

Securing a Means of Communication

The *Angus Journal* celebrates 35 years as an American Angus Association publication, offering 35 Keys to Success.

by **Shauna Rose Hermel**, editor

Paper and ink. Separately, they are rather benign. Together, they transform. They can inspire us with the beauty of a picture, educate us with information, or motivate us with inspiring words or a vision of what could be.

In an article in the July 1979 issue of the *Angus Journal* — the first one published by the American Angus Association — general manager Mike Sweet shared a presentation entitled “Why an *Angus Journal*?” that had been given to the Association Board and staff at their March meeting. In that presentation, to establish the power of the written word, Sweet referred back to the first magazine published in the United States.

The *American Journal: A Monthly Review of the Political State of the British Colonies* was first published Feb. 13, 1741, and was, said Sweet, a catalyst for the Revolution. Men who read the *American Journal* wrote the *Declaration of Independence*, which Sweet referred to as the best editorial ever written.

“In order to get their point across, they had to write it down on paper and sign it. They had to communicate via the written word. There was no misunderstanding their intent, reasons, purpose or goals,” said Sweet of the *Declaration of Independence*. It was written in black and white — ink on paper.

“And it all began when this country’s first magazine motivated purposeful men to act to solve heinous crimes against the people,” Sweet continued. “Their vehicle to communicate with authority was a written declaration that further motivated a reaction, resulting in the first major conflict of this country. It wasn’t

cheap. Personal bias was set aside and a nation was born from the effort.”

While there is no denying the power of face-to-face communication, that power consists of building a relationship between presenter and audience and conveying the gist of a message as opposed to its details. Our concentration at listening just isn’t perfect. Remember the rumor game, the one where you tell the first person in a circle something to start the game. They whisper it to the next person in line, and it continues around the circle until it comes back to the source. It’s amazing how different the sentence becomes to what it was in the beginning.

While it’s a game, it’s not so far off real life. It’s no wonder God etched the *10 Commandments* in stone and commanded that the *Holy Bible* be written so future generations could read the same words as those originally penned. It’s no wonder the founders of our country penned the *Declaration of Independence* so their intentions would not be misunderstood and so rumors would not dilute or thwart a solid base for revolution.

A breed revolution

While the Angus business doesn’t really compare to the American Revolution, consider the timing in the breed’s history when the *Journal* was purchased by the Association.

In the late 1970s, with registrations in decline and a \$250,000 deficit in 1976, the Association Board came under pressure to do something to turn business around, as Keith Evans describes in *A Historic Angus Journey: The*

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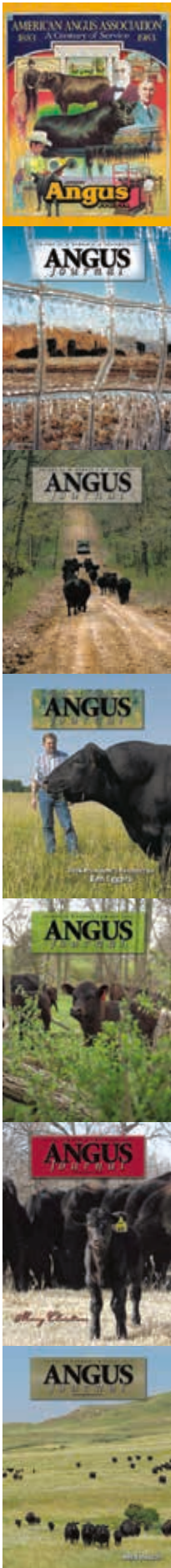
35 Keys to Success

As we celebrate our 35th year owned by the American Angus Association, we’ll be looking at what it takes to succeed in the Angus business. You laid the foundation for these keys when you responded to our readership survey and told us in what topics you were most interested. The keys below are not presented in order of importance, but rather by approximate order of publication.



- ▶ Getting Started
- ▶ Securing a Land Resource
- ▶ Your Health
- ▶ Youth Development
- ▶ Continuing Education
- ▶ Herd Health
- ▶ Ag Policy
- ▶ Animal Welfare
- ▶ Consumer Relations
- ▶ Herd Goals
- ▶ Winter Feed Management
- ▶ Recordkeeping
- ▶ Business Planning
- ▶ Employee Management
- ▶ Contingency Planning
- ▶ Angus Resources
- ▶ Genomics
- ▶ Industry Involvement
- ▶ Seedstock Selection
- ▶ Herd Nutrition
- ▶ Marketing Seedstock
- ▶ Reproductive Efficiency
- ▶ Developing Seedstock
- ▶ Customer Service
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Technology & Innovation
- ▶ Pasture Maintenance
- ▶ Grazing Strategies
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Facilities
- ▶ Cattle Handling
- ▶ Equipment
- ▶ Four-legged Helpers
- ▶ Marketing Commercial Cattle
- ▶ Being Neighborly





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American Angus Association 1883-2000. The end result was a staff reduction and reorganization in 1977 and a change in leadership.

