



# Up Front

► by **John Crouch**, executive vice president

## A few priceless moments in Denver

*The National Western Stock Show (NWSS), held in Denver, Colo., every January, is a special event. At a time when our complete existence is filled with computers — both at work and at home, personal digital assistants (PDAs) in our pockets, and cell phones ringing constantly — even in church, the traditions that exist at the stock show are refreshing. Mind you, I am not referring to air quality when I say it's refreshing, and I hope everyone is back in stable health by now.*

### A barrage of events

Livestock begin to arrive a week before the show opens. I really do not know why, except to adequately acclimate them to the environment in Denver prior to the show. Perhaps the real reason is just to prolong the excitement and thrill of being at the most unique livestock show in the world.

Aside from the actual Angus show that spans five days, there are a host of other events, including meetings of every type, seminars, judging contests, a world-class rodeo, a tremendous trade show and, of course, sales. It seems as though there is an Angus sale to attend every day of the stock show. And this, too, adds to the excitement that prevails and the reason why it's such a special event.

### National Western Bull Sale

In this regard, the one and only annual sale sponsored by the American Angus Association is the National Western Angus Bull Sale. This sale normally attracts some 35 to 50 consignments from across the entire United States and from Canada. It provides a showcase for breeders both large and small to display and market superior seedstock.

Another Angus tradition associated with the Denver bull sale is the sale of the Angus Foundation Heifer Package. For those not acquainted with this extraordinary occasion, an Angus heifer of substantial economic value and genetic merit is donated by an outstanding breeder each year to be auctioned at the beginning of the sale. The proceeds are then given to the

Angus Foundation. The Foundation, in turn, provides funding for research, education and scholarships given to worthy members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA), now some 11,000 members strong.

As tradition has it, the NJAA Board member who is the chairman of the Foundation committee has the honor of making a short presentation preceding the sale of the package. This year's honor fell to Brandon Walker, Lexington, Ga.

Prior to the sale, I noticed Brandon walking around with his head down. He seemed a bit preoccupied, sort of like he was practicing a set of oral reasons for a judging contest. I'm sure he knew that his two-minute presentation to an overflow crowd of Angus breeders had more at stake than any set of oral reasons he could have delivered in an evaluation contest. He was right.

The festivities began with opening remarks from Chuck Grove and American Angus Association President Steve Brooks. Brandon was then introduced. He calmly stepped to the microphone, dressed sharply in his green jacket and holding a yellow sheet of paper. His remarks were written on the paper and follow in their entirety.

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### AMERICAN ANGUS AUXILIARY

**President**—Nancy Jo Sullivan, Marietta, OH  
For a complete listing of officers, refer to page 62.

**REGIONAL MANAGERS**—Refer to page 192.

### CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

**President**—Jim Riemann, Wooster, Ohio  
For a CAB staff listing, refer to page 165.

**In Brandon's words**

"Welcome. My name is Brandon Walker.

"Being a college student at the University of Georgia, I was forced to become a football fan. And when I'm not at the game, I'm tuning in on ESPN. One of my favorite things about watching football on TV is the MasterCard commercials. You know, for example they might talk about a vacation and the various costs associated with it and then talk about something of sentimental value that is, of course, 'priceless.'

"Well, for today I came up with my own 'commercial' as it relates to the National Junior Angus Association and the Angus Foundation. Here's how it goes:

"National Junior Angus Association Annual Membership: \$20.

"National Junior Angus Show Entry Fee: \$35.

"Cost of attending the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference: \$175.

"The lifelong friendships made, lessons learned, and memories at the various National Junior Angus Association functions ... *priceless*.

"My involvement with the National

Junior Angus Association has been a truly *priceless* experience for me. Now, as an NJAA director, I can look back and see that this great experience would not have been possible if not for the support provided through the Angus Foundation."

As Brandon finished, I felt a lump in my throat and a sense of pride and exhilaration. Little did we realize when the Angus Foundation was formed what a tremendous influence it would have on the development and growth of our youth programs. David McMahon, Lavaca, Ark., said it best, "Not all of our NJAA members will be Angus breeders in the future, but all of them will be citizens." How right you are, David, and good citizens they will be.

**Pledge of support**

Brandon's speech touched more people than just me. Moments later six generous Angus breeders pledged their support to the Angus Foundation by contributing a total of \$40,000 to purchase the heifer package. Those buyers included Edwards Angus Ranch, Denton, Mont.; Paws Up Angus Ranch, Greenough, Mont.; Three Trees Ranch Inc., Sharpsburg, Ga.; Express Angus

Ranches, Shawnee, Okla.; Rolling RRR Ranch LLC, Edmond, Okla.; and Limestone LLC, Perkins, Okla.

Our sincere thanks to these great supporters and the "priceless" experiences they have provided for thousands of junior Angus members with this purchase. Each year the support for this special offering is overwhelming to those of us who help put the package together. I would be remiss without extending special thanks to Whitestone Farm, Aldie, Va., for their donation of the heifer that headlined the 2003 package. We couldn't have done it without them.

Even though the pageantry of the NWSS has been completed for another year, I'm already looking forward to the 2004 edition. There's no question that it, too, will provide great cattle and great experiences for all to enjoy. Some of them might even be *priceless*. I hope to see you there.



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