



People Behind the Print

A reflection back on past editors of the Angus Journal.

by Kaci Foraker, editorial intern

Brown books line the shelves of bookcases at the American Angus Association. Gold lettering details the books' spines depicting 100 years' worth of bound *Angus Journal* issues.

The first volume of *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal* from August 1919 displays a red and green colored cover with the same Angus bull head displayed repeatedly in advertisements. Skip to the 24th volume of 1979, the publication's title drops the word "Aberdeen" and continues to add creative elements to accompany the latest news. Browse through the early 2000s; large, colored photos fill each page with custom-designed editorial headings.

The look of the *Angus Journal* has evolved over the years — even the name changed and the kinds of information written in the publication adapted to the times. But the magazine continues to dispense relevant information to its subscribers.

Historic names of people and livestock alike reside in previous issues. Though the person behind the entire operation may only have their

name displayed in a byline or listing of publication staff — the editors have carried on the well-known reputation of the *Angus Journal*.

Starting in 1919, F.H. Higgins served as the first editor of *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal*. Higgins worked for the Association as well as the publication during this time. After the recession hit in 1921, he was let go by the Association.

"It will be our endeavor to give you the world news and to create a fellowship among all breeders that will be lasting and work to the mutual benefit of all," wrote *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal* management in the August 1919 issue. "We want to

see more and better Aberdeen-Angus cattle grown, and we will do our share to find and create a ready market for the right sort of animals. If you have anything to sell tell us about it. If you want to buy and wish assistance of our representatives just let us know ... our services are at your command."

The Hahne family took over the editor-in-chief position for the next 24 years. Fred Hahne held the role from 1921 to 1937. Then, his son, Richard "Dick"



FRED HAHNE



DICK HAHNE

Hahne stepped into the position from 1937 to 1945.

During those 24 years, the publication saw many fluctuations in terms of operations and its role in the breed. Subscriptions grew tremendously and issues were — and still are — delivered from coast to coast. Selling space for advertisements became popular to generate revenue for improvement of the publication and editorial became shorter articles on specific subjects.

The Hahne family passed the editor position out of the family to Sam Bartlett for a short stint from 1945 to 1946.

After Bartlett, Colin Kennedy served as editor until December 1972. He was famous for his column called “On Angus Tracks.” This column featured current topics affecting the beef cattle industry and Angus breeders’ triumphs or hardships. Kennedy’s column provided multiple views on debatable issues, but that’s why it drew a large readership.

“The one thing — the only thing — we Angus people have to sell is quality beef,” wrote Kennedy in his June 1962 column. “Due to the genetic nature of the doddie we have a superior product in spite of the road blocks set up over the years in the form of fads and fancies dealing with size, pedigrees and popular families. As a breed our main job is to produce more of those good Angus with less ‘Bone, Belly and Brisket.’ Let the competition play around with the non-essentials.”

Some of the topics still remain true today, but other sections written by the editorial staff depicted advancements for the given time period.

“All things considered we decided to go to a side-stitched magazine for we felt this would be a means of improving the *Journal*, giving you a magazine that would stay together under handling, one you could throw at the cat without having it fly apart — I mean the magazine, not the cat,” written by Colin Kennedy in the April 1953 issue.

Though the *Angus Journal’s* editors had some fun explaining their work, there were times that



their writing was instrumental in helping the breed succeed. In Jim Orton’s column simply known as “Editorial,” he compiled important bits of news for Angus breeders from 1972 to 1979.

“Calves sired by non-owned bulls that have been reported to carry specific genetic defect, or that have non-traditional blood, or are carriers of non-traditional blood will not be eligible for registration

after January 31, 1979,” Orton wrote. “The four specific genetic defects to which the rule applies are: dwarfism, osteopetrosis, syndactyly and double muscling ... This action, of course hurts a few individuals at this time. But it will keep the carriers from hurting many in the years ahead.”

A fresh start

In 1979, the ownership of the publication was transferred to the Association and the name shortened to its current title. This change brought many new employees to the magazine, including Michael Sweet who was editor of the first *Angus Journal*. Shortly after, Ann Huffine Gooding, Jeri Lynn Sloan (Gilleland) and Nancy Anne Sayre each individually held the editor role for a few years.

Every editor impacted the publication in his or her own way, much like Gooding offering her advice to cattlemen who were struggling in the early 1980s.

“Times are certainly not the best they’ve ever been for cattlemen, and they might not get a whole lot better for a while,” Gooding wrote. “That’s not to say survival in the cattle business is impossible. Not at all. All indications are that making it in the cattle business is going to continue to be a challenge. Yes. But impossible? No. And one thing is certain. Those who survive the tough times will have had to do a lot of things right.”

The publication faced successes and lulls alongside the Angus breeders, but it always prevailed. Starting in 1985, Pennsylvania native James “Jim” Cotton served as editor in chief for four years. He brought a wealth of experience, and for his

Continued on page 40



JIM COTTON

final *Angus Journal* he published the largest issue with 714 pages in the 1989 Herd Reference Edition.

Possibly one of the most influential editors was Jerilyn Johnson, whose mindset was to revamp the *Angus Journal's* editorial

content. She focused on using staff who were scattered throughout the country to provide readers with a diverse set of topics. Johnson also emphasized providing technical information with human aspects to help breeders implement practices into their own operations.

In her column "Culling Time," she expressed her own opinions of the future for the beef cattle industry and *Angus Journal* readers' role in that.

"It's time we do our part to educate the general public on our awareness," Johnson wrote. "You know the importance of clean air and water better than anyone. It's essential for your family's health and for producing safe, quality food products. You know the importance of preserving our land and natural resources for the next generation."

Upon Johnson's resignation in 1997, Shauna Rose Hermel brought her own distinct background to the publication. Hermel's lifetime experience with Angus cattle brought a new perspective to the magazine's production for 21 years. Her column called "Angus Stakes" connected her background to pertinent topics the *Angus Journal* was reporting.

Hermel and Assistant Editor Angie Denton had



JERILYN JOHNSON

a passion for delivering relevant information to a diverse membership, taking advantage of the extra editorial pages required during an era when breeders of national acclaim mailed their sale books with the *Journal*.

"I think our largest issue carried 311 pages of editorial. The piece altogether would have been four times that size," Hermel says. "It had to be boxed."

Hermel and Denton also brought the publication into the digital age, brainstorming the *Angus Journal's* first online presence with a website (www.angusjournal.com) and starting the *AJ Daily* electronic newsletter. Topic sites such as www.angusjournal.com/drought and www.cowbcs.info were created to give breeders timely and relevant information. Meeting sites such as www.bifconference.com and www.appliedreprostrategies.com were initiated to give breeders access to cutting-edge information straight from the source.

Hermel transitioned to leading the *Angus Beef Bulletin* editorial team full time in 2018 and Julie Mais was hired as editor of the *Angus Journal*.

For the past 100 years, only 14 people have filled the editor role for the publication. Each of those individuals played a major part in developing the publication into one of the most reputable sources of information for Angus breeders and those interested in the cattle industry.

Even though copies of past issues now reside on shelves gathering a bit of dust, they are always there to offer insight into the publication's beginning and reflect the cattle industry and Angus breed for the past century. 



SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

