



# Up Front

► by John Crouch, retiring chief executive officer

## Positioned for progress

*I write my final column with a sense of excitement and anticipation regarding the future direction of the Angus breed.*

### Discipline leads to success

I know we have issues and challenges. We've always had them. In solving these issues and addressing the challenges we have become stronger as individuals and stronger as an Association.

In retrospect, Angus breeders have proven to be a resilient lot over the years. In the half-century-plus that I have been directly involved with the Angus breed, I have witnessed a technical revolution the likes of which has never before been seen.

Think about it: A half century ago the process we used for the selection of seedstock was the eye of the master. Granted, it was a calculated, well-trained eye; nonetheless, it

was still the eye, with little or no scientific basis.

Cornerstone technology adopted by your Association in the 1950s has evolved to the point where much of the guesswork associated with the selection process has been removed. Genetic values called expected progeny differences (EPDs) for traits that affect profit, coupled with open artificial insemination (AI) adopted as far back as 1972, has virtually leveled the playing field, allowing all Angus breeders, regardless of size, access to the same tools at a very miniscule charge.

So, since this is the case, why are some more successful than others?

In the opinion of this scribe, the reasons are obvious. Given the same tools, the same opportunity and the same genetics, success is totally dependent on management practices, attitude and the undeniable desire to excel. Those who wish to succeed will apply the necessary discipline to, in fact, succeed.

### Balance and moderation

Discipline in developing a successful breeding program must not be minimized. By that, I mean seedstock producers must determine a destination, plot a route and use the available tools to stay the course.

So many times I hear breeders talking about the largest ribeye, the lightest birth weight, the largest yearling weight or the highest %IMF (percent intramuscular fat). While we all love superlatives, perhaps the largest or the highest may not be the best for all of your customers.

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This thought process gives rise to the adage that breed improvement still should not be defined as incremental increases in some given trait over time. The industry would be much better served if seedstock were genetically empowered with an optimum balance with respect to reproduction, growth and end product merit.

The beautiful part of these dynamics is that we have the tools to “get ‘er done.”

Make no mistake, these tools and Angus breeders’ affinity to use them have made the Angus breed a dominant force in today’s global beef cattle economy.

**Thanks for the opportunity**

I have enjoyed my career with the American Angus Association immensely. I have been afforded the opportunity to work with the most innovative and progressive breeders in the world doing

a job I thoroughly loved. I have observed technology in the beef industry move from the horse-and-buggy days to the supersonic age and been in the middle of every fray. What a ride it has been!

My wife, Judy, and I thank you for that opportunity.



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