



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

The political process worked

Way back when, I served as a delegate to the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) annual meeting. It was one of my first introductions to participating in a political process at the national level. It was an eye-opener for a country girl more used to lobbying for the best of our weaned calves to show the next summer.

Positives and negatives

That experience as a delegate was definitely invaluable. More candidates ran back then. I'd estimate 15-20. Each came to the table with a different skill set, a different approach and a different agenda.

It was inspiring to go through the interview process — such sharp minds and ideas for the NJAA and the Angus breed. Some offered enthusiasm and charisma that could grow a relatively new national junior program. Some were students of pedigrees and performance. Some carried visions of what the NJAA could become.

If we could have only voted at the conclusion of the interviews — before the politics began — I would have felt a lot better about the process. The “chatter” that led up to the vote included one candidate's advocate offering an outright trade — “My state's delegates will vote for your candidate if you'll vote for ours.” No other reasons for the candidate's deserving the position were offered.

Needless to say, I turned my vote

elsewhere. Fortunately, I didn't have any doubts about my state's candidate earning a spot. I found out how naïve that was when two of the most production- and industry-oriented candidates didn't get on the Board. One ran again the following year and was eventually elected chairman; the other will perhaps make a bigger impact on the breed itself than all the rest of us at that NJAA annual meeting put together.

In today's world

Obviously, I'm no fan of politics or political processes. But I am glad there are sincere, dedicated people who do put their hats in the ring. It takes a special person to remain true to a cause among the noise and glad-handing. It takes special people on both sides of an issue to work through the politics, emotion and rhetoric to get to the heart of an issue, then make the right decision.

Members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) did just that.

I was expecting even more fireworks and unrest at this year's Cattle Industry Annual

Convention and Trade Show than at last year's convention. There just wasn't.

Granted, the industry has a lot of issues to be resolved; but one small victory was won as a new voting structure was voted into place by NCBA members (see page 285). Last year, as a different voting structure was defeated, Jan Lyons (now NCBA president) told members that the Executive Committee heard members' concerns and would work toward a solution.

At the conclusion of the 2003 meeting, I wondered how sincere those words were. This year, I found out.

Kudos to those on both sides of the issue who set aside the emotion and banter that took center stage a year ago to work together to construct a bylaw amendment that both sides could get behind and support.

One down, several to go.

Turn to page 284 for a quick summary of NCBA policy passed at this year's convention and candid photos capturing highlights of the event. For more complete coverage, log on to www.4cattlemen.com, our real-time coverage site sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc.

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