

This Ag Agent Chose to Keep His Children

by Lori Riffel



"I haven't missed the Louisiana State Fair since 1931, but one time, and that was in 1933," says C.L. "Lesley" Flowers, a veteran county agent and current secretary-treasurer of the Louisiana Angus Assn.

"It was during the Depression and I had to lay out of college that year (he received his bachelor's degree in animal science from Louisiana State University)," says Flowers who resides in Baton Rouge. But he's been to every one since. In 1934, he went to the State Fair on a freight train with two horses.

After that year, Flowers has been a part of the many livestock exhibits on behalf of his club members, the Louisiana Angus Assn. and the Louisiana Cattlemen's Assn.

Flowers has dedicated his life to the youth of Louisiana; a dedication he and his wife Naomi have enjoyed immensely. The Flowers had no children of their own.

His career of 37 years centered around people as the work of extension agents is totally a "people business." Flowers has gone through two generations of families and is well into his third with junior projects. He and Naomi were often adopted as additional parents, but gave an extra amount of care as advisors to hundreds of 4-H Club members.

Flowers is a man that is softly encouraging, conveys enthusiasm and gave and still does give much of himself so that a young person may have the chance to gain responsibility, experience winning, losing and have the chance to travel and meet other fellow 4-Hers.

Once Flowers had his own land and cattle he encouraged even more 4-Hers to take on a livestock project. He began by getting his brothers' four children involved in showing steers and lambs. Among their 4-H years, they had a class winner in the steer show at the Chicago International. Flowers more often than not gave a steer or lamb of his own to these children to make their start. After his brother's children had grown up, it

Four-H Club work and junior activities has been Lesley Flowers' life. He's been active in working with adults as a county agent, but he's always had the junior program first in mind.
—Wayne Wyble, Opelousas, La., and board member of the American Angus Assn.

wasn't long until Flowers had the neighbors children involved.

"Their oldest child was a boy and I asked him if he'd like to have a club project," says Flowers. "The first year I gave him a lamb. He raised him and showed and sold him at the 4-H show. When he got his money he asked me what he should do with it—if it was supposed to be mine and I told him, 'Charlie, I gave you that lamb and there weren't any strings attached.'"

Flowers also gave him his first steer. Later, Charlie also showed some of Flower's registered Angus in 4-H shows.

Lesley and Naomi Flowers have worked as a team for many years, each one complimenting the other. Lesley working with the livestock and Naomi working as a 4-H leader help-

ing club members with their records. Lesley and Naomi says, "all that we've done for the children we feel like we have really been well paid in return."

Lesley Flowers was first an assistant county agent and assistants were often put in charge of the 4-H program. Flowers was then promoted to agriculture agent, but refused to give up his youth duties. Agriculture agents are usually put in charge of crop and livestock management for area farmers.

"I stayed with the children all the way through," says Flowers. "Some of the agents didn't like it as well, thinking I ought to have given up some of the youth work, but I didn't." Four-H Club work meant genuine enjoyment to Flowers, especially the livestock end of it, he notes.

Flowers joined the LSU Extension Service as assistant county agent of DeSoto Parish in 1937. In 1940, he moved to Claiborne Parish as a county agent and continued his success with youth work in 4-H livestock programs. He was appointed marketing specialist with Extension at its state office in Baton Rouge in 1944.

Flowers became county agent of West Feliciana Parish in 1946 and developed its junior livestock program into one of the best in the state. West Feliciana Parish had the best parish group of beef animals at the State Fair of Shreveport for 10 straight years.

But Flowers is quick to point out there are three vital parts to a successful junior project.

"In extension and in junior Angus work, I find for the livestock projects

that you've got to have three parties involved," he says. "You must have the interest of the child, the interest of the parents, and the interest of the agent/advisor to work with them and it can be a successful project for all."

Flowers officially retired in 1972, but there was no way he could cut loose from his lifelong career of helping youth. He has voluntarily continued to work with the Louisiana 4-H and livestock programs and is involved in other organizations.

