



President's Perspective

David Dal Porto

*Retiring President David Dal Porto shares insight on his tenure
on the American Angus Association Board of Directors.*

by Julie Mais, editor



Q: What motivated you to run for the board?

A: I'd always been interested in learning more how the Association worked and trying to give back. I served on local and state cattlemen's, water and school boards. I'd always enjoyed that kind of thing. I saw an opportunity to run for the Angus Board ... so I talked it over with my wife; we hashed it back and forth. I had her full support, and thought that this was a good time to go ahead and take a shot at it.

Q: What lessons learned growing up in the Angus Breed and professionally helped prepare you for your time on the Board?

A: I think probably more life experiences prepared me and having served on some other boards. I learned that in order to be a good board member and an active board member, you have to listen to what everybody has to say. You don't want to just listen to the people you agree with. I actually would like to talk and listen to people that might have a different opinion than me. Try to learn as much as you can about every subject that you're going to deal with, and then make your own decision up that you think is right.

And people are going to agree with you, and people are going to disagree with you, and that's part of what it is. But I think people respect you if they know that you've put in a lot of thought into it, and you've done what you think is best for the Association. You have to put everything else off. You have to put personal stuff off; what may impact friends, what may impact this or that, and do what you think is best for the membership of the Association.

Q: What were some of your goals going into your term as president?

A: We just hired a new CEO, Mark McCully, before I was elected. I thought that the Association was headed in a really good direction. I thought that our staff was headed in a good direction. I thought Mark was doing a great job with the Association with the culture, and the people that work there. All of the entity presidents, I thought, the ones that were in place and the ones that he was talking about, were going to be really, really valuable to the Association.

So my goal was to kind of keep us moving in a positive direction, to keep the communication channels open so that the membership knew everything that we were doing — that we weren't

trying to hide stuff, that there was no backroom stuff going on, that we tried to be completely transparent with the letters [following board meetings], or getting the agenda out before the meeting so everybody knew what we were going to do. Then just try and keep the membership informed, try to be available for anybody that wanted to talk to me, try to be involved, which meant more travel and more phone calls. If I was going to take that on for that year, I was going to do everything I could to make it a good year.

Q: Looking back on your tenure on the Board, what are some of the things you are most proud of?

A: One of the premier things we've done is we've got a CEO in place, that the Board has hired, that I think is going to lead this Association for a long, long time and keep us in the forefront. Everybody's coming at breed associations from every direction, and so they have to stay relevant. And I think the entire Board, our staff, our CEO, everybody wants to keep the American Angus Association relevant. I think the fact that we've embraced, and tried to be a leader in beef-on-dairy this last year, that some people would have us just run from it and ignore it, but we know it's coming, the genomics are coming, it's going to be part of the industry.

Also part of what I've pushed really hard in meetings all year long, is the value of a registration paper of an Angus bull or an Angus cow. They're not just a black one. They're not just an Angus. That American Angus Association registration paper, and everything that comes with it, I think is the key to our success, and we can't lose sight of that. And I don't think the Board has. I don't think anybody has. Throughout the Association, that's where the value is. And that's where we're a leader in the beef business.

Q: What have been some of the board's priorities?

A: Transparency — I think it's important that everything we do that we can, that's not personnel related that has to be kept confidential, we get it out. We get it to our Association membership. We ask for their input. Another priority is that we wanted to continue commercial programs and AngusLinkSM, which was a controversial decision when we purchased that ... and it was a very close Board vote.

It was about as close as it gets; but once a decision was

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made, everybody got together and got on board, and we've had some ebbs and flows, and we've had a little bit of a crooked road — but I think everybody's pulling in the same direction now. I think it's a program that has a lot to offer the commercial cattlemen and the beef business, and we're seeing that grow by leaps and bounds. Our staff is doing a great job with that.

A big priority for us is to get that self-sustainable, so that it's paying for itself and actually making money; and we've pushed real hard in that, and that's been important to me. We've gotten that done. I could go down entity by entity — the progress that Brett Spader made with API is just amazing, from people being able to have a lot more input in their own sale [books], and the cost-cutting measures he's done for our Association members so that they'll use API Services for their sale [books], and probably the premier print publication, I would think, in the beef business, and that's showing up in advertising.

