



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Chart your own course

Words are coming hard today. Less than a week ago we celebrated the life of my mother, Elizabeth (Moore) Coon, as we put her body, spent from cancer, to rest in a cemetery that has collected the bones of our ancestors for generations. She was proud of that heritage, and she and my dad had together risked it all to raise a family on land homesteaded by the Moores in 1845.

The road less traveled

This morning, thinking of her and the future of the Angus business, I'm reminded of an excerpt of one of her favorite poems — "The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost.

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."*

It is so fitting for her, as she was a true trailblazer. I'll share just a couple examples.

In 1956, she was elected to the first officer team of the very first state junior Angus association, joining fellow Missouri Angus enthusiasts Eddie Sydenstricker, Ronnie Rodgers and Fred Blades. She would chuckle as she recounted how the advisors didn't quite know what to do with the girl on the team and how, when she travelled, her mother would chaperone.

When women were expected to pursue more feminine fields of study, Mom chose

animal science and competed on the meats and livestock judging teams at the University of Missouri. Magazine articles collected over time, including an article in the *Angus Journal*, document how much of a novelty she was, but also how well she competed and the respect that she earned.

As a graduate student at Kansas State University, a broken leg and a shared interest in judging cattle cemented a friendship that laid the foundation for a dream shared by both Mom and Dad (Larry Coon).

In today's world, it's hard to grasp the grit and determination it took for them to sign the note to buy the place and to clear the bottom to establish more pasture. Together they built the Mark Twain Bull Test during the early years of the performance movement; they enrolled bulls in the Liberty Bell Program of Performance Registry International; and they traveled the country looking at Angus cattle, developing lifelong friendships in the process. They carved their own path and encouraged

Russell and me to do the same — to think for ourselves, to trust in our own evaluation and to not just follow the crowd.

Finding our own path

That drive to explore new frontiers — while standing on the same old ground — is something we can't afford to lose as individuals or as a breed.

It's easy to use the popular sire. It's easier to market cattle out of the popular sires, but the future of the Angus business will originate from those who have the courage to turn down a path less heavily trod.

The *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) brand stands as a great testament to that. Today, as the brand celebrates year after year of record-breaking sales, it's hard to imagine that it and, more importantly, the cattle that qualify for the brand were ever out of vogue, but they were. CAB was born as the popularity for exotic breeds and the war on fat gained momentum.

Our success today is rooted with the heels of those who dug in to chart a different course than what was popular. As we begin a new year, I encourage you to chart your own course.

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