

A Century Herd built on a solid foundation:

# FAIRVIEW ANGUS FARM

BY LORI GILMORE

**F**or Andy Schuler Jr. and his family, raising and registering Angus cattle is more than a way of life — it's a meaningful link to their heritage. Fairview Angus Farm, established near Chapman, Kan., has been exclusively Angus for 101 years.

"My life has been dedicated to Angus cattle," says the 75-year-old Schuler, the current stalwart of the century-old western Flint Hills operation. "If you get involved and love it, it's something you just don't want to give up."

Understanding the Schulers' long-term commitment to the breed requires an introduction to the family's ancestors.

In 1870 Andy Schuler's grandfather, Martin Schuler, departed from Austria for America. The same year, the young woman who was to become his grandmother set sail for the States from the Black Forest region of Germany. Martin was a skilled stonemason, renowned as a master builder. Catrina Heizelmann was a proficient domestic assistant with work experience in large German homes and castles. Both arrived in Rochester, N.Y., eagerly anticipating fresh opportunities.

However, it wasn't until each had migrated to north-central Kansas, an area abundant with limestone, that they met. Two years later Martin married his German bride in Junction City. Their first and only son, A.J. Schuler Sr., was born in December that same year.

Early on, the master builder accepted a contract to build two schoolhouses south of Junction City for \$500 each. "After building the Rinehart and Fairview schools, they decided to stay in the area," says Schuler. The immigrants claimed 80 acres in eastern Dickinson County, near the Geary County line. There



they erected a small stone house in 1875 — on the same property as the modern family home.

Martin continued constructing stone homes, churches and barns in nearby communities. Tragically, the family patriarch died in 1881. While heading back to a distant job site, he encountered a horrific storm and drowned.

“That left my grandmother with a 7-year-old boy and a 5-year-old daughter,” says Schuler. Understandably, the next years proved difficult for the young widow and her two children.

#### ■ Angus influence

“Dad had to start working at an early age,” says Schuler. A.J. was not only responsible for the family’s 80-acre farm at age 12, he also began working for a neighbor as a “chore boy.”

It was through this early employment that A.J. discovered the qualities of Angus cattle. While Mike Wandler’s animals were mostly half-blood Texas cattle, there were a few “blacks” in the bunch.

“Dad noticed that the Angus-influenced cattle seemed to do so much better than the others,” Schuler says. The young lad

took note of the feedlot performance and premiums paid when the black animals were sold.

“At that time Angus cattle weren’t new to this area,” says Schuler. In fact, George Grant had brought the first Angus bulls to Victoria, Kan., in 1873 — the same year Fairview Angus Farm’s founder was born. According to Andy Schuler, some of the original cattle, in addition to Angus crossbreds, were shipped to the Junction City area to graze after a prairie fire destroyed grassland in the Victoria area and

surrounding region.

In 1889, 16-year-old A.J. Schuler purchased his own black crossbred cows and a bull from Wandler. “Dad started feeding and fattening out the calves, then selling the meat to local butcher shops,” says Andy.

“That is when he got indoctrinated,” he says. “His mother, an expert cook, saw the texture and palatability of the meat and told him that was exactly what he ought to be producing. She encouraged him to start his own Angus herd.”

#### ■ Founding of Fairview

Much like his father’s early work as a stonemason, A.J. Schuler set the cornerstone for a successful registered herd. The 24-year-old obtained his first registered Angus bull in 1898 from Charles E. Sutton of Russell, Kan.

That year, Sutton had named his top bulls Dewey and Sampson in honor of two Spanish-American War naval heroes.

“Dad picked Dewey,” Schuler says. “They shipped the yearling bull to Chapman by boxcar, and he hauled him home in a box wagon.”

Next, the newcomer in the Angus breed established his cow base. He turned to the Wagner Brothers’ herd, based in Enterprise, Kan., for registered females. The cows came with handwritten papers dated 1899 from the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders’ Association, according to Schuler. The cows traced to McWhorter breeding.

“The McWhorter herd of Aledo, Ill., was considered one of the top Angus herds in the country at that time,” says Schuler. “They were breeders and exhibitors of the first grand champion bull at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago.” A few years later, Schuler’s father acquired the remainder of the Wagner Brothers’ herd, approximately 10-12 cows.

