

# Angus Stakes

by Shauna Rose Hermel, editor



## If it doesn't make sense, maybe it shouldn't

I can't remember how old I was, but I remember that ride home from Christmas shopping in Quincy, Ill. I was young enough that Quincy seemed like an awfully big city, and it was a special occasion to go shopping, especially with the whole family.

Somehow, Mom and Dad slipped a present to the gift wrappers at Bergners Department Store without my seeing what it was. It was a big box, and it had my name on it. Besides having to wait till Christmas to open it, I had to sit in the back seat of the car beside that big box for the hour-long drive home.

Patience is still not one of my strong suits, but I'm a lot more patient now than I was at that age. And parents can only say, "You'll have to wait for Christmas," for so long.

Mom and Dad finally wore down and gave me an answer:

"It's a rocking horse."

**Now, I was too old** for rocking horses. And it really didn't seem like the kind of present "Mom and Dad Practical" would buy for me. And if they thought a toy horse would stop me from asking for the real thing, well, they had another think coming.

Surely they wouldn't buy me a rocking horse for Christmas!

**On the other hand**, the rectangular box was about the right size to contain your typical rocking horse. Mom and Dad were sticking by their story, too. It was their gift to me, so I really couldn't complain; I should be happy with whatever it was. Who knows, it might be a really neat rocking horse.

By the time we got home, I was pretty well convinced they had bought me a rocking horse, and I was all out of arguments to the contrary. But it still made no sense whatsoever.

I was in for a surprise Christmas morning. I got the saddlebags instead of the horse. Mom and Dad had gotten me a four-piece set of luggage — each suitcase neatly packed inside its larger counterpart. (Guess they already knew at that stage that I was bound to spend a good share of my life on the road!)

**At times an animal's packaging** — its phenotype and accompanying sales pitch — can be just as deceptive as that Christmas wrap.

We've all had a calf that just didn't have a

right to be as good as it looked. It's natural to try to find ways to justify it. The thing is, I can't remember one that actually turned out to be a herd cornerstone.

Even though it didn't make sense that my Christmas package contained a rocking horse, I talked myself into believing that's what it was because I didn't have any proof otherwise, and the package looked the part.

With genetics, we do have proof otherwise — expected progeny differences (EPDs). No doubt, those with high accuracy are most reliable. They've been proven.

But interim EPDs give insight into what the producer was trying to achieve. A look at the EPDs of the sire and dam — and even those of the grandsires and granddams — points out how much room for variability there might be.

That's not to say there aren't flukes out there. Still, if I'm going to bet the farm on a herd sire, I'm sure not going to bet on the basis of the wrapper.

Take a breather ...

Hope you're enjoying this break from the sale-book season. Maybe it will give you a chance to go back and read some of those features you didn't get to read in the September, October and November issues.

I wish we'd had a couple more sale books this month. We always seem to have more information than space this time of year.

Let's keep 'em practical ...

Some of the heifers shown this fall were just plain too fat. Research has shown that getting heifers too fat impairs future milking ability. Why take a quality heifer and ruin her productivity? It didn't seem to fool the judges.

Merry Christmas ...

Take time for church and family this Christmas.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Shauna".

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### Foundation Heifer Package sells Jan. 13

Davis Polly 8506, a January 1998 daughter of DHD Traveler 6807, will highlight the 2000 Angus Foundation Heifer Package. Bred to Sitz SLS Rainmaker 7596 for an expected March 8 calving date, the outstanding female will sell Thursday, Jan. 13, at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo., at 2 p.m.

The daughter of the 1994 Foundation Heifer, Davis Polly 8506 is being donated by Joe, Sandra, Ashley and Anne Nicole Davis of Davis on the Highlands, Springfield, Ky. See page 65 of the November 1999 *Angus Journal* for a photo, pedigree and expected progeny differences (EPDs).

All proceeds from the sale of the Foundation Heifer Package will go to the Angus Foundation to support Angus youth, education and research. For more information or to submit a bid, contact James Fisher, director of junior activities, at (816) 383-5100.

### Profitmaker prints unveiled in time for Christmas giving

The NJAA has selected four grease-pencil drawings from a series of works by Frank Murphy to be offered as the Profitmaker prints collection. These four images were used in the Association's advertising campaign from 1966-70.

The set of four prints, perfect for the home or office, is available for a \$100 donation to the Angus Foundation. Each 11-by-14-inch print will fit into a standard-size frame.

For more information, contact the Junior Activities Department at (816) 383-5100.