According to Evans' book, the search committee charged with finding a new leader for the organization knew it had to look outside the Association because of the membership's dissatisfaction with current staff. C.K. Allen was hired and took the reigns as executive vice president in 1978.

Allen understood the importance of communicating to the entire membership. At his first board meeting in July of 1978 he brought up the idea of buying *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal*.

The magazine, created by Fred Hahne, was first published Aug. 10, 1919. In his history of the Association, Evans details a rather tumultuous relationship between the *Journal* and the Association through the years.

As the bottom dropped out of agricultural markets and the Association fell on hard times, in 1921 the Association eliminated its field staff and its assistant secretary, F.H. Higgins, who was in charge of advertising and promotion for the Association and served as editor of *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal*.

Evans quotes Higgins: "With *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal* now substantially established, it is felt it will not be necessary for the Association to . . . send out so much free literature because all the [information] can be found in . . . *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal*." Members were encouraged to subscribe to stay informed.

Evans said the relationship ran "hot and cold" from about 1935 through and following World War II. Indeed, Hahne renounced the title, "Official publication of the American Angus Association" in 1945.

Hot and cold could describe the relationship into the 1950s, when Fred Hahne turned the magazine over to his son, Richard. Richard and Association leadership seemed to have a closer relationship, and *The Aberdeen-Angus Journal* published most of the Association's news releases, again becoming the Association's primary means of communication.

However, because the *Journal* circulation was subscription-based, and didn't go to the entire membership of some 45,000 breeders, the Association began publishing the *Angus Bulletin*, "mailing it to every member when it was important to communicate with everyone," Evans explained.

Murray Fretz purchased controlling interest of the publication in 1975, just before Allen became executive vice president.

"Allen believed the limited communication with every Association member created an obstacle to the Association's progress," describes Evans. His solution was to purchase the *Journal* or to turn the *Angus Bulletin* into a monthly publication going to all members.

J.E. Horton Jr., Madison, Ala.; Ray Adams, Tahoka, Texas; Charles Cannon, Flemingsburg, Ky.; Dave Pingrey, Benton, Miss.; and C.K. Allen formed the Publication Committee that met with Fretz and hammered out the details of the purchase. The Board of Directors approved the \$200,000 purchase at its November 1978 meeting, planning to create Angus Productions Inc. (API) as a for-

profit corporation to publish the magazine and conduct other for-profit ventures.

In July 1979, the American Angus Association published its first *Angus Journal*. In that first issue, Sweet laid out three criteria to the success of the magazine:

- ▶ it would serve advertisers by providing a massive circulation;
- ▶ it would do so at "an equitable cost per reader for the advertiser"; and
- ▶ it would deliver strong editorial content.

"For the first time in the history of the American Angus Association, the small breeder will have a better-than-fair chance to compete — with one magazine reaching all breeders," said Sweet, noting that for the cost of mailing 300 first-class letters, that breeder could advertise to 40,000 Angus enthusiasts in the *Angus Journal*.

For an editorial focus, Sweet said, "I see the new *Angus Journal* as an industry forum for discussing technological advances in all areas of beef production.

"I see the *Angus Journal* asking questions that must be answered. . . .

"I see the *Angus Journal* being as informative to Hereford breeders as it is to Angus breeders.

"I see the Angus association subtly communicating to the beef industry that it is leading the way for all breeds and thus insuring the position for Angus cattle that there is, after all, only one breed."

Thus, the *Angus Journal* became the American Angus Association's means to inform, to educate and to motivate purposeful men and women to act to solve the problems of the day.

Celebrating a milestone

This year we celebrate the 35th anniversary of that first issue published by the American Angus Association. As we celebrate, we'll take a look back at some of the stories that affected Angus breeders during those 35 years, but we'll also look forward to what will help this membership succeed in the years ahead.

With that thought we launch a theme that we will carry throughout the next year: "35 Keys to Success." Based on responses to recent readership surveys and input from other industry experts, our writers will explore 35 keys to succeeding in the Angus business. Topics range from how to get started in the Angus business to developing bulls to sell as seedstock to the importance of being a good neighbor both domestically or internationally (see "35 Keys to Success").

We aren't presenting the keys in order of importance, but rather matching them to the season where the information might be most useful and mixing production-management information with business and industry issues.

We're excited to begin our series this month with three keys: Getting Started, Securing a Land Resource and Your Health — three subjects that are fundamental to your success as cattlemen and that uphold the purpose of the new *Angus Journal* Sweet outlined in July 1979.

With that, it's time to apply ink to paper.

