

A Century of Service:



by The Rev. Robert C. Snyder

The Personality of a Lusty Centenarian

It is great to be here with you, great because we are gathered to celebrate as a body, and what a body! A body with the wisdom of 100 years, a body with all the frame, vigor, muscle and vitality of a 2-year-old virgin Angus bull set loose in his first pasture. Just like him, we are gathered to be set loose to fulfill the hopes and dreams of the men who brought us to this moment.

My own roots go back to the days of the Chicago stockyards when our association had its headquarters there. My earliest days were filled with the sights and sounds and yes, the smell. But what gave the place its real distinctive flavor was the aroma bubbling up from a stew pot of three savory ingredients—the daily Drovers Journal, the headquarters of America's best beef breed, and the home of the International Livestock Exposition.

How many of you here ever attended an International? What a thrill it was! But let's remember that it was the Angus breed which made the International famous, not the other way around. One of my earliest memories of the International was being taken through the stalls by an old-time staff member of the Drovers Journal. I guess I must have been eight or nine. As we stood looking in awe at what was no doubt the best bull at the show, my guide said to me, "Bobby, when every bull in America looks like that fellow, there will be a prime sirloin on every plate in the land." (You must remember that was a very long time ago!) And that's as penetrating a vision of the Angus advance as I've ever heard.

The Drovers Journal has been for us kind of a seed stock producer. Did you know that many of the most effective leaders of the Angus advance got their basic training at the Corn Cob Dailiesmen such as Frank Richards, Lloyd Miller, Bill Roche, Keith Evans, Veryl Jones Dale Runnion, LeRoy VanDyke, Dale Baird, Ham James, Paul Good, Ray Roth, Bill Powell,

Lyle Springer, and on and on. Perhaps what helped most to give them a boost at the Drovers Journal was the discovery that they were just as important as the man who hired them. They discovered that they had profound influence over where the action was—in pens and pastures where heavy decisions were made about a breed's future. They discovered they were movers and shakers in the cattle business.

With such roots, I hope you can understand why I am so happy to gather with you to celebrate the birth of a living organism—the body we call American Angus Assn. For our Angus association is a body, an organism in which individuals are bonded as companions, as compadres with a common purpose.

What is our purpose? There is only one and you know it well. To promote the best interests of the Angus breed. That is really all there is. It is written that way in our charter. Be solemnly assured that our Association's purpose is distinctive. We are not bonded into a fellowship to promote the best interests of the owners, or each other, but the best interests of the breed itself. And because the breed comes first, the interest of the cells of the body are needed to nourish it and help it gain strength. And that is why breeders who have taken more from the breed than they have given have never been able to meet the test of time.

It is time that will test our confidence. Strengthened by the potency of our purpose we can walk in confidence as long as we walk with eyes wide open, alert to whatever is coming. We're always something like my friend, Willie Joe. Willie Joe's wife had takin' to reading a great deal lately, but it didn't really worry him a great deal until one morning last month. When he came downstairs that day he noticed a booklet on a reading stand. The title was, "How To Be A Successful Widow." Willie Joe picked it up and walked out in the breakfast nook



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The Rev. Robert Snyder of Neosho, Mo., opened the Angus Horizons Conference held Sept. 17 in St. Joseph with a centennial review of the association and the breed. Much of Snyder's knowledge comes first hand since he was an American Angus Assn. staff member for 20 years before leaving to join the ministry in 1978. We hope our readers enjoy his presentation as much as did those attending the conference.



and blurted out, "Minnie Bell, why in the heck are you reading this?" And she blurted right back, "Never you mind Willie Joe, just eat your grits and never mind how they taste." Well, ever since that day, Willie Joe has been walking alert, with his eyes wide open.

Because our Association is an alert body we should ask, "What's the personality of this lusty centenarian, what are the traits of this venerable and vigorous sire who is 100 years young? Is he wide-eyed and ready for all pretenders of the promise of his progress yet unborn? Three traits leap to mind—he is persistent, he is committed, he is courageous. He wants the best in the next 100 years because he has already experienced the best in the last 100. It is because he has been the best that he is something like three alert umpires. After the World Series one year these guys were discussing their calling. The first was persistent and he said, "I calls 'urn as I sees 'urn." The second was committed and he said, "Well, I'll tell ya, I calls 'um as they is." The third was courageous and he told them, "They ain't nothin' until I call 'urn."