Herd growth for Fairview



**Above: The original Schuler home was built in 1875 by Martin Schuler. The addition (on right) was added in 1900. The house is located on the same property as the modern family home.**

**Right: Mignonne of Glencarnock, a daughter of Blackcap Revolution, was a foundation female in the Fairview Angus Farm herd. A.J. Schuler purchased the cow with a bull calf at side in 1927 at the Harrison Production Sale in Harlan, Iowa, for \$685.**



## BETTER LIVESTOCK DAY

In August 1998, Fairview Angus Farm was the feature stop on the Kansas Angus Association's annual tour. That event not only marked the 100th anniversary of the Chapman-based herd, it brought back memories of field days gone by — particularly, the long-running Better Livestock Day.

This annual event, dating back to 1926, was the brainchild of A.J. Schuler and J.B. Hollinger, both eastern Dickinson County Angus breeders. According to Schuler's son, Andy Jr., producers often had been inconvenienced at various times of the year by agriculture classes wanting to judge livestock. Rather than turning the young people away, Hollinger and Schuler teamed up to bring Angus cattle together in a central location and create a "better livestock day."

The founders recruited the new Geary County Extension agent, Paul Gwin, to help organize the first event. They encouraged other Angus breeders to join forces in promoting a field day from which youngsters and adults alike could gain practical knowledge and experience judging beef cattle.

The day's events included the morning judging contest, a roast beef dinner and an afternoon educational program. The hosts always invited local merchants and community members to attend.

"From the time I was a toddler until they discontinued Better Livestock Day, it was something we looked forward to

with great anticipation," says Charles Munson of Munson Angus Farm, Junction City, Kan. "It was the biggest outdoor event in this area of the year."

Long recognized as the oldest and largest Angus field day in the nation, it annually attracted more than 1,000 people, including 4-H and FFA youth. It was not uncommon for a Kansas governor, or even a presidential candidate, to make an appearance at the well-attended community affair.

"It was a big event," says Dean Hurlbut, activities director of the American Angus Association. "They conducted a huge, huge judging contest, and the participants were able to look only at Angus cattle."

According to Schuler, several years the massive crowd had to form a large ring around the animals. Kansas State University personnel assisted by serving as official contest judges.

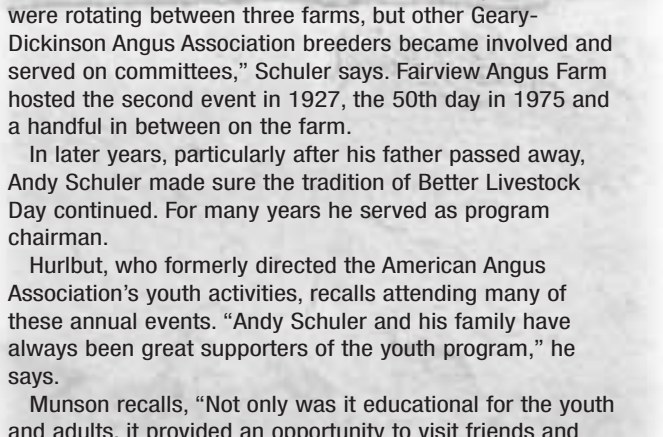
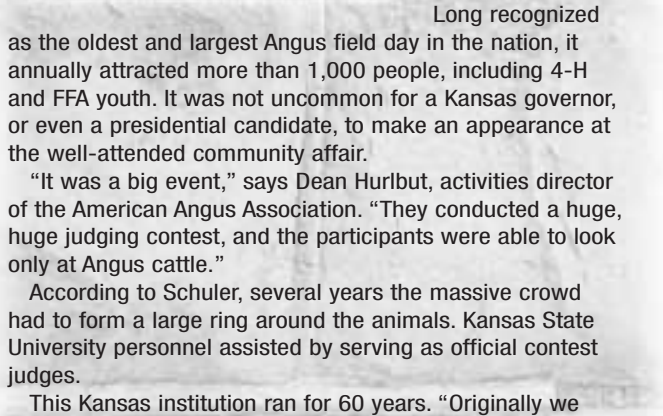
This Kansas institution ran for 60 years. "Originally we were rotating between three farms, but other Geary-Dickinson Angus Association breeders became involved and served on committees," Schuler says. Fairview Angus Farm hosted the second event in 1927, the 50th day in 1975 and a handful in between on the farm.

