

Judging

A time-honored practice continues to provide strength in the Angus world.

by Corinne Blender

With her petite stature and long hair rolled close to her head, she stood out in the crowd of young men in suits and ties. But her serious gaze revealed that she belonged and was there for a reason. Minnie

Lou Ottinger (now Bradley) was there to judge livestock.

At the time, it was almost unheard of for a young lady to judge on a college team — let alone travel with a group of young men to a competition. That was all about to change thanks to the courage of one determined young lady and future leader in the Angus industry.

“We started out a set of reasons saying, ‘He’s the shortest, deepest-bodied, fattest steer in the

class,’” says Bradley, who now lives near Memphis, Texas. “So things change. Livestock have changed, and needs have changed.”

But the evolution of livestock wasn’t the only change that Bradley would be a part of during her judging years at Oklahoma A&M (later to be Oklahoma State University). Her efforts to make history in a male-dominated field began by proving a female could judge and give reasons with the best of them. Her coach at the time, Glen Bratcher, who would later become the sixth American Angus Association executive secretary, needed a little persuasion before he would let a girl judge.

“He called me into his office and he told me, ‘Well, you know your voice isn’t low enough. I don’t think that the judges would like for you to come in there and give reasons,’” Bradley recalls. She says she was hurt by Bratcher’s words, but not discouraged. It would take more than those words to stop a young lady with a clear passion to judge.

“From the third grade on I had told my folks that I was going to go to Oklahoma A&M and be on the judging team,” Bradley says. “I had no idea what it took to get there. I had no idea that they

didn’t have girls on the team or anything like that. I was just going.”

After being turned away by Bratcher several times, Bradley finally got her break and was allowed to judge in Fort Worth, Texas — but only if her parents accompanied her. From that point on, she had finally made the team.

Her biggest judging achievement, though, was still to come. Bradley would walk away from the national championship, which at the time was held during the Chicago International, as the first woman to win high individual at the famed judging event.

“It was a long, long time ago, but people still make a big to-do about it. I don’t know why. I guess just because I happened to be the first girl,” Bradley says.

Bradley may have been the first girl to win the national championship, but she won’t be the last. Nor will she be the last Angus leader — male or female — to come from the ranks of collegiate livestock judging.

Building leaders

When you look around the boardroom at the American Angus Association, you see several judging team alumni, points out Bradley, herself a Board member. When you line up the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) Board of Directors, they’ll be there.

“Sitting around the boardroom at the American Angus Association, I think the majority of those fellows were on judging teams, because I have heard them talk about it,” Bradley says. “I think you know that’s where the leaders come from.”

Lessons

Former 4-H'er Makes International History

► Newspapers from around the country published articles on Minnie Lou (Ottinger) Bradley, a pioneer for women seeking to judge on the collegiate level.

The list of livestock judges turned Angus leaders is endless. Livestock judging gives birth to leaders by molding them into strong, reliable and confident individuals.

"Judging helps create dedicated, knowledgeable, confident people who have strong communication skills," says Lacey Robinson, Montgomery City, Mo., who is currently judging at Kansas State University (K-State). "They obviously have a passion for the livestock industry if they are willing to put forth the sacrifice of time and effort it takes to be on a judging team."

"Those qualities are also the things that you want to have in the leaders of your association," she continues. "They need to have an understanding of how the whole livestock industry works. They also need to be willing to put forth the dedication and time as well as to be a good speaker and be able to convey their thoughts and ideas to the people and members of their association."

Robinson has become an Angus leader in her role as the leadership director on the NJAA Board. She credits livestock judging as being a source of strength and determination.

"It's allowed me to build a network of people within the livestock business that I think will help me later in life," she says. "It has also helped me develop a deeper understanding of all the facets of the livestock industry, and it has allowed me to grow

CONTINUED ON PAGE 96



FIRST GIRL WINNER Stock Judging Title To Co-ed

By Walter F. Moore
A girl placed first in the national contest for the first time in history in the International Live Stock Exposition and Judging contest.



OKLAHOMA GIRL MAKES STOCK HISTORY

Minnie Lou Ottinger, 31, scores a mile in the International Live Stock Exposition...



► Minnie Lou (Ottinger) Bradley stands out in the crowd of men who judged with her on the 1952 livestock judging team at Oklahoma A&M. The Oklahoma native was the first woman to claim top collegiate judging honors. She now resides on her family's ranch in Memphis, Texas.

