



# A Long Journey

API's Cheryl Oxley is recognized for her contributions to the livestock publications industry.

by *Cara Bieroth*

It's 9:05 Tuesday morning, and all the troops at Angus Productions Inc. (API) are gathered around a sassy redhead as she calls on individuals to share their department's status for the *Angus Journal* currently in production. One of her tools for coordinating magazine production, these weekly meetings help Production/Advertising Manager Cheryl Oxley pinpoint potential problems early and keep everyone on track so production is smooth and efficient.

To lighten the mood and wrap up the session, the 24-year publishing veteran shares some light-hearted humor. Then, as 29 staffers shake their heads and chuckle a bit, Oxley sounds the charge: "Let's go be publishing people."

Noted for her work ethic, dedication, professionalism and contributions to others, Oxley was inducted into the Livestock Publications Council (LPC) Hall of Fame July 29 in Cleveland, Ohio, at the fifth annual Agricultural Publications Summit (APS). LPC is a nonprofit organization with a focus on providing information to ag publications to improve their overall effectiveness for both advertisers and readers.

## Indirect route

On a small, five-acre farm in Lee's Summit, Mo., Oxley's family always had a milk cow, a few hogs and a little bucket-fed calf. But as a 4-H member, her projects



primarily consisted of vegetables and sewing. She had little interest in an occupation in agriculture, yet she has become a driving force behind LPC and the *Angus Journal*.

Oxley grew up as the oldest of four children. "That's why I'm so bossy," she explains. She received a bachelor's degree in education from Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, Mo., where she was nominated "hardest working" by her peers. Certified to teach English and history, she taught English in suburban Kansas City, Mo., schools for

seven years before coming to the *Angus Journal*.

"I decided I needed to do something different," she says. "I really wasn't happy teaching school. I just kind of 'lucked' into this position."

Oxley came to the *Angus Journal* after the American Angus Association bought the magazine and moved it to Saint Joseph, Mo., from Webster City, Iowa, in 1979. The first issue was published under the new ownership in July of the same year, with Oxley on staff.

"My name is on that very first issue," she says. "And it's been on every issue since."

Oxley's strong will to succeed, organizational skills and attention to detail helped her advance in the organization.

"Cheryl is one of the most thorough and one of the most detailed and competent publication people I have ever known," says Association Executive Vice President John Crouch. She started out as a typesetter, back in

the days when type had to be set with chemicals and a large machine.

"I really kind of enjoyed that, and I was a pretty decent typist," she says, recalling the early days of her tenure at API. "I enjoyed making it all appear and come together."

Life was less than easy for Oxley, as she struggled to keep the hours of a typesetter while being a single mother to her daughter, Nancy.

"She was just starting grade school," Oxley

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says. "I was determined to do a good job. Back then we didn't have a time clock; you got paid the same no matter how many hours you worked. I would work a full day, then I would go home and feed her, bring her back here with some toys and books to play with, and I would set type until midnight. Nancy would sleep in one of those little sleeping bags on the floor among the file cabinets, and at midnight I would pick her up and take her home. It was a way of life for us. I had to do that to get it accomplished, and I did it a lot."

After three years of setting type, Oxley was promoted to production manager. Dale Runnion, who worked for the *Angus Journal* when it was still located in Iowa, was brought in as a consultant.

"It was obvious that this was a smart gal," Runnion says. "She was capable, confident and determined. When we had the vacancy, there was no question in my mind. I wasn't going to go looking for someone; I had someone right there in the office that could handle it."

In March 1982, Oxley's name first appeared in the masthead as production manager. She had no professional training in the production of a magazine, or even in journalism.

"Dale (Runnion) and his wife, June, lived here in Saint Joseph for six months," she recalls. "He taught me a lot about production of the magazine, how to page a magazine and how to improve the efficiencies of the production department. A lot of the basic things we do today were what we started then."

"But over the course of time, we have gotten rid of the waxer, the Exacto knife and the typesetting equipment, and we have gone to computers," she continues. "That was really a traumatic transition time for all of us. We had to give up what we knew and embrace a new technology."