In later years, particularly after his father passed away, Andy Schuler made sure the tradition of Better Livestock Day continued. For many years he served as program chairman.

Hurlbut, who formerly directed the American Angus Association's youth activities, recalls attending many of these annual events. "Andy Schuler and his family have always been great supporters of the youth program," he says.

Munson recalls, "Not only was it educational for the youth and adults, it provided an opportunity to visit friends and neighbors."

— by Lori Gilmore



Angus came primarily from retaining the best female progeny. According to Schuler, his father also added females through occasional purchases.

A majority of the sires produced were sold. "It turns out, Dad had quite a demand in the area for his bulls," Schuler says. "The cattle impressed the neighbors." At one time there were seven Angus herds within 7 miles of the Schuler headquarters, many of whom repeatedly purchased Fairview Angus genetics.

"From the beginning Dad culled the herd pretty close," Schuler says. "He never intended to sell anything that couldn't be used for breeding purposes."

Early on, A.J. Schuler sold all cull animals to the local meat market. Once the registered herd expanded, Schuler had an adequate supply of mixed yearlings and fed steers to ship and sell at the Kansas City Stockyards.

"Whenever he went to Kansas City, he would top the market," his son says. From 1903 to 1905 A.J. Schuler consistently topped the Kansas City market with his fattened cattle, receiving an average of \$5-\$7/hundredweight (cwt.). This practice continued throughout the years. In fact, the next generation sold fed Angus cattle at the Kansas City market through the 1960s.

### ■ Building a long-standing herd

Aside from the acquisition of the base genetics, the most notable purchase in Fairview Angus history came in 1927 at the Harrison Production Sale in Harlan, Iowa. A.J. Schuler purchased the top female, Mignonne of Glencarnock 379801. It took \$685 to buy this daughter of International champion bull Blackcap Revolution, with a bull calf at side sired by another International champion — Revolution the 7th.

According to Schuler, Mignonne was a great show

heifer. As a 2-year-old, she placed first at both the American Royal and the International livestock shows in 1926.

"Dad brought her home, and we used that bull calf as a herd sire," Schuler says. Fairview Angus went on to exhibit that female in the aged cow division and received champion at the Kansas State Fair.

"She had six daughters, and the last one was a 4-H project of mine," says Schuler, who joined the youth organization in 1935.

At the Harrison sale, his father also purchased 10 cows, each with a heifer calf at side. "That's really the basis of what our herd is today," Schuler admits.

### ■ Significance of the showing

In chronicling the Fairview Angus story, one can't diminish the showing's role in the program's success. "It was an opportunity to meet many people and bring our name before the public," Schuler says.

Fairview Angus Farm first competed in 1922, primarily at local shows. In 1925 A.J. Schuler started exhibiting his Angus "on the circuit" — at several county fairs in Kansas and Nebraska, both state fairs in Kansas, and the American Royal. Two years later he began taking cattle to the National Western in Denver.

As soon as he became eligible to join 4-H, Andy Schuler followed in his father's footsteps as an Angus showman. "The first year I showed steers," Schuler says. The following year he competed with a breeding heifer project out of the foundation Mignonne cow.

"That daughter went on to be named champion heifer at both Kansas state fairs," he says. "We exhibited her in the open show, and she stood second to the female that went on to win the International."

Andy's only sibling, Susanna, exhibited Fairview steers. "She had one that was particularly good and won both state fairs in Kansas," Schuler says. "So we

took the steer to the American Royal in 1936.”

Even though the animal stood second in class at the American Royal, it attracted a lot of attention. While most steers at that time averaged \$14/cwt., says Schuler, his sister’s project sold privately for \$50/cwt. Elliott Brown, J.B. McCorkel and Lee Leachman teamed to take the steer on to the Golden Spikes Show in Ogden, Utah, to the Chicago International and finally to the National Western. The steer stood second at all three shows.

