



Seeing Angus Through Colored Glass

Former Wisconsin junior member Dustin Henningfeld found his place helping juniors with his talent for stained glass.

by Corinne Blender

Neighbors in ag communities often share a bond beyond just borrowing a cup of sugar or a cup of milk. The children play together, and many times the elderly are “adopted” as grandparents. At least it was that way for Dustin Henningfeld while growing up in the small farming community near Burlington, Wis.

“My neighbor moved to the country where we lived when I was about 9 or 10 years old. He was a retired firefighter,” Dustin remembers. “In the firehouse, when they weren’t fighting fires, they all picked up hobbies, and he picked up stained glass. He had a grandson that was my age, and we’d always play together.”

Dustin; his neighbor, Don Nellen; and Don’s grandson Ryan Nellen found many afternoons to spend together, whether working on the farm or working with glass. On weather-spoiled days, the two young boys, held captive by the rain, began watching Don work with stained glass in his garage.

“You play video games all morning long, and you’re tired of them by the afternoon,” Dustin says. In many ways Don became a grandfather figure to Dustin as he learned the tricks to stained glass. A rewarding relationship was being created for all parties.

“Don helped my dad out a lot on the farm, and Ryan started showing cattle with us at the local fairs,” Dustin says. “He taught us stained glass, so it started like a little family. He would

help us pick out the patterns as well as glass and supplies.”

Don’s firehouse hobby became a 4-H project for both of the boys. Dustin’s “garage” art sessions would soon shed a new light on his future.

Science to art

As a senior in high school, Dustin found himself in need of an extra class to complete his requirements for graduation. He had never taken the introductory-level art classes, so he wasn’t qualified to enter a stained-glass class that was being offered. But spending many hours with Don and learning the art of stained glass gave him confidence to approach the art teacher.

“I brought in some of my work, and she liked it,” he recalls of the teacher’s reaction. “She told me I could come into this class and maybe be taught something. By the second day, I was teaching the class, because the teacher really didn’t know exactly what she was doing. She had a handbook and videotape instructions, but she hadn’t done it herself. I taught that whole semester of stained glass in high school.”

A self-described “people person,” Dustin says his stained glass has been a conversation starter.

“I am a very outgoing person to begin with. With people that I don’t know, my stained glass is a starting point,” he says. “I have made a lot of contacts through stained glass, and those contacts have turned into friends or colleagues. I have met a lot of new people through the stained glass, as well as people who have been there for me that I met through the Angus association.”

“Dustin is a very enterprising young man who took a hobby and turned it into a business to help put himself through school,”

says Leslie Mindemann of Mindemann Farms, Sullivan, Wis. “He found an opportunity to help the Wisconsin Junior Angus Association raise money for the 2002 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) held in Milwaukee by donating his work for auction at several cattle sales and at Denver.” Mindemann served as adult co-chairman for the 2002 NJAS.

Love for Angus

“When I was 13 years old, I had a picture out of



► Dustin Henningfeld (right) shares a special bond with his neighbor Don Nellen. Nellen taught Henningfeld how to create stained glass art.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DUSTIN HENNINGFELD

CONTINUED ON PAGE 240

Seeing Angus Through Colored Glass CONTINUED FROM PAGE 238

the *Angus Journal* of HBR Omaha Clint because I thought he was just the prettiest looking bull. I just wanted to do a stained glass or do something," Dustin remembers. He had been cutting flowers from glass, but wanted to do something different.

"I drew him out and copied his profile and actually made a pattern with him. But then I realized I was just copying a profile of a bull, so I drew my own instead," he says.

"The inspiration comes from getting my ideas out there and on the paper so I can put them onto glass."

Angus cattle weren't a part of the Henningfeld family's operation until Dustin began showing cattle and realized that the "blacks" were winning all the classes. He and his dad now have an Angus herd of 45-50 cows and about 800 acres of cash crops.

It wasn't until he was 17 years old that he

became well-known within Angus circles in Wisconsin. It was about this time that Wisconsin was declared the destination for the 2002 NJAS.

"I volunteered to donate some of my glass to raise money for the NJAS, and it took off from there," Dustin says. His first donations were sold at the World Beef Expo in Milwaukee, Wis. "One of my cow-calf pairs brought \$900.

"And from there Jerry [Cassady] wanted me to take more of an active part and to help get more kids involved," Dustin says. Soon he found himself president of the Wisconsin Junior Angus Association. He took his active role seriously.

Dustin realized the importance of the junior Angus association and the need for juniors to be active. He wanted to be an example of how juniors could help, even as individuals. His donated artwork caught much attention, showing how one member could lend his or her talents to an organization.

"It is unusual to find Angus in art, and stained glass is a unique field," Dustin says.

In addition to his standard pieces, Dustin auctioned two custom-sized windows that he offered to place in the buyer's home anywhere in the country," Mindemann says. His donations of stained glass pieces depicting bulls, cow-calf pairs, calves and many other subjects raised nearly \$5,000 for the 2002 NJAS.

"Seeing a young person develop over the years and become successful is a joy to all youth advisors. Dustin's artistic ability is exceeded by his gift as a salesman," Mindemann says. "He is quite enthusiastic and knowledgeable in all his businesses. He will go far in any enterprising venture."

In May 2003, Dustin graduated from the University of Wisconsin (UW) with a degree in ag business management. While his days as a junior Angus member are over and he has left the family farm for a job in Illinois, Dustin says Angus cattle and stained glass will always be a part of his life.

"Raising Angus makes me tick. I am very passionate about them. In my future I see myself taking over the family farm 10 to 15 years down the road," he says. "When you find a good Angus heifer you normally find four or five good Angus people behind that heifer.

"People in the Angus Association, Angus industry, the beef industry in general, I have found to be some of the greatest people."

A new look at collecting Angus art

Frank Murphy made collecting Angus art popular with his beautiful oil paintings. But a former junior Angus member from Wisconsin has brought a new twist to Angus art collections.

Dustin Henningfeld's stained-glass bulls, cows and calves have become additions to many collections. His stained glass has been sold to people in 15 states.

He says people often relate to stained glass because of its association with churches.

"The whole process is very intricate. Sometimes it works perfectly; sometimes it doesn't," he says.

Each detail, he says, is depicted by the patterns in the glass and his ability to use the solder, which holds the pieces together, for extra detail.

While he made donations totaling nearly \$5,000 to the 2002 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), he also sold his work to help pay for college. Proceeds from his art paid for a half of a semester each year until his graduation from the University of Wisconsin in May 2003.

"Not only did Angus members appreciate his work as an artist, but they were impressed with the enterprising junior Angus member," says Leslie Mindemann, adult co-chairman for the 2002 NJAS. "Dustin has an active Angus herd, buying, selling and breeding cattle, which he readily discusses with other breeders. He's also used his Angus business to help with school expenses."