The *Angus Journal* has in fact grown and advanced tremendously in the past 24

years with the growth of API and the introduction of the Special Services Department, which aims to help breeders market their cattle with sale books and advertisements; the Web Marketing Department; and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, which is focused toward commercial breeders.

"She has been the adhesive force in the book," Crouch says. "She has afforded a lot of continuity and a lot of stability in an area that, when we started, had quite a bit of turnover. In the early days it wasn't fun because nobody knew where we were going with the *Angus Journal*. We knew what we wanted to do; we wanted to make it the best publication in the business. Cheryl's attention to detail and her steadfast devotion to the cause and to the *Angus Journal* has really made it into the outstanding publication it is today."

Oxley describes herself as a behind-the-scenes person. "I manage the people who put all this together," she says. "They do the real work. My purpose is to keep them scheduled so we stay on time and get the magazine in the mail on time, which means I coordinate with the printer to have it done on time."

### Reaching beyond API

At API, Oxley was also given the opportunity to leave her mark on LPC during its formative years.

"We were new, and we needed to find out as much as possible about the magazine business," says Terry Cotton, general manager of the *Angus Journal*. "She was the most logical person to put into position to get us the most current knowledge of the printing industry."

Oxley agreed to fly to Oklahoma City, Okla., for the eighth annual meeting of LPC. The organization was in its early stages and consisted mainly of long lectures and dinners, she says.

"I was there on a production capacity to learn about production and printing." Then, one evening after the meetings were finished, everyone gathered in a big suite for a bull session, she recalls. "I was the little awkward gal, the new kid who barely knew what I was doing. I was mostly a listener."

As they began to discuss ways to improve the following year's meeting, Oxley piped in with some good ideas. "Because I had some ideas and was willing to express them, they surprised me in a couple of years and nominated me to be a director on the board, which was a huge step for me," she says.

Throughout the years, she held the offices of secretary-treasurer, second vice president and first vice president. Finally, after 13 years as a board member, she was elected president in 1996. "I remember taking the gavel off of the plaque I had been given and banging it on the table at that board meeting to get

everyone quieted down, and I said, 'I have wanted to do that for the longest time,' " she says. "That was the only time I ever hit the gavel."

Oxley has spent countless hours working and planning for LPC.

"Something that I really enjoyed was organizing and planning those meetings — working with the hotels, getting food figured out, and planning the off-site activities and fund-raisers," she says. "LPC meetings were a big part of what I've done."

### Mentoring

One of her most rewarding experiences within LPC was



► Cheryl Oxley (center left), API production/advertising manager, was inducted into the LPC Hall of Fame July 29 in Cleveland, Ohio. From left, Terry Cotton, API general manager; Shauna Hermel, *Angus Journal* and *Angus Beef Bulletin* editor; and Angie Denton, Web marketing director, celebrate with Oxley.



developing a mentor program, which gives LPC members the opportunity to mentor college journalism students.

"Students were not totally being prepared to come into the real business world," Oxley says. "They had all of the academics down pat, but as far as social skills, their résumés, the interviewing process and following up with thank-you notes, there were a lot of areas we felt needed polishing. So we put together the LPC Mentor Program. It functioned well for several years, and I think we influenced a lot of students."

Stacie Jacob was Oxley's protégé the year the program was initiated. Oxley made a close friend and a lasting impression.

"Cheryl played an instrumental role in helping me launch my career in agricultural communications," Jacob says. "She was a great listener and exposed me to various aspects of the ag communications business. She always made time for my questions, took time out of her busy workdays to chat regularly on the telephone, and arranged for me to meet many members of the *Angus Journal* and Angus Association. She has become a mentor for life."

Oxley has always had a talent for working with and making lasting impressions on students. In 1996, The Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) named her its Honored Professional. She was nominated by the University of Missouri (MU) chapter because of the work she had done with the LPC Mentor Program.