“The good news is the steer was named champion in the carcass contest, with the highest dressing percentage of any entry,” Schuler says of the Fairview-bred animal. “That told us we were doing the right thing.”

Another American Royal highlight came in 1939 when 14-year-old Andy led Black Diamond to the winner’s circle. This Fairview-bred Angus steer received reserve champion honors.

Andy Schuler built a marketing program based on his first 4-H heifer project’s progeny.

“One of her granddaughters went on to be named 1973 International champion female,” he says. “SF Colossal Mignonne 391 not only won the International but also Denver and Fort Worth.” According to Schuler, that female, exhibited by Ken-Caryl Ranch, Littleton, Colo., is the only animal in the Angus breed to be named champion at all three events.

Over the decades Fairview

Angus never conducted a public production sale. The Schulers sold breeding cattle private treaty and through numerous consignment sales. “In the past years we have had enough demand to take care of our cattle,” he says.

“Throughout the 100-plus years, I would guess that we have started hundreds of smaller Angus herds all over the United States,” Schuler says. Fairview cattle have been sold into West Virginia, Texas, Michigan, along the West Coast, and many places in between.

For example, Munson Angus Farms’ origin can be traced back to Fairview genetics. “My grandfather, C.O. Munson, bought his first purebred Angus heifers in 1927 from the Schuler herd,” says Charles Munson of Junction City, Kan. “In the early days of our herd, the Schuler bloodline had a substantial influence on our breeding. My father, Ralph, purchased a number of bulls from them through the 1940s.”

#### ■ Angus activities

At an early age Andy joined the American Angus Association as a junior member. It was only natural that, in 1944, he became an adult member of the American Angus Association.

Both Andy and his father gave freely of their time and talent to their local, state and national breed organizations. Andy served as president of the Geary-Dickinson Angus Association from 1953-55, a local group that his father helped found.

“My dad, along with some other breeders, organized the Kansas Angus Association right after World War I,” Schuler says. Although the exact date of establishment is not known, the state association was listed in an early issue of the *Angus Journal* printed in 1919.

The group recognized A.J., a charter member and past president, for his early work with an honorary membership in 1959.

At age 20 Andy served as vice president of the Kansas Angus Association. Thirteen years later, in 1958, he became president.

“When I was elected, the group only had \$1,100 dollars in the account and a worn-out automobile,” he says of the once-troubled state organization. At the time, according to Schuler, Kansas Angus breeders recognized the need, but couldn’t afford to hire a fieldman.

“I traveled 10,000 miles throughout the nine districts that year promoting our association,” says Schuler. Part of his duties included recruiting donation cattle for a state sale. As a result of his tireless effort, the Kansas Angus Association once again could hire a fieldman. “It’s been going great ever since,” he adds.

Andy advanced to a national scene the following year through his election to the American Angus Association Board. In 1959 the Kansan became the youngest person elected to the Board. He served two terms, beginning in 1959 and ending in 1965.

“When I went on the Board, we had 34,404 members, and that number kept increasing,” he says. “Each year the Association hit an all-time high through increased memberships and registrations.” In 1965, he recalls, the American Angus Association reached 40,000 members. “The little breeder was the backbone of the Association at that time,” Schuler adds.

Association issues of the day included documenting dwarfism carriers; launching the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) performance program; purchasing a computer system for the Association; and hiring a replacement for retiring Executive Secretary Frank Richards. Before leaving the Board, Schuler voted to expand the St. Joseph headquarters through the west wing addition.

