

Mills Honored with BIF Ambassador Award

Field Editor Becky Mills recognized with 2020 Beef Improvement Federation Ambassador Award.

by Madi Baughman, editorial intern

Though her career in journalism may have started by accident, the recognition she has earned in the last 40 years of writing is anything but coincidence. At the Beef Improvement Federation's (BIF) annual meeting and symposium, Becky Mills of Cuthbert, Ga., received the 2020 BIF Ambassador Award. BIF selects one member of the media for their efforts spreading information about BIF for this award annually.



"[Receiving the award] was a huge honor, and I'm incredibly grateful," Mills says. "It was also pretty funny because I really struggle with anything genetic. I've never thought about it being one of my strong areas with writing and stories."

Grown and raised

Mills says her love for livestock stems from her father, who was a professor and counselor at the University of Georgia (UGA). He often took her to the university's farm to see the animals.

"My earliest memories are of him holding me while I petted Holsteins, lambs and baby pigs," Mills recalls. "To this day I still love the smell of silage, because I associate it with those trips to the University farm."

Though she originally entered Berry College with an animal science major to learn how to better care for horses, Mills says a job at Berry's bull test station quickly changed her mind. From this experience, Mills says she learned the significance of performance-testing the true "BIF way".

Due to Berry not having an animal science department large enough to support a lone major, her professors enrolled Mills in a few journalism classes, leading her to write about her experiences.

"I wrote a short story about my experience at AI (artificial insemination) school, which was published in the school paper, and that accidentally started my career," Mills says.

During her time in graduate school at UGA, Mills notes expected progeny differences (EPDs) were in the beginning stages, so she learned more about performance and BIF.

A stocker-finisher tour in 1980 led to Mills meeting John Leidner, an editor at *Progressive Farmer*, who

encouraged her to begin writing for the publication. He hired her for the Sunbelt Expo program the following summer, she says. Leidner remained her mentor and friend until his death last year.

Additionally she has written for *Farm Journal*, including *Hogs Today*, *Dairy Today* and *Beef Today*. Mills also continues to write for *Progressive Farmer* in addition to *Gulf Coast Magazine*.

"My favorite part of my job is getting to visit with cattle folks, learn from them and see their operations," Mills says. "It never gets old."

Present passion

Mills is currently a field editor for the *Angus Journal* and *Angus Beef Bulletin*®. Mills notes the fondness she has developed over the years for the cattle and people of the Angus breed.

"When I started writing for the *Angus Journal* and *Angus Beef Bulletin*, I was introduced to the great people, great cattle and great programs within the breed," Mills says. "Probably

the thing that has made me respect the breed the most though is the breeders' and Association's willingness to change to meet the needs of commercial producers."

Writing stories to help producers understand how to improve their

"My favorite part of my job is getting to visit with cattle folks, learn from them and see their operations. It never gets old." — Becky Mills

Continued on page 68

operations is just another day on the job for Mills. She says the information she has learned at BIF's meetings has assisted her in this task, especially in regards to genetics.

"I sure try to focus when I am writing genetic stories on ways producers can improve through genetics and the principles that BIF has established," Mills says.

However Mills says her articles aimed at producers sometimes end up catching the eyes of consumers as well, whether online or through social media. She says she believes this interaction is vital to overcoming the misconceptions surrounding cattle production.

"To me it's extremely important for consumers and influencers to hear positive stories from the cattle industry and let them know how


hard cattlemen work to produce a safe, quality product," Mills says.

Mills credits a large part of her success to the leaders in the industry and the editors she has worked with. She says it is an honor to be working in the field with them.

"I'm incredibly grateful to the people in the cattle industry, especially my editors who have always made me look good and given me great assignments," Mills says.

In 1992 Mills married Scotty Lovett and moved to Cuthbert, Ga., where Lovett, his brother Bob and Bob's son, Graham, own Lovett Farms, a row crop and commercial Angus operation. Mills thanks her husband for keeping her realistic when working on stories to benefit producers. In addition to Scotty, Mills' immediate family is her

golden retriever, Mosby; her rescue Thoroughbred horse, Paulie; and her Persian cat, Panda.

"Becky has a passion for those she writes about, and it shows both in her writing and the photos she takes to document her stories," says Shauna Hermel, *Angus Beef Bulletin* editor. "She has a knack for taking complicated subjects and revealing their practical application through the experience of fellow producers. Combine that with her love of cattle and people, and writing to support BIF was a natural." 

PASTURE AND LIVESTOCK CROP INSURANCE

Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF)

The Pasture, Rangeland, Forage Insurance Program provides insurance coverage on your pasture, rangeland, or forage acres grown for the intended use of grazing by livestock or haying.

Livestock Risk Protection (LRP)

Livestock Risk Protection insures against declining market prices (based on USDA's Agricultural Market Service).

Contact your trusted ProAg agent for more information.

(800) 366-2767 | ProAg.com



PRO AG[®]

GROW WITH CONFIDENCE

ProAg is an equal opportunity provider. | The description of coverage is for informational purposes only. Not all coverages available in all states. | © 2020 ProAg. All rights reserved.