

doing a better job

MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Unfortunately, if you build a better mousetrap the world will not beat a path to your door. That old saw is wrong and has probably mislead untold numbers of people over the years to assume that if they produce an outstanding product or breed genetically superior cattle, that customers will automatically materialize.

A brief story in the Sunday newspaper a few weeks ago reminded me again of the fallacy of this assumption.

You, like me, may have long been under the impression that the late Fred Waring, the noted musician and choral director, invented the household blender. After all, we have all heard of the Waring blender and the many imitations that were manufactured when the patents finally became public property.

Well, come to find out the blender was invented and patented back in 1932 by Stephen Poplawski who produced and sold fruit juice mixers. Another man, whose name the writer didn't even know, also produced a blender-type machine that he later showed to Fred Waring. Waring liked it enough to invest money in the machine and hire people to perfect and market it. He sold the first one in 1937 and it became a major commercial success.

Stephen Poplawski and his counterpart did the work of inventing and even producing back in the 1920s, but the world beat a path to Fred Waring's door and they brought their checkbooks with them.

Obviously, the promotion of a superior product is just as important to its financial success as is its invention or production. In fact, more so. Unfortunately, an average product with superior promotion can be more successful in the business world than a superior product that receives little or inadequate or ineffective promotion. You may know of some good examples of this even in the Angus business.

Often, when we think of effective promotion we think of paid advertising. As effective as advertising can be, it is

not the complete answer to the problem. Public relations in all its many facets may be as important to our in-

dividual commercial success in the Angus business as anything else.

The best, simple, definition of public relations that I have ever heard or read is: **DOING GOOD AND GETTING CREDIT FOR IT.**

In other words, public relations includes all of the things that bring about business success—running a superior business, being a good citizen of the Angus world, and getting credit for these activities. In my opinion, it is just as important for you to have a planned public relations program as it is to have a planned breeding or advertising program.

Let me dispel some common misconceptions about public relations. Public relations isn't free publicity. Effective publicity about your operation is an important part of PR, but it comes out of a legitimate news event and a well planned program of action.

Public relations also has little to do with "publicity stunts." There might be a reason why you would want to do something that is unusual, funny or even outrageous in order to generate some news coverage of a program or event. But publicity stunts are a small part of public relations.

Also, public relations is not being egotistical or "showing off" or "tooting your own horn" in the negative sense. Public relations is a positive and necessary marketing tool that simply involves being a good cattle breeder, a good businessman, an active participant in all parts of the Angus business, and then letting people know all about your activities. We will discuss PR in more detail in the months ahead.

In the meantime, when you think you can rest on your laurels as a top breeder of Angus cattle and let someone else do the promotion, just remember Stephen Poplawski and his fruit juice mixer. He did the good work of inventing the blender but it was Fred Waring who got the credit and reaped the rewards. **AJ**