#### A FAMILY HEIRLOOM

*Heritage — a multi-faceted word;*

*“Be Proud of it,” a phrase that is often heard.*

*I often wondered, for me what could it mean?*

*Now, looking back over time, its true meaning can be seen.*

*I think back to Grandpa, a man I won’t forget,*

*And, as a young boy, his dreams and goals that he had set.*

*He had hopes of establishing a fine and prominent herd;*

*It’s easy to see now that his vision was not blurred.*

*For Fairview Angus Farm was founded in 1898;*

*Black Angus have been a trademark ever since that date.*

*A son was born — Andy Jr. was his name.*

*Father and son together sent Fairview to its fame.*

*As the story continues, this boy is now my dad;*

*I recall many memories which he and I have had.*

*The day that I was born, he gave me an Angus heifer;*

*It is without a doubt, the most precious gift I’ve received — ever.*

*So Angus cattle have been with me ever since Day One,*

*Providing a lot of education, but also amounts of fun.*

*I remember checking the pasture cows when I wasn’t very old,*

*And helping Dad feed them when the weather was windy and cold.*

*I used to call, “Come, cows,” as Dad scooped out their food,*

*And I’d watch the herd start running as they loudly moo’d.*

*And nothing could be more special than a tiny baby calf,*

*Watching him play and frolic would tend to make me laugh.*

*I recall the softness of a newborn’s velvety coat of black,*

*When I delicately stroked my fingers across his tiny back.*

*There are several things I’ve wanted my family to know —*

*My grandfather started something for which we’re all endowed.*

*He gave us coal black Angus — for that I am most proud.*

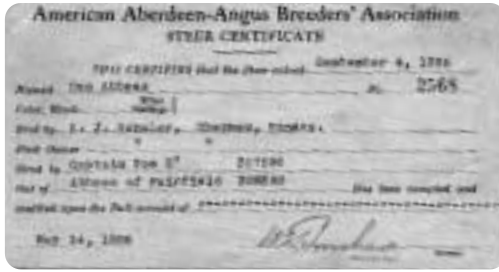
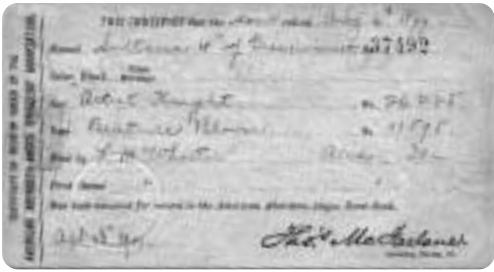
*But he’s also given me special memories, which I may not have ever had*

*If he had not had a vision when he was just a lad.*

*For Angus cattle have been and will always continue to be*

*A very important part of my family heritage and an irreplaceable part of me.*

— by Janice (Schuler) Stover



**To establish his cow base, A.J. Schuler turned to the Wagner Brothers' herd, Enterprise, Kan. Tracing to McWhorter breeding, the cows came with handwritten papers from the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association dated 1899.**

■ **The next generation**

In the early 1950s Andy married Roseanna “Rosie” McLaughlin. He and his late wife raised eight children on the original home place.

“Our kids all had their own Angus cattle and were active in 4-H,” Schuler says.

The youngest, Julie Schuler Katz, served as the 1983-84 Kansas Angus Queen. She was hired as a public relations intern for the American Angus Association.

Like most families, the

Schuler 4-H projects helped pay college tuition. Andy proudly boasts that all of his grown children are graduates of Kansas State University and are life members of the American Angus Association.

While Andy’s children remain co-owners of Fairview Angus, all have followed their own families and careers across the country. The oldest, Andy Schuler III, and his wife, Daretia, live in San Antonio, Texas.

“He was the youngest

member ever to join the American Angus Association,” his father says proudly. “The day he was born I had his application in the St. Joseph office.”

The rest of the family consists of Steve Schuler and his wife, Sally, of Chapman; Sharon Henry and her husband, Frank, of Victoria, Texas; Mark Schuler and his wife, Karen, of Mound City, Kan.; Kent Schuler and his wife, Mary, of Littleton, Colo.; Janice Stover, and her husband, Tad, of Arkansas City, Kan.;

Joan Lebo and her husband, Jeremy, of Wakefield, Kan.; and Julie Katz, and her husband, Jeff, of Manhattan, Kan. Andy has 13 grandchildren.

■ **Looking back**

As the century comes to a close, Andy tends to the current 1,040-acre operation single-handedly. At Fairview’s peak in the 1970s, Andy Schuler and his family ran approximately 300 cows, never wavering from the Angus breed. Today the second-generation Angus breeder is still shooting for consistency, quality and uniformity in his 75-head herd.

Looking back on the early years, the honorary member of the Kansas Angus Association says, “We started with the right kind of cattle. It was a time when people were buying a lot of meat and demanding quality. That quality sold the breed to my family.”

