

Miss American ANGUS

National Junior Angus Association ambassador promotes the breed during her year of travel.

by Corinne Blender



PHOTO BY COURTNEY WIMMER

►The National Junior Angus Show is just one of the many appearances Miss American Angus is expected to make throughout her year as queen. While she is there she is not only responsible for handing out ribbons, but also for coordinating the representations made by other state Angus queens and princesses.



PHOTO BY CORINNE BLENDER

►Miss American Angus's role at the shows she attends during her year as queen is not limited to handing out ribbons and smiling for photographs. She also represents the Angus breed through showing and being knowledgeable about the many facets of the Angus industry.

Composed of a few brief words, the telegram reached the hands of the first Miss American Angus (MAA) while she was at her county fair. It notified her of her title after she had been named top American Angus Auxiliary scholarship winner. Today, a speech, a test, a question-and-answer session and a personal interview are also required of the five young ladies vying for a chance at the crown.

"Things have changed since 1968 when my mother was awarded the first-place scholarship. At that time, she received \$600 for first place and was automatically named National Angus Queen," Jill Harker says. Harker's mother, Sharon Sommers, was the first MAA.

Even though the requirements for becoming MAA have changed, the same principle the program based its roots in continues today. The MAA title continues to provide young women with the opportunity to promote the Angus breed and to be a role model for youth, 2002 MAA Cortney Hill-Dukehart says.

"The greatest strength of the Miss American Angus program is its heritage. It's developed tremendously over the last 33 years," Harker points out, following in her mother's footsteps as MAA in 1994. "It is still [part of] a scholarship program providing many opportunities to young women. It also offers youth who may not excel in the showing an opportunity to shine in another way."

Beef ambassadorship

MAA attends Angus shows and other livestock events coordinated by the American Angus Auxiliary. Ann Bell and her daughter, Christy Page, are the MAA committee co-chairwomen who make sure the competition and year of traveling for MAA runs smoothly.

"Most of the program is tradition, just enhanced over the years because of financial support," says Page, who was MAA in 1995. "The purpose of the program and the role Miss American Angus represents have and will basically remain the same. Just over time, the program has become more prestigious, more known and has allowed the individual to become more of a true speaking ambassador for the industry."

As a public figure, MAA has become more distinct as traditions are passed on.

"I was the first queen to wear the red jacket and black leather banner," Harker says. "I believe that the red jacket draws attention to Miss American Angus, distinguishing her from other queens. It gives the queen a classy, sophisticated look."

The red jacket and crown are not the only

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PHOTO COURTESY OF JILL HARKER

► Strong traditions and a rich heritage contribute to the professional representation made by Miss American Angus. The tradition was passed on from mother to daughter when Sharon (Harrold) Sommers, the first MAA in 1968, passed the crown on to her daughter, Jill (Sommers) Harker in 1994. Jill was also the first MAA to wear the red jacket that now distinguishes MAA from other queens.

trappings that follow tradition.

“Traditions have evolved over a number of years with new ones being added periodically,” Hill-Dukehart says. “A small black notebook has been passed from girl to girl since 1990, and each contributes her thoughts and tips, on a monthly basis, of particular events she has attended.

“It is interesting to read about the reactions to the weather in Denver, or the first trip to the East Coast for the Atlantic National,” she

continues. “For a number of years, each outgoing Miss American Angus has purchased the crown pin that is worn on the traditional red jacket. It is purchased from the same company and is the same model pin that is worn by Miss America.”

More than a figurehead

MAA’s appearance is not just a fashion statement.

“Very seldom are women judges seen in the showring, and young girls rarely see a woman in a position of authority or leadership,” Hill-Dukehart says. “The cattle industry is predominantly male-oriented, and Miss American Angus gives young girls an opportunity to see a female who is a representative of their industry.

“Miss American Angus isn’t just about wearing a crown and handing out ribbons; it isn’t just about smiling for pictures and posing with the champion heifer,” she continues.

“The greatest strength of the Miss American Angus program is its heritage.”

—Jill Harker

“Miss American Angus represents the largest beef registry in the world. Her job is to draw attention to the breed and be a voice and a spokesperson for the American Angus Association, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and the American Angus Auxiliary.”

The number of shows and events MAA attends has increased over the years. MAA is required to attend six events, including the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo., but she attends many others as well.

“Miss American Angus should epitomize the outstanding qualities of the American Angus Association,” says Lindsey Trosper, 1997 MAA. “To me, Miss American Angus is a symbol of the leadership and class possessed by the American Angus Association and demonstrated in the beef industry.”

No matter what audience MAA is before, her voice is as important on the junior-to-junior member level as it is on the public level.

“Miss American Angus’s primary role is being a role model. While the task of passing out awards was not really important, *how* I passed out the awards was,” Harker points out. “Many times I was able to give the kids an encouraging smile, word of congratulations or look of understanding. These are the most important responsibilities for Miss American Angus.”

Indeed, the role of MAA is not to be taken lightly. The MAA committee developed a code of conduct in 2000. Each year the top scholarship winners receive a copy of it before they make the decision to vie for the title. For many, representing the Angus breed as MAA is the bridge from youth to adulthood.

Tradition, heritage set standards for Miss American Angus

MAA Contest Inception

In 1980, the American Angus Auxiliary decided to form a separate contest for Miss American Angus (MAA). At this time, the top five scholarship winners were asked to compete in a contest for the title. This allowed those girls who were top scholarship winners but who did not want to perform the duties of MAA the option not to do so.

Trademark “red jacket”

The red jacket came about in 1994 when Jill (Sommers) Harker was queen. It has become the trademark of MAA and a great way to identify her at each of the shows. It definitely adds a very professional touch. There had been some different dress codes over the years, but the red jacket became a standard.

Mother-daughter duos who have served as Miss American Angus:

Sharon (Harrold) Sommers, 1968-69; and Jill (Sommers) Harker, 1994

Sisters who have served as Miss American Angus:

- Mary (Smith) McCurry, 1971-72; and Beverly (Smith) Everett, 1976-77
- Kathy (Votaw) Dubs, 1973-74; and Kerri (Votaw) Kliewer, 1977-78
- Lindsey Trosper, 1997; and Whitney Trosper, 2000

— Ann Bell
MAA committee co-chair

“The president of the American Angus Auxiliary when I served as Miss American Angus told me at the end of my reign that she felt she watched me change remarkably during that year,” Trospen says, recalling the comments of Renée Driscoll. “It really is a year of transformation and growth. The opportunity to travel and meet people combined with the first year of college truly creates this ‘new you’ — a more poised, mature, polished woman.”



How can you vie for the Miss American Angus crown?

The royalty competition takes place each November in conjunction with the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky.

The top five scholarship winners are automatically eligible to compete. The contest will be opened to the sixth-place scholarship winner, and others as needed, if any of the young ladies in the top five do not wish to vie for the title.

Competitors are challenged through four phases of competition:

- ▶ written test evaluating the contestant’s knowledge of the Angus breed and the beef industry;
- ▶ speech (5-7 minutes) on a topic provided;
- ▶ personal interview (20 minutes); and
- ▶ impromptu question answered before an audience.

“My advice to young women interested in one day competing in the Miss American Angus contest is to take advantage of the vast array of learning opportunities available to you as an NJAA member. Even if at first you’re nervous or apprehensive, it only makes you stronger and better,” 1997 MAA Lindsey Trospen advises. “Take time to mentor young Angus enthusiasts. Never miss out on opportunities to meet new people, because you create great friendships and learn a lot, too. And always stand up for your moral and ethical beliefs.”

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