Girl Pioneer

IN THIS newspaper we show pictures of women and their reasons. The reason for a reason... because... officially selected champion.

The new woman placed Ottinger, who is 21, lives in Oklahoma.

Miss Ottinger, 901 points out of a possible 1,000. The male competitor made 800.

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

Why has Miss Ottinger taken the of farm animals? Because she...

CONTESTANT
Number _____

KANSAS
4-H JUDGING CARD

Class No. _____

Class Name _____

REASON SCORE



PHOTO BY CORINNE BLENDER

► Judging while in college opened the door for Chad Ward (left), Eldorado, Ohio, to be able to judge different shows, including this year's National Junior Angus Showmanship Competition in Milwaukee, Wis.

Opening doors to new experiences

A half-century ago, Minnie Lou Ottinger (now Bradley), a native of Hydro, Okla., made judging history. She was the first female to win high individual at the National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest held during the International Livestock Show in Chicago, Ill. It is an honor very few women have been able to achieve since her championship in 1952.

Bradley's judging team experience at Oklahoma A&M led to her television debut on "The Today Show" with Dave Garroway.

"That year a Shorthorn steer was grand champion and being an Angus person it kind of got under my skin," Bradley recalls. "But I had to talk to the TV audience on the good points about this Shorthorn steer that was grand champion. I was on national television with a Shorthorn rather than an Angus, but he was a good steer."

Judging has offered many youth opportunities that they would never have been able to experience without belonging to a judging team.

Dustin Wiley, Saint Francis, Kan., traveled to Scotland to judge livestock and see production agriculture in England firsthand.

"While we were over there I was fortunate enough to be able to represent the United States on the international team, which was really cool considering I was 14 and I had never been involved with anything like that before," Wiley says.

After the judging contest, Wiley traveled with one other teammate to a dairy in Holland to learn about some of the ways cattle are raised overseas.

"It was just a very neat learning experience to be able to do that and also tour through the different countries and learn about their agriculture and how they raise livestock," Wiley says.

Wiley says he learned that judging offers youth overseas some of the same opportunities youth in the United States gain.

"Judging was a way for the kids to be involved and be able to evaluate livestock and trying to keep up with what's going on in different industries," he says. "They look for different things than we do in different areas, but it's pretty much the same."

Judging Lessons CONTINUED FROM 95

into a better communicator, enabling me to make better decisions under pressure and to give an articulate defense."

Association Executive Vice President John Crouch says he gained some of his leadership abilities through judging experiences in 4-H, FFA and eventually at the University of Tennessee.

"You have to analyze a situation completely, make a decision and stand by your decision," Crouch recalls from his judging experience. "No ifs, ands or buts — that's the way it is."

More importantly, Crouch says, judging has given him many fond memories of his travels across the country. His University of Tennessee team tied for first place with South Dakota State University at the national championship in Chicago in 1962.

"The things I really recall, that stick in my mind, about the whole process were the camaraderie we had traveling, and working out at various farms," he says. "To be able to analyze those cattle in the manner in which we did in those days and make placings, then stand up and justify those placings before the officials helped me tremendously in being able to think on my feet and to express myself."

Chad Ward, Eldorado, Ohio, was on the K-State livestock judging team that won the national championship in 1995, in Louisville, Ky. (The contest was moved from Chicago in 1975.) Now a leader in the Angus industry, Ward owns Westward Angus with his wife, Mindy. He continues to use his judging experience at many livestock shows, including the showmanship competition at the 2002 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Milwaukee, Wis. He says the opportunities to judge since graduating from K-State have come from the

many contacts he made while in college.

"I've made a lot of lifelong friends through the judging circles, as well as all the contacts that you make for down the road when you need some help or just need to talk to somebody for advice," Ward says.

He says being asked to judge events is proof that his time spent judging in college was fruitful. "It goes back to the contacts that I've made, and maybe the Angus people who have seen me judge before might have remembered that and passed my name on to the list (of potential judges). I really had an enjoyable time judging at the junior nationals."

Lessons learned

In addition to networking, livestock judging offers youth the opportunity to visit livestock operations and learn from their owners — providing lessons not everyone has the chance to experience. Bradley remembers taking advantage of many breeders' knowledge during her quest to learn about livestock selection.

"You tried to study the lessons from those people, see what they were doing and how they were doing it," she says. "None of those people were money people. They were just breeders, good ranchers and cattlemen who bred cattle for a living. That's the kind of people that I've always tried to associate with — those who had economics on their side. The cattle had to pay for themselves."

Bradley has implemented that same logic in the daily operation of her family's Angus operation, Bradley 3 Ranch Ltd., Memphis, Texas. "Study it, and if the cows can't pay for themselves, you know you don't need them in my book."

Livestock judging has changed over the years to keep pace with the many lessons learned to help advance livestock production.

Today, management scenarios, along with production records, are used in the contests, but that wasn't always the case.

"We didn't know it at the time, but we found out much later that the relationship between phenotype and production was not very good," Crouch says. "Science and research have proven that. So it (judging) didn't teach me very much about profitable livestock production, but it taught me a lot about life."

Evaluating livestock based on phenotype can play an important role, as cattle of similar types and kinds are in demand in today's market.

"It really trains people to be able to select the type of cattle that they like — whether it's cattle, or sheep, or hogs, whatever the livestock that they prefer," Ward says. "As a whole it teaches people, in terms of the cattle part of it, that it should relate to making the cattle more uniform in their type and kind. People learn to see what is better in terms of phenotype. That goes a long way in terms of the uniformity of cattle as you are looking at them."

Ward says evaluating cattle based on phenotype alone is not the only way cattle are appraised alive. "I also had a lot of experience with judging live cattle in terms of carcass merit, that really helps the industry."

"It's not that we've always been right about the kind of cattle that we pick, but I think what we learned was about believing in ourselves and looking at the points," Bradley says.

The tradition continues

Youth today who find value in judging promise that sound leaders will continue to filter into the industry.

"Livestock judging has meant a great deal to me. It is certainly one of the best experiences that I have been a part of in all of my school years," says Lana Myers,



► Lacey Robinson (right), Montgomery City, Mo., and Tom Patterson, Columbus, Mont., have both been junior leaders on the National Junior Angus Association Board of Directors. They credit judging as a source of many of their leadership abilities.

Jennings, La., a past member of the Louisiana State University livestock judging team. Myers is now the vice-chairman of the NJAA Board.

True leaders stick together and work hand-in-hand. Judging forces youth to set goals on an individual level, but also to work as a team.

"It teaches you to work hard to reach your goals and at the same time to be a team player and be able to convey your thoughts in an articulate and convincing manner," Robinson says. "All the time, effort and work it takes to reach this one goal that you have set, and then at the same time, work with others and help them to become better — that's one of the big things I think that it really teaches you. Something that will hopefully stick with you long after your judging career is over."

Livestock judging is a true team sport. Countless hours are spent with team members on the road and during long hours of giving reasons.

"Like the old saying goes, 'Practice makes perfect.' Even though I never was close to perfection, the hours of practice helped me to improve with each contest and left me with the livestock knowledge that I use

on a daily basis in my own herd," Myers says.

Practicing and learning about livestock selection doesn't have to be a scheduled event.

"Always keep your ears and eyes open and be aware and listen to what they have to say and try to take some of that back with you. If you want, go up and ask the judge questions after a show. I know I definitely think this is a good idea and (as a judge) I never minded answering questions," Robinson suggests.

It's good to seek help before you get to the contest, because once there, there isn't anyone to look to.

"You don't have anybody there. You have to reason with yourself why you did what you did and then decide that your first impression was probably your best impression," Bradley recalls. "Don't pick something to pieces until you talk yourself out of something."

It can be complicated at times to make decisions while evaluating livestock, but it can still be an enjoyable learning process.

"Enter into that process (of judging) with complete objectivity and excitement. Consider it a new learning process that would help

considerably in public presentations, in decision-making and developing confidence in oneself," Crouch says.

"There's nothing like competition. That's why we love it," he adds. "There's nothing like the thrill of competition at a livestock judging event. Livestock judging is like a sports contest, just different principles are utilized. If a young man or woman enters into it with that thought in mind and that attitude, there is no end to what they can gain."

Bradley says judging isn't always easy, but it will help teach you important qualities.

"I'm thrilled we have so many young people coming on," she says. "It is a real challenge. It's a real individual deal, but everything is a team effort to a degree. At the same time, it is one of those things where you've got to be an individual and rely on yourself in judging or when you're out there showing a calf — or whatever it might be. It builds self-confidence in a person. If you have confidence and you feel good about yourself you can conquer lots of things that you didn't even think you could conquer."