The LSU Livestock Show, the 4-H Short Course and the 4-H Foundation (of which he is on the board of directors) are some of these organizations. In 1984, Lesley and Naomi were named recipients of the Ruby Clover awards, awards presented to contributors of more than \$10,000 to the Louisiana 4-H Foundation Fund.

When Flowers became the county agent in active livestock parishes, he also got his exposure to Angus cattle, plus the fact that Naomi came from an Angus family and provided partial influence to Angus cattle.

"One of the 4-H parents in the West Feliciana parish gave us two Angus heifers," says Flowers. "That was the beginning of our Angus herd." From there the Flowers built up their herd and now maintain 40 head of brood cows. Lesley and Naomi became members of the American Angus Assn. in 1953.

Flowers acquired the necessary land for his herd in a year's time in 1953 and 1954. Twenty years later Flowers was being crowded with developing subdivisions. So he made a deal with the development owners. He traded 14 acres on the edge of Baton Rouge for 105 acres eight miles down the Mississippi River.

Flowers gradually became involved in the Louisiana Angus Assn. as his herd grew. He served on the board of directors before he retired from extension and when he retired he then served two years as president of the Louisiana Angus Assn. That next year he was the sale manager of the Alexandria Bull Sale and soon thereafter accepted the position of secretary-treasurer.

He has seen many seasons of shows, sales and meetings. In January of each year is the annual bull sale and in February is the LSU Livestock Show at Baton Rouge. The junior Angus show there is exceptionally strong as each year it brags of over 100 head. The year continues on typically of any state Angus association with district shows, field days, the State Fair, breeder and bull test sales, coor-



Naomi and Lesley Flowers have worked together over the past 48 years, giving greater opportunities to youth.

dinating the directory and the annual meeting.

Once in extension, always involved

Flowers has always just seemed to 'fall' into active involvement in organizations, because of his natural knack to be involved. Along with all of his 4-H commitments, he has also been consistently associated with the Louisiana Cattlemen's Assn.

He served as the LCA president in 1973-74 and has been the secretary of the local cattlemen's association

Mr. Flowers is a man of dedication. He doesn't ever quit working and he never misses an event. He is Louisiana's 'Mr. Angus.'

—G.P. McMichaels, president,
Louisiana Angus Assn.

since 1952. In 1979, he was named Louisiana Cattleman of the Year.

Flowers is also a member of the Farm Bureau organization and was president of the local membership from 1978 to 1980 and is a committee member of the livestock advisory committee.

Chef, too

For many years, Lesley Flowers, under the watchful eye of master

barbecue king, Albert Steinbach, provided food for the East Baton Rouge Parish 4-H Club members at parish activities. Flowers received his instructions and training from Steinbach, who always said, "if you cook a good meal—you make a lot of people happy; if you go hunting or fishing you come back tired and you've only made one person happy." Flowers has managed the time to prepare the

meal for the annual meeting of the Louisiana Angus Assn., which follows the LSU Junior Livestock Show.

"I do it because it's hard to get an exact count of people and I want to accommodate everyone," says Flowers. "I can cook and fix it a lot cheaper and the juniors can afford to attend."

He fixes barbecue filets, his special cajun baked beans, salad, ice cream and *always* Oreo cookies, Flowers' lifetime dessert favorite. He not only serves up this menu for the Angus group but

for his local cattlemen's association and last year he served 250 people of the National Beefmasters Assn. at a meeting in Baton Rouge.

Flowers takes a sincere interest in his state Angus breeders and has represented them at every American Angus Assn. annual meeting since taking on the secretary-treasurer's position. Last fall he travelled to St. Joseph and was a part of the "Ideas '85" leadership conference.

And no matter what Angus event, Lesley Flowers is there with the Louisiana Angus booth—always featuring coffee.

"I tell them it's Angus coffee. It's better if it's black," he says. "Black is beautiful, but they cross good with anything."

Naomi can concede that Lesley keeps plenty of "irons in the fire" and she, along with him, thrives on the activities. But a mention of him slowing down, just brings an urge to do more, especially where youth are concerned.

He says this of his years of working with youth, "It's been really rewarding to see club members that I've helped along through projects and what they are doing now in life. Some still come to me and ask for advice." AJ