

The Faces of the AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

Eleven men of vision have sat at the helm of the national Angus organization, helping lay the foundation of the American Angus Association we know today and what it will become in this millennium. We continue our look at the history of the Association by examining the tenures of Glen Bratcher, Lloyd Miller and C.K. Allen.

PART 2

BY KEITH EVANS



The first 80 years of the national Angus breeders organization in America was a tumultuous ride, but the fledgling association grew. Five executive officers can be credited with steering the American Angus Association through economic depression, natural disaster and political unrest in the early days.

Those men were not only charged with executing the policies of the Board of Directors and handling day-to-day management of the Association office, but they were the “face” of the organization to its own members and to the beef industry at large.

In 1962 Frank Richards, the Association’s fifth executive officer, was 64 years old and not in especially good health. With the breed association business going through yet another rapid change, he concluded that the Association should be handled by someone with more youth and energy.

He announced at the 1962 Annual Meeting that he would retire at the end of the 1963 fiscal year. The ninth decade of Angus in America would be introduced by someone new.

Only so much time

The job of Association secretary was a plum that many people wanted to pick. After sorting through a pile of applications

and interviewing approximately 15 candidates, the Board contacted Glen Bratcher, head of the animal science department at Oklahoma State University. They hired this likable and popular educator to be the sixth secretary of the American Angus Association.

A native of Oklahoma, Bratcher was a 1940 graduate of Oklahoma A&M University (later named Oklahoma State). He, like Richards, was an honors student and president of the student association. A few months after graduating in 1941, Bratcher was appointed to the staff of Oklahoma State, where he completed his master’s degree. He served as a U.S. Navy officer in the South Pacific from 1942 to 1946, then returned to the university staff as livestock judging coach.

During the next six years, his teams won first-place honors at the International Live Stock Exposition in Chicago, the American Royal in Kansas City and the Southwestern Livestock Exposition in Fort Worth. He was appointed to head the animal husbandry department in 1953. Angus people had come to know him as one of the most respected beef cattle judges in America. He judged the Angus show at the International twice and the All-American Aberdeen-Angus Futurity four times, plus numerous state-fair Angus shows.

This extensive background came with

ASSOCIATION TIME LINE

1963

Frank Richards retired, Glen Bratcher hired



1966

Building expansion completed



1966

First performance pedigree issued



1968

Registrations hit 406,310

Bratcher when he stepped into his new position.

The growth of the Association, particularly in staff positions, was putting stress on its “new” building. Bratcher almost immediately spearheaded a building expansion that increased the square footage by 50%. Nine new offices were added, along with a new, larger Board room. A new entrance was built to face west toward Brookside Drive. Bratcher personally oversaw much of the construction and redecorating. The project was completed in 1966.

The Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) program was beginning to gain more acceptance. Bratcher, an educator, worked both personally and with his staff to increase the use of the program. In 1966 the first performance pedigree was issued. That year 18,000 weaning and yearling weights were processed — a drop in the bucket by current standards, but exceptional for the time.

The famous cattle judge from Oklahoma had little time to serve the Angus breed. Bratcher died of a heart attack in October 1968, less than five years after he was hired. With his history of heart trouble, some said the stress of the job and the demands that were being made on the office at the time contributed to his death.

In-house promotion

Another lengthy search and interview process followed. In December 1968 the Board announced that Lloyd Miller, the director of publicity, would be the person to follow Bratcher. Miller took over with the title of executive secretary. It was the first time that an employee of the Association had been elevated to the top staff position.

Miller, a native of Andrew County, Mo., was a 1940 graduate of the University of Missouri with a major in agricultural journalism and a minor in animal



LLOYD MILLER

- 1968-1978
- First employee to be elevated to executive secretary position.
- Exotic craze hits the States.
- “Challenge of the Future” Angus tours.
- Live cattle displays at trade shows.
- First growth and maternal EBVs calculated.
- AI rules opened.
- Hosted World Angus Forum in Kansas City.
- Centennial Celebration.
- First *Sire Evaluation Report* published.
- Photos of Angus were first used in advertising.
- Liberty Bell Sire Evaluation Contest held.
- First *Pathfinder® Report* issued.
- Certified Angus Beef (CAB) program developed.

husbandry. In college he was editor of the *College Farmer* magazine, a student publication, and of the *Missouri Press News*, a monthly magazine of the Missouri

Press Association. Following graduation he worked for the *Drovers Journal* in Chicago. After serving in the U.S. Army in the Pacific during World War II, he became assistant agricultural editor at the University of Missouri.

Miller, hired in 1946 by Frank Richards to head the Association’s advertising and public relations program, pioneered many of its publicity and public relations programs. He filmed and produced numerous motion pictures about Angus cattle and wrote and edited Angus promotional and informational books. He also built a three-person public relations staff. Over the years he was involved in international marketing of Angus cattle and led tours to a number of international Angus events. He planned and managed the Association’s national conferences.

Miller’s distinguished career as executive secretary was overshadowed by a situation over which he had little control. The beef cattle industry was in revolution, and few of the Association members, officers and directors or staff were prepared for what took place.

The rise in corporate cattle feeding, which was partially influenced by tax-shelter operations, helped place a premium on larger, faster-growing, later-maturing cattle. Although the trend at shows was shifting to larger, “growthier” cattle, many in the Angus industry either had not received the message or had failed to act upon it. To meet feeder demand, many commercial cattle producers turned to Continental-breed bulls. Charolais became an almost overnight success, and many other “exotic” breeds were to follow.

The year Bratcher died, the Association registered 406,310 head of cattle. The next year the numbers began to drop. Before things turned around, Angus registrations bottomed out at 133,475 in 1986. Just as the

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Timeline of key events:

- 1968**: Glen Bratcher died; Lloyd Miller hired
- 1970**: Open AI rules adopted
- 1971**: Second computer purchased
- 1972**: First growth EBVs calculated
- 1973**: Association hosted World Angus Forum in Kansas City
- 1973**: Centennial Celebration

Images included in the timeline: Lloyd Miller (1968) and American Angus Association 100 Years coin (1973).

president of the United States gets credit for good economic times and takes the heat for recession, regardless of the cause, much the same is true for the executive officer of the Association. Throughout the next 10 years, Miller and his staff waged a fight to put Angus back into their place of dominance, often taking heat for not moving things along fast enough.

Education was one tool to effect change in the Angus breed. National conferences brought hundreds of members together to learn more about scientific cattle production. The Association played host to the World Aberdeen-Angus Secretariat's second World Angus Forum in Kansas City in 1973 and put together an educational program that attracted international attention.

That same year a huge celebration marked the 100th anniversary of the importing of Angus into the United States and brought cattle producers and media people to the heart of Angus country. A tour of commercial Angus herds in connection with the Centennial and the World Forum showed people that many large, growthy, high-quality Angus feeder steers were already being produced.

Extra emphasis was placed on the "Challenge of the Future" Angus tours. These tours were designed to show Angus breeders what commercial cattle producers were doing to supply the feedlot industry. Angus breeders were challenged to use performance records to breed the kind of cattle that would best satisfy the needs of commercial producers.

In the 1970s the Association used trade and farm shows to emphasize that Angus were keeping up with the times. Live displays featured registered-Angus bulls, cows and calves with size, quality

and outstanding performance records. Some of the shows included were the Farm Progress Show, