

A Friendly Voice



After more than 27 years of helping producers, Gloria Hurlbut retires.

by Brooke Byrd

Producers have called specifically for her help to deal with tricky Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) issues. She's the highlight of American Angus Association office tours for many breeders who want to meet the friendly voice who has helped them. After more than 27 years of service, Gloria Hurlbut, the friendly voice of AHIR, retired in August to spend more time with her family.

Angus has been a part of Gloria's life since the beginning of her career. "I remember the first day I came to American Angus," she says. "I was straight out of high school and scared to death." She was hired to work in the Public Relations Department in 1958.

Shortly after, she met Dean Hurlbut, former director of activities. At first, Dean was only her dance partner.

"In 1960 we were married, and Dean became my permanent dance partner and Angus partner," she says.

After quitting in 1963 to raise their two daughters, Stacy and Tracy, Gloria came back to the Angus Association in 1982, this time in the AHIR department. She has headed that department since 1994.

September marked the first time that a Hurlbut has not worked at the American Angus Association since 1957. Gloria's reliability and helpfulness will be missed.

Building connections

Gloria will be remembered most for her incredible customer-service skills. "Her friendly approach to customer service has been something that will be pretty hard to replace," says Bill Bowman, vice president of information and data programs.

"She has been happy, cheerful, courteous and respectful, especially on the phone," says American Angus Association Executive Vice President John Crouch. "When I travel, so many people say, 'We really do appreciate doing business with the Association, especially with those people in AHIR.'"

One of those people is Mark Duffell of Whitestone Farm, Aldie, Va. "It was always a joy calling in to talk with her," he says.

"Whatever my performance issue was, she walked me through it and helped solve it."

This customer appreciation is also evident to Bowman. "There are people who would automatically call Gloria before they would consider anybody else," he says. "When you get out in the country and visit with breeders, it's pretty evident that she's done a really good job."

More than just customer service, Gloria has been a valuable representative of the American Angus Association. "In order to be a successful public servant, you have to want to do nice things for nice people," Crouch says. "Gloria really enjoys doing things and helping folks."

Duffell agrees about the importance of such people to the Association. "It's so nice to know that a company has employees like Gloria who are very compassionate about their jobs," he says. "When I call in, she's always like your best friend. She's always very kind, very sincere and very caring."

Setting the standard for caring

Alice Koupal of Koupal's Angus Ranch, Dante, S.D., says she has appreciated Gloria's ability to help with problems. "Gloria never made me feel like I was stupid when I asked a question," she says. "She never was sharp with me, and it never felt like she was losing her patience."

This ability is also recognized by Crouch. "The unique thing about Gloria is that she makes people feel good when they call with a problem," he says.

With all the new people just beginning to enter performance data, Bowman

► **Above:** Gloria Hurlbut is excited to spend more time with her family. "The Angus Association has been our family's life," she says. "We are truly blessed and thankful for being part of the American Angus Association."

appreciates her ability to work with all people. “She tries to talk to them on their level and relate to the problems that they’re having,” he says.

Her customer-service skills have been valuable as technology has changed. When she started, all performance data was written manually and submitted on paper, and data entry was done by keypunch machines. Now, Bowman says, “more than 60% of the weaning and yearling weights are coming in electronically. That makes customer service even more important when you’re dealing more with the breeders on questions or problems.”

Because of her in-depth knowledge of the AHIR program, Bowman says he has come to rely on Gloria. “You end up traveling or on the phone,” he says, “and she has to handle a lot of things.”

Koupal has noticed Gloria’s reliability and knowledge, too. “She knows the program inside and out, and she knows just what we need to do to straighten out something,” she says.

Duffell has appreciated Gloria’s attention to detail and individual producers. “The thing that’s amazing,” he says, “is that she always knew my member code. That meant a lot to me. I always called in to speak with her

because I cherished the friendship we have, and I enjoyed working with her.”

Gloria has grown close to many of the producers she’s worked with over the years.

“What I will miss the most are the people — the wonderful people I worked with on the phone,” she says. “My fondest memories about working for the Association are the contact with breeders I worked with every day.”

Says Crouch, “I will miss her smiling face, her wonderful countenance and her steadfast support, because those are the things that are important about living and working with people.” 