Our regional manager staff's great, to keep those guys enthused, and they are, and the job they do. So there's lots and lots of things going on all the time, so I hate to prioritize one over the other, but in general, so that we're always moving forward in a positive direction. And if we're not, figure out why we're not, and fix it.

Q: What do you see as some of the challenges for the Association in the future?

A: The American Angus Association, and all breed associations, will be challenged by outside factors, whether it's genomic companies wanting to do EPDs (expected progeny differences), or whether it's individual breeders getting together, wanting to do EPDs. We have the largest genomic base in the industry: we're over a million now, and going to continue to grow. So to leverage that, to stay a leader in this business, to not run from anything, not hide from anything, embrace the genomics, embrace, like we said, what we did on beef-on-dairy, and all the new technology.

In the next five years, we'll probably see technology that'll blow by everything that's happened in the last 15 or 20 years. So there's a lot of surprises to come, but there's a lot of positives to come. I think the Association's well-suited to meet those challenges, and to be a leader, and to stay a leader.

Q: What do you see as the Angus breed's opportunities?

A: We've got about 70 or 75% market share now, and everybody thinks that's mature market share. And how

do you grow that? I think we have the ability to grow that even further. The Angus bull can offer you the maternal side, it can offer you the terminal side. We can make this breed do everything the industry needs.

Now, other breeds are obviously going to argue with that, and I would expect them to, but I think we have the tools, and so I think we have opportunities to be a leader to improve our market share, to figure out how Angus cattle can be straight-bred, but also use them as terminal cross cattle, and F1 cross cattle with other breeds.

The biggest worry that I think everybody has, and that's what drives everybody every day, is you can't get complacent ... It's not like we're at the top and we're done. We still have a lot of opportunity. It'll be exciting.

Q: What part of raising Angus cattle do you most enjoy?

A: I enjoy mating the cows to the bulls that I've done research on, that I think are going to improve where that cow needs to be improved and accentuate the positives she has. And then I really like calving season. I like seeing that mating hit the ground. That's a great time of year for me. You have to enjoy it all. I like the bull sales. I like selling bulls. I like everything we do, but those two things are tied together. But boy, they're nine months apart, and it takes a while to get there. But I really enjoy that.

Q: How do you want to be remembered as president of the Association?

A: I don't want to be remembered as anything special. I want to be remembered as a guy that did the best he could do with what he knew, and got along with people, tried to get everybody to pull into the same direction, try to do what's best for the Association, treat people fairly, and that's it. I don't want any more than that.

Q: What's the value of being a member of an Association vs. doing it on your own?

A: The value of being a member of the American Angus Association is the value of that registration paper that you can get. The depth of our database, that's second to none, whether it's genomics, weaning weights, yearling weights, ultrasound. Anything that we have to offer, I think those are things that are valuable. And there's so many tools that being a member of the American Angus Association, that are offered to you, that you can use in your business, that you can't get anywhere else.

Other people can offer this kind of data or these kinds of EPDs or lots of different things that aren't based in

the same kind of reality and in this same kind of history and data that the American Angus Association has to offer. So there's some people that don't want to do it and don't believe in it, and that's their choice. But I think most people who take it seriously and use the Association to their benefit are successful.

Q: What would you like to share with the membership?

A: It's been a pleasure to be able to be on the Board of Directors, be an officer and be president of the Association. I'll go away quietly and won't bother anybody and go back to ranching. I don't know where they're going to start me. I might have to start at the bottom, fixing fence or cleaning water troughs. I'm not sure, but I've really enjoyed it. But I'm looking forward to moving on with the next chapter.

Q: What will you miss the most?

