

A Place of Honor

Three longtime Angus supporters are inducted into the Honorary Angus Foundation.

by *Shelby Axtell & Crystal Albers*

Many Angus enthusiasts have supported the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and its members throughout the organization's 24-year history. Whether assisting in showbarns, serving as mentors or purchasing fund-raising packages, few would doubt the dedication of such leaders toward Angus youth. However, only three distinguished individuals or organizations each year can earn the NJAA's highest place of honor, induction into the Honorary Angus Foundation — an entity established in 1985 to show appreciation for those exhibiting extraordinary support for young members of the American Angus Association.

This year the NJAA Board of Directors

recognizes three individuals who have shown untiring dedication to junior programs. James Fisher, American Angus Association director of activities and junior activities, and Chuck Grove, longtime Association regional manager, were inducted into the Honorary Angus Foundation during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) July 12-17 in Kansas City, Mo. Bob Laflin, formerly of Olsburg, Kan., was also posthumously inducted for a lifetime of dedication to NJAA members and to the breed.

Angus devotion

This year's NJAA Board honors a very special person who has gone beyond the call of duty for junior Angus members.

Thirteen years ago, the Association had an opening for director of junior activities.

The man they hired does more than just put in his time from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., he devotes his life to junior Angus members. With his enthusiasm, he makes each event exciting and memorable. Scott and Moriah Pohlman, former NJAA Board members, Hereford, Texas, say Fisher is an outstanding leader and very deserving of the honor.

"James goes far beyond the duties of his job," the Pohlmans say. "He always makes an effort to learn each junior member's name and encourages them to get involved in Angus activities that will help them build life-long skills."

Fisher's "live-life-to-the-fullest" attitude is contagious, and his dedication to Angus youth is evident to anyone who has ever attended a junior activity. He is always ready to help any junior member.



► Bob Laflin was inducted posthumously into the NJAA's Honorary Angus Foundation. His wife, children and grandchildren were on hand to accept the award. Pictured are (from left) family members Shelie, R.D., Joshua, Clinton and Guy Laflin; former NJAA Chairman Jennifer Beck; and family members Cody Sankey, Barb Laflin, Chris, Sharee and Jeana Sankey, and Karen Laflin.

“James not only directs the activities of the American Angus Association, but he is involved in every activity,” says Jamie King, 2003-2004 NJAA vice chairman from Tiffin, Ohio. “He takes a sincere interest in every NJAA member and supports each junior member in every activity they are involved with.”

Fisher is enthusiastic and passionate about Angus youth and has devoted countless hours as an advisor to the NJAA Board through the years.

Cara Ayres, former NJAA Board member, Stevensville, Mont., says the most inspiring dimension about Fisher is his sheer goodness. She says she could not think of a better role model for youth to be closely involved with.

“While [I was] on the NJAA Board, James was open, easy to talk to, willing to listen to new ideas and eager to allow the Board members to handle tasks without interfering,” Ayres says. “He made us feel good about ourselves, competent and capable.”

He is more than an advisor to juniors; he is also a friend and mentor. Fisher’s involvement and interest in NJAA members runs deep. He knows every one of the juniors, and they know him. The involvement does not end with their junior careers either. Numerous past junior members still keep in contact with Fisher, who always has a minute to visit.

“I have known James for about 15 years, and, now that I’ve grown older and James’ capacities have widened, he is still, and always has been, an invaluable sounding board for my ideas, tribulations, and [he] shares in our triumphs,” Ayres continues. “James is so important to the American Angus Association because I know that our relationship, although special, isn’t unique. He is a supportive voice to many young breeders in our nation. Thank you, James, as your legacy is a positive impact.”

Regional manager is role model

Chuck Grove, Forest, Va., is a familiar name to the NJAA and to the Association. He has dedicated much of his time to Angus youth throughout the last 29 years as a regional manager for Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee.

“Chuck has always been a big supporter of juniors, from helping them select a heifer at a sale to encouraging them to get involved in NJAA activities,” King says.

Grove makes it a priority to get to know junior members and to help them. He can be seen at numerous junior events and shows, helping juniors check in their cattle, giving last-minute showmanship advice, or just



►The NJAA inducted James Fisher (right), Agency, Mo., into the Honorary Angus Foundation. Trever Kuipers, 2003-2004 NJAA Foundation director, presents the award.



►The NJAA inducted Chuck Grove (left), Forest, Va., into the Honorary Angus Foundation. Jamie King, 2003-2004 NJAA vice chairman, presents the award.

giving a needed hug. He is a role model and friend to Angus youth.

“One of his greatest assets is being a role model for the juniors,” says Association Board member Paul Hill, Bidwell, Ohio. “He has an easy way about him that both commands respect and admiration. Adults and juniors alike look for his trademark cowboy hat and long stride as he assists in the showing, sale ring and other Angus functions across the country.”

Angus breeders also benefit from Grove’s dedication to staying up-to-date on the

industry’s advancing technologies and to educating breeders about the tools that can better their herds, Hill continues.

Grove has been involved in Angus cattle all his life, and he and his wife, Ruth, raised their children, Jake and Rachel, on their Angus operation. In addition to being a family man and regional manager, Grove has managed the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) Bull Sale in Denver, Colo.

His loyalty to Angus and his dedication to youth will continue to touch the lives of many for years to come.

For the love of the breed

Angus, Angus, Angus best describes Bob Laflin. He was a dedicated Angus man, family man and friend, who was passionate about Angus and youth.

“He was the ultimate Angus enthusiast,” says Mary McCurry, former American Angus Auxiliary president, Burrton, Kan. “Angus cattle was his thing; he was always there for anyone who wanted to talk about them.

“Bob was always there for the kids, all the kids, cheering them on from the sidelines.”

Laflin believed in kids and cattle. He realized it took the whole family to be successful on the ranch and in the showing. He traveled many miles, taking his children and grandchildren to cattle shows and NJAA events.

“Honesty and integrity, Bob was always preaching those two words to me,” says Josh Malson, former NJAA member, Parma, Idaho. “He would tell me that as a person and a cattleman you must have both (honesty and integrity) to be respected and successful.”

Laflin, a third-generation Angus producer, was raised on the more than 100-year-old Laflin Angus Ranch, Olsburg, Kan.

Family was Laflin’s first priority. He and his wife, Barb, raised four children — Sharee (Sankey), R.D., Karen and Guy, and four grandchildren, who are still involved in the family ranch and NJAA.

Laflin was an innovator for the Kansas Angus Association, being one of the first producers to use performance testing, own and feature a certified meat sire, and place his bulls on a feed test at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

Laflin’s innovativeness and strong family values made him a successful rancher, father and role model. His enthusiasm and dedication to the Angus breed will not be forgotten.



Editor’s Note: Any member of the Association can nominate individuals or organizations for the Honorary Angus Foundation. Application forms for nominations are available from the Junior Activities Department and are due March 1 of each year.