbor on Emerald Lane

checking animal identification to splitting classes to disbursing premium monies — are carried out efficiently.

"I have taken pride in making these shows run smoothly," Hurlbut says. "It can only be done with the cooperation of staff and regional managers. One of the hardest things I have to do is make the work schedules. You have to spread out the responsibilities. I work closely with the regional managers, the PR department, the *Angus Journal* staff and the office manager and his staff."

Hurlbut also works closely with people outside the Association, like Harold Workman, president and CEO of the Kentucky State Fair Board and the NAILE.

"Dean is a good friend and a professional in the industry who has always had the heart of the Angus Association in his mind," Workman says. "He's done a tremendous job at promoting the breed. He goes beyond the position he has — he promotes the agricultural and livestock industry across the board. He understands the livestock industry, and he's been able to gauge where it's going before it's gotten there."

"We need more people like him. He's going to be severely missed in the industry. You don't very easily replace that kind of knowledge and influence and his ability to effect change."

B.C. "Bud" Snidow, retired assistant secretary of the American Hereford Association, remembers Hurlbut as always pleasant and efficient. "Dean performed many functions," Snidow says. "He's a very versatile man. And he was always cooperative with all the

other people, like on the livestock committees at the American Royal."

Debbie McDole, the director of marketing for the Denver Marriott City Center, has worked with Hurlbut for more than eight years. "He is very special," she says. "We consider him family. I wish all my meeting planners were like Dean."

In his diverse job as director of activities, Hurlbut also coordinates the Roll of Victory (ROV) program and 14 ROV shows. "The Roll of Victory

honor helps breeders promote their business in merchandising and enhances the number of entries at shows," he says. "I try to attend every ROV show and as many state fairs as I can, too. The shows have been my life."

He also:

- Talks by phone with breeders wanting show information or having trouble getting an animal entered.
- Travels to meeting and conference sites to find hotels and restaurants.
- Arranges the Association's

Annual Meeting and Banquet in November in Louisville at the NAILE and the annual Herdsman Dinner at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver.

- Keeps all the information he gathers meticulously filed.
- Coordinates the nomination process of the Angus Heritage Foundation, which honors people who have contributed to the success of the Association and the Angus breed.
- In his joint position as director of foreign marketing, Hurlbut also coordinates a cooperative program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Dean's cards

"You're my hero."

Julie Dameron, vice chairman of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), smiles when she repeats the three words Dean Hurlbut handwrote on a congratulatory letter to her two years ago. Then 19, she had just won the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest in Indianapolis, Ind.

"It meant a lot," she says of Dean's thoughtfulness.

Amy Dyar, a former NJAA board member, treasures a collection of cards and letters she's received from Dean through the years. "It makes you know he cares when he follows up with them," she says.

In the industry Dean has become well-known for his old-fashioned way of patting people on the back.

"I write a lot of thank-you notes," he says. "I learned that from my mother. I do it when credit is due. If people are doing a good job, then they like to hear about it. In today's society, that doesn't happen very often. [Writing a thank-you note] makes for a great working relationship when you let people know you appreciate them."

He appreciates a lot of folks, Linda Campbell, his administrative assistant, says. "He thanks hotel staff, people at shows, judges, our staff, anyone who has helped. He also sends congratulatory letters to winners."

To those who've played a part at the major shows, Linda types the thank-you letters, and he signs them. But to the rest—people who have birthdays, a new baby, or a death in the family—Dean handwrites messages on special cards.

"He picks them out himself, too," Linda confides. "Sometimes he'll say, 'I'm going to be gone for a little bit,' and then he'll come back with cards."

Now and then his youngest daughter, Tracy Hurlbut of Kansas City, Mo., supplies him with samples from the company where she works as a sales trainer. It just happens to be Hallmark Cards.

—Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Life ahead

An eye-catching accessory on Hurlbut's desk represents another part of his life — his love of hunting and fishing. The pair of mounted turkey legs were taken from two wild turkeys he harvested in 1981 and 1984. Engraved with the birds' vitals and the apt title of "Foot Notes," the scrawny legs hold Hurlbut's urgent notes and memos. They also bring back a few good memories and assure Hurlbut that there's more to come when he bids farewell to his many colleagues and friends at the Association.

"Angus has been my life," he says. "I'm still here after all these years because of the organization itself and the great people. And also because Angus is a great breed of cattle. The best in the world. Surround that with the best people, and that has a lot of influence."