A: The people. I'll miss the people. I'll miss kind of knowing what's going on before everybody else does ... I've got a pretty good idea of everything that's going on with every facet in the Association and I've enjoyed that, and I'll miss that. But at the same time, I've served my time in it, and we've got a great group of officers coming in, and new Board members, and I'm excited for them, and they'll take this Association in the direction that they see is best. And I'll continue to be involved as much as I can in the Association. And I'm excited about both those things. **AJ**

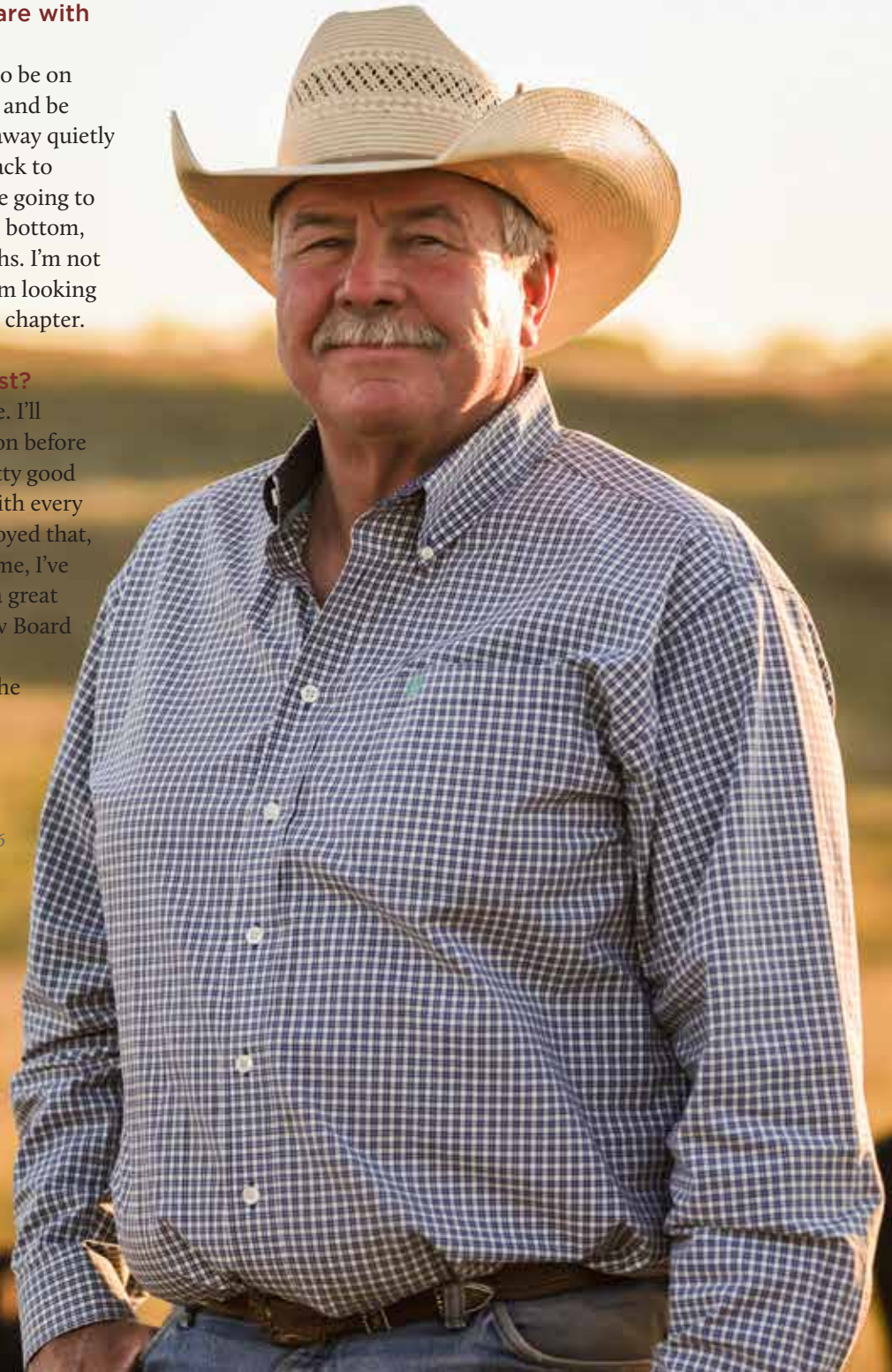
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- David Dal Porto



Peer Review

David Dal Porto's fellow Board members share their thoughts on his role as a leader of the American Angus Association.