Although the mentor program has done some "shifting," Oxley continues to work with ACT. She presents lectures on social skills, the importance of handshakes, taking the initiative to introduce yourself and not being bashful.

"I have critiqued a lot of résumés, and we have done a lot of networking," she says. "Students always want to know how to do an interview."

Oxley says, "LPC gave me the opportunity to branch out and try some of those kinds of things, and it has been very rewarding. It's great to see the students come back around and be personable in professional settings. If you're going to pass the torch, you might as well pass it to one of those we have molded."

Working with students has also taught Oxley a number of lessons. "As I get older, the

## Denton wins service award

API Web marketing director earns industry honor.

by Crystal Albers

Angie Stump Denton, Web marketing director at Angus Productions Inc. (API), entered the banquet hall of the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel, July 29, ready for the annual Livestock Publications Council (LPC) awards banquet.

She had prepared for the evening's events — part of the Agricultural Publications Summit (APS) in Cleveland, Ohio — and had primed the award-winning students she oversees as chairwoman of the LPC Student Award Committee. Everything was accounted for, and all the students were in place. However, as Denton took her place at a table surrounded by rock 'n' roll decorations and familiar faces, she wasn't aware of the award she was about to receive.

Named after long-time LPC supporter and past president, the Ed Bible Distinguished Service Award was established in 1994 to recognize individuals who exhibit continued dedication to LPC. Candidates are considered for their committee work, sponsor solicitation, meeting planning, leadership and hard work — something that is more than familiar to Denton.

A native of Blue Rapids, Kan., Denton grew up raising Polled Herefords, but chose to work in the Angus industry after graduating from Kansas State University (K-State). She joined the API team as an assistant editor in 1996 and was named Web marketing director in 1999. Since joining API, Denton has spent the last six years on the LPC committee that chooses student nominees for the Forrest Bassford Student Award — the same award she won in 1995. She has spent the last four years serving as committee chairwoman and, for her dedication, received the 2003 Ed Bible Distinguished Service Award.



► Angie Denton (center), director of Web marketing at API, was presented with the Ed Bible Distinguished Service Award. Greg Henderson (left), editor of *Drovers*, and Terry Cotton, API general manager, made the presentation.

As Shauna Rose Hermel, editor of the *Angus Journal* and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, presented the last award of the night, she began describing the recipient. Denton's eyes filled with tears when she recognized that it was her.

"Receiving the award was a very unexpected honor," she says. "Growing up in the Hereford business and knowing Ed as a mentor and friend makes this award even more special."

As the youngest recipient to ever win the award, Denton says she is honored to be in the company of prior recipients, like API advertising/production manager Cheryl Oxley. She says, "They leave big shoes to fill."

age gap gets wider," she says. "And I have had to really adapt my thinking to be more accepting of younger people. So it's been a really good lesson in patience with them — to accept that they are younger, they have more ideas, they have new ideas, and they have energy and are ready to work."

Oxley has watched the LPC grow through the years, and she has been a major player in developing it into the organization that it is today. She has left an impression on a lot of people along the way.

"Cheryl has dedicated more time and effort to the LPC than any other individual in the group's 29-year history," says Todd Domer, Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) Vice President of Communications. "This organization would not have achieved the current level of popularity and professionalism without Cheryl Oxley. She has helped shape the face of the livestock publishing business. Many young women and men currently hold the positions of

editor, production manager or ad designer because Cheryl showed them it could be done in what was previously an industry dominated by middle-aged men. She provided guidance and leadership that helped usher in a new generation of livestock publishing talent."

"I am proud that I have left my mark on a lot of the LPC programs over the years," Oxley says. "And I'm proud that we have always gotten out the magazine, we have never missed an issue. It has just been an accomplishment to be a part of it, and to be associated with something that is so highly respected in the cattle industry."

"Twenty-four years is a long time to put into something, but it has been worth it because it is a great magazine, and I know what I do affects a lot of people," she says. "Not everybody gets to do that. Not everybody gets to touch that many lives in some small way."

