

CATTLE CULTURE

by Megan Silveira, assistant editor

Traditions — the Basics of the Business Breed

Traditions are everywhere in the cattle business. The mark of a true cattle producer comes in their ability to learn from and adapt the traditions of others to their own operation.

What does the word “tradition” mean to you? I admit to being guilty of likening the word to adjectives like “old-fashioned” or “dated”, but really, traditions are all about reflecting the history of a process or subject. This issue of the *Angus Journal* is all about getting back to the basics, and what fits better into this theme than the idea of traditions?

Merriam-Webster defines tradition as the handing down of information, beliefs and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction.

Think back to the first time you entered the cattle business. Did you know what feed to put in front of your animal? What type of hair products created the ideal sheen on your show calf? How to properly lead an animal around the show ring?

I have no doubt you didn’t have the answers to all those questions at the start of your career in the Business Breed. You gained that knowledge by watching others in the industry or finding a mentor.

I started raising Angus cattle 14 years ago. Over the years, my parents and I developed traditions we have kept while developing our cattle operation. From the “special dip” we pour over show heifers at the

end of a rinse to the combination of feeds and supplements we put in front of steers, we have developed our own traditions when raising calves.

However, neither my parents nor I came up with these traditions on our own. We were taught these trade secrets by asking others who had spent more time in the industry, or watching what the exhibitors of champions were doing at shows.

Some of my first mentors came in the form of Darrell Hansen and Jim Vietheer of HAVE Angus in Wilton, Calif. These men taught me how to show, how to clip, how to fit, how to represent myself as a showman and the Angus breed.

The traditions my family adopted came from mentors like Darrell and Big Jim. I learned who I was as a cattle producer by finding mentors like these men and asking questions.

Sharing traditions

There won’t be a “how-to” book or a cattleman’s Bible to consult. To gain experience and knowledge, you have to step out of your comfort zone

and ask others for advice, or watch those around you to gain insight.

To junior members, I suggest you look towards officers in your state association or members of the National Junior Angus Board, and ask them for advice or tips to thrive in the Angus industry. For breeders of all ages, watch operations with the same type and kind of cattle you appreciate. Ask them for help, or

ask to shadow them at the next show.

Remember, we all start somewhere. My favorite thing about the cattle industry is we have no hesitation when it comes to helping others. The beauty of this business is that it is traditional. Our methods of raising cattle or methodically preparing a calf for the show ring come from the experience of generations before us.

It is passed-down knowledge, experience and traditions that make us unique and successful. The Business Breed is built on tradition. Start developing your own and asking others what basic traditions you should add to your operation. 