Such is the decision-making force of movers and shakers. If our lusty Association is to continue to be a mover and shaker, we need to ask, how did this stud bull get this way? On a cold and windy night in an upper room at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Chicago, on November 21, 1883, a group of persistent, committed, and courageous Angus owners met for the conception. There was nothing artificial about the union. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for grit and gumption to combine and conceive our being.

Every man makes history, only great men write it. Men of persistence, commitment, and courage are the men who have written Angus history. They are the ones who have created the image and the personality of the prepotent stud bull we call the Association. They are writing Angus

history now. They are the ones who will continue to write it. I want you to look at the breeder sitting next to you right now. You may stand in awe at his next calf crop, for he will be writing true history. True history begins in our hearts, hearts filled with persistence, commitment, and courage to breed better baby blacks.

The growth of our baby black was amazing. By the time he was ready to cross the scales at 12 months of age his future growth potential was being revealed. For at the first annual meeting (November 1884), membership had doubled and almost half the members were on hand to hear good results. The bank balance was \$651.00! Eighteen months later, the first Herd Book was published. Now you know, and I know, that if there is to be long-term genetic improvement we need Herd Books as a record of pure blood. Even the most dreamy-eyed composers of symphonies praising one-trait mongrels knows that like begets like only if blood is pure. Our founders are the ones who recall us to our

destiny. Purity of blood is part and parcel of uniform calf crops.

When our first secretary, Charles Gudgel, of Independence, Mo., resigned in 1888, our Association's directors began a process they were to repeat eight times. They faced the task of naming a man to be the leader of the day-to-day operations and carry out the policies of the board. What blessings we have received. The men we have selected for this awesome responsibility have been men of persistence, commitment, and courage. Thomas McFarland, secretary for 20 years, began maintaining records in his home at Iowa City, Iowa, and by the time the offices were moved to Chicago in 1907 membership had grown to 1,200.

Our lusty sire was headed for better things, but first he would have to swim through rough waters. His career had been launched on a riptide. On the plus side was the amazing record of Angus in the show ring. Stanley Pierce of Creston, Ill., won everlasting fame by showing his steer "Advance" as the grand champion at the first

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International in 1900. In coming years Angus and their crosses would capture 75 percent of the interbreed steer awards at that classic event. Angus and Angus crosses established our breed's reputation for the highest market value. Authentic records proved that Blacks commanded the top market price at the nation's four leading central markets 70 percent of the time.

On the negative side was our political system. It allowed proxy votes at the annual meeting. Sometimes as few as three members held a majority. This system rattled the bones of the beast we honor and the dissension caused by that proxy system nearly put our young sire asunder. At the stormy 1923 annual meeting the group who called themselves the "Progressives" elected their leader as president. He was Judge Sam C. Fullerton of Miami, Okla., a real Sooner-Boomer of our heritage.

Progressives favored the delegate system that we know so well today. The regular officers, as might be expected, fought these moves tooth and toenail. The issue went to court under the persistent, committed, and courageous leadership of Judge Fullerton. The result you do know well. Our democratic process was declared legal by the Supreme Court of Illinois in 1924. Secretary Charles Gray was the victim, swept away in the riptide of the proxy system.

Like our nation, our lusty bull rose up with new bones on which to hang new muscle as he emerged from the desert dust of the depression. Through it all, W.H. Tomhave served as secretary. . . longer than any man before him or since. When he retired in 1946, the directors turned to Frank Richards.

Frank had the persistence, commitment, and courage to draw out of the well of the past the freshest water needed for the present-water to irrigate the furrows of the future. Under his guidance the word was go, not whoa. Office work was speeded up and a hard hitting advertising and public relations program added potency with the creativity of the Barger brothers and Frank Murphy. Then a kind of skyrocket burst in the beef industry when our junior activities department was ignited under the leadership of Dean Hurlbut. Its sparks still cast a glow which shines through the enthusiasm of our youngsters.

By 1956 the Association moved into the splendid homestead that you visited here in St. Joseph. And soon an effective staff of fieldmen roamed all across the landmen like Jess Cooper, Milt Miller, Lyle Harling, Vern Kerchberger and Bill Roche, each able and willing to promote the best interests of the breed. It was under Franks leadership that the foundations of the Angus Herd Improvement Record program were laid, another first for Angus. It is still recognized as the standard of the beef industry, and I believe it will continue to be just that, as long as the program works for the members rather than the reverse. By the time Glen Bratcher became secretary

in 1963 the bones which rose up in the 20s had the capacity and the substance for more stretch and muscle. It was time to enlarge the headquarters building.