Dave has the unique ability to prioritize what is truly most important to our membership and breed. He makes certain that every opinion is heard and that every item of business or issue is thoroughly examined and discussed before any conclusions are drawn. He gives countless hours to the Association to make sure members benefit from being part of the best breed association in the world. — Smitty Lamb

David is a good leader because he is very levelheaded and thinks things through before he speaks. He tends to have a calming effect, and you get the feeling all will be OK when David is at the helm. However, he is not afraid to make a hard decision when circumstances dictate something needs to be done. I will miss his steady hand as a fellow Board member. — Jerry Connealy

David has done an excellent job navigating the American Angus Association through a difficult year with COVID-19 restrictions and other issues. He understands the cattle business from calf to plate as well as production cattle and show ring cattle. He understands the value of carcass traits and their value to our CAB (*Certified Angus Beef*[®]) brand. He also understands the needs of those with production cattle and show ring cattle as well as the needs of the member with 10 head and those that make their living on Angus cattle and their progeny.

David's broad understanding of the Angus cattle business has been a big benefit to all of us in his role as board member and president. — Barry Pollard

David has been a real pleasure to work with for many reasons. His upbeat, optimistic attitude and his willingness to listen to all sides of an issue, is much appreciated by all. David

is sure to ask for and get everyone's opinion. David has helped me as a Board member for making me realize that all opinions are important, even when you are on the losing side of an issue. David has shown unwavering conviction in moving the Association forward to the betterment of the entire membership. — Dave Hinman

David is one of the most gifted decision-makers that I have had the opportunity to ever work with on a board. He has an uncanny ability to draw on his vast life experiences combined with a heap of good old-fashioned common sense to make decisions that are fundamentally sound mixed with a tremendous amount of wisdom. The American Angus Association was both blessed and fortunate to have David make decisions during a very critical time in its history. — Don Schiefelbein

It was truly a pleasure to serve on the Board with David. He came onto the Board at not the best of times as there was a lot of controversy going on, and he was being pushed to make a quick decision about what was going on. This was where I saw David stand firm until he had a chance to review all the facts and make his own decisions. This was what we always saw in David — he would listen to all parties, weigh what they had to say, but in the end he always made his own decision. David was always willing to share his reasons for why he thought it should be that way. We never had to wonder where he stood on various issues, and he was always a straight shooter.

David loved a good joke or even a good prank. David was a steady leader that worked hard to help keep everyone involved and headed in the right direction. His calm demeanor was always a big help in the boardroom and helped us accomplish a great deal while I was president. Even though I continually gave him fits about his "close friend," Nancy Pelosi, he took it in stride and told me some day he would get even. The American Angus Association is lucky to have had him as a Board member and president. He has worked to make the Association a better place. — John Pfeiffer

I have very much enjoyed serving our membership and Association with David and under his leadership. He is very measured and thoughtful in his leadership style. He always asked for and allowed time for input from fellow Board members.

David served our Association during his time on the Board under some difficult and transitional times. He did so with a steady hand, and always with the longtime health of our Association and its membership in mind.

— Richard Dyar

David has provided strong and effective leadership during his tenure on the Board. Regardless of the issue under consideration, you always knew his position in the debate. Ultimately, David's vote would be cast for the benefit of the membership and the long-term success of the Angus breed. Even though we came from vastly different parts of the country, we shared several similar experiences in the Angus industry which usually led us to similar opinions on most issues. It was a pleasure to serve on the Board with David and see him fill the role of president of the American Angus Association.

— John Grimes

David has been very thoughtful and deliberate in guiding the Board in some tough decisions. His leadership and insightfulness has been invaluable not only this year, but also for his full tenure as a director.

— Mike McCravy

As president, David wanted to do what was right, what was best for Angus. There were certain challenges and some decisions could have caved to the way it's always been. Instead of kicking the can down the road one more time, David tactfully promoted resolve. Angus has a big future and his leadership better positioned us moving forward.

Under his leadership, we proudly balanced the Association budget. That was desperately overdue, not an easy decision, but the correct one to make.

— Darrell Stevenson

