



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Spirit of innovation

As we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the American Angus Association, it is fun to look back at milestones in history. Consider where we were as a country and as individuals 125 years ago. Look at where we are today. How in the world did we get from Point A to Point B? One word comes to mind: innovation.

Perspectives on innovation

As I started to research this column, I googled “innovation” and stumbled on a grouping of quotations on *Bartleby.com*. All but the last can be attributed to *The Columbia World of Quotations*, 1996.

“A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.”

— Edmund Burke (1729–1797), Irish Protestant political writer. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 29, ed. Pocock (1790).

“Innovation violates tradition — attacks it in public and steals from it in private.”

— Mason Cooley (b. 1927), U.S. aphorist. *City Aphorisms*, Fourth Selection, New York (1987).

“I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every innovation as a toilsome trouble, every social advance as a first step toward revolution, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all for fear of being carried off their feet. The prospect really does frighten me that they may finally become so engrossed in a cowardly love of

immediate pleasures that their interest in their own future and in that of their descendants may vanish, and that they will prefer tamely to follow the course of their destiny rather than make a sudden energetic effort necessary to set things right.”

— Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), French social philosopher. *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, pt. 3, ch. 21 (1840).

“I am disgusted with innovation, in whatever guise, and with reason, for I have seen very harmful effects of it.”

— Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist. “Of Custom, and Not Easily Changing an Accepted Law,” *The Essays* (Les Essais), bk. I, ch. 23, Abel Langelier, Paris (1588).

“Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees; pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly; care not to innovate, which draws unknown inconveniences; use extreme remedies at first; and, that which doubleth all errors, will not acknowledge or retract them; like an unready horse, that will neither stop nor turn. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and

seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success.”

— Francis Bacon (1561–1626), British essayist, statesman. “Of Youth and Age,” *The Essays or Counsels* (1625).

“Great innovations should not be forced on slender majorities.”

— Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), U.S. president. Letter, May 2, 1808.

“As the births of living creatures, at first, are ill-shapen: so are all innovations, which are the births of time.”

— Francis Bacon (1561–1626), British philosopher, essayist, statesman. *Essays*, “Of Innovations,” (1597–1625).

“Is it not the glory of the people of America, that, whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience? To this manly spirit, posterity will be indebted for the possession, and the world for the example, of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theatre, in favor of private rights and public happiness.”

— James Madison, *The Federalist*, ed. Benjamin F. Wright, no. 14, p. 154 (1961). [*Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations*. 1989.]

Obviously, innovation is regarded differently by different individuals and at different times. It is the combination of outlooks that have created, observed, edited, censored and brought to life the innovations that have molded our current state. Left unbridled, innovation would surely exhaust our resources and our spirits, but without innovation we lose the ability to adapt and would surely become extinct.

E-MAIL: shermel@angusjournal.com

ANGUS PRODUCTIONS INC.

3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506; 1-800-821-5478; fax: 816-233-6575; office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (Central) home page: www.angusjournal.com
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