Then in 1969 representatives from all over the globe gathered at Sydney, Australia, to set the cornerstone of the World Aberdeen-Angus Secretariat. What a thrill it was for me to be a part of that conception. We invited the delegates to meet at the World Angus Forum in Kansas City in 1973, a highlight of the faithful and dedicated leadership of Lloyd Miller who served as secretary from 1968 to 1978.

A new tune was written for the future during Miller's turn at the secretary's keyboard. The tune was written in a new key, too. The key of A-sharp-"A" for artificial, "sharp" was the necessity of energetic minds who could make it work for themselves and the best interests of the breed. Wide opened A.I. put breeding programs on power take-off, put new pressure on selection decisions, and while all this was going on plans were made for recording embryo transplant calves. Their impact on our history is being written this very moment.

I believe that whatever progress has been made has come by the grace of the Almighty. In case you are wondering about a better definition of God's grace, let me give you the true meaning as it's experienced down in the Ozarks. For us down there, grace is what happens to a bootlegger when he discovers he has been living in a wet county for 20 years.

In Dr. C.K. Allen's tenure as executive vice president, (new title, same ole job) we gained a new muscular arm, the Angus Journal. The Angus Journal lets the world know that Angus are not only popular, not only a challenge to our ingenuity as breeders, but also that Angus cattle give investors from all walks of life the best opportunity for prestige, pleasure, and profit. In Allen's years as secretary, the Association's potency began to influence the buying habits of consumers. This came about when we launched our Certified Angus Beef program under the guidance of Mick Colvin.

Today, with the reins of leadership in the sensitive and sensible hands of Dick Spader, our body we call the Association sits tall in the saddle.

If this stud bull (the Association) could speak to us now, what would he say? I believe he would speak this way, "I am proud of where I came from, of who I am, and where I am going. And each of you should be proud to share in my heritage, in my homestead, in my future. You ask this centenarian what I have left in me after so much experience in so many pastures? Solemnly, I say to you, first, I still have work to do, songs to sing, and melodies to play, but you must gather together to write the tunes and compose the words, and you must give me the instruments to make it a symphony of lasting progress. Second,

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I am an optimist because I have faith in you and I trust my own pure blood. I have confidence in your creativity, in your courage to make things happen, in your commitment to shape old bones so they can carry new flesh. Third, my strength is service to the wholeness of the beef industry and the nutriment of all Americans. This is my job. My hope is that you will give me the freedom to do it, that you will feed me and keep me healthy. I will never rest on glory past, but ever seek green pastures wherein lie the riches of the Angus advance. Together we will share in the victory of our dreams. Dreams always come true for those of persistence, commitment, and courage.”

Men willing to sacrifice and pay the price to make their dreams come true have been the lifeblood of our breed. Investing hours and days and weeks and months and yes, even years, to build local, state and national associations. Men willing to serve as directors and officers. Without such volunteer effort there would be no Angus breed as we know it this day.

Wouldn't it be grand if all those hundreds who have served could stand right up here and hear our cheers for what they have done. Well, let's do it this way. Right now we have with us a dozen or so past presidents and a pair of former executive officers, so let's get them out here, let's see the men who dream dreams and then pay the price to make them come true. I will introduce them individually, but let's hold our applause until we have made them known as the representatives of every person who has ever served an Angus group in the past 100 years and here they come: First, our former executive officers, C.K. Allen from 1978-1980; Lloyd Miller from 1968-1978. And here is our parade of past presidents, Charles Cannon, 1982; Myron Woofever, 1981; Dave Pingrey, 1980; Gilman Stewart, 1978; Richard Bell, 1977; Roy Meyer, 1976; Sam C. Fullerton, III, 1974; Robert O. Swaim, 1973; Kenneth Moore, 1972; George W. Graham, 1962; H. Dick Nobis, 1968; Joe Kefauver, 1960; and Lewis B. Pierce, 1959. With gratitude let these be for us the whole parade of the Angus advance. And with exuberance I do bid you to stand and let's give them a round of three cheers.

Wow! We've cheered and chewed on the past, but the day is now, and tomorrow is only a few heartbeats away. On this day of celebration let's take a deeper look at the present and the future. For this 100th anniversary celebration a penetrating motion picture has been produced. Produced for the whole world, to answer a big question. The question is "What's it really like to be a breeder of registered Angus?" As we absorb the film at this world premier we'll discover the answers as we see and hear Angus breeders themselves tell their own stories from the depths of their own heart. So right now, let the good times roll as we take part in, "The Good Life-Breeding Registered Angus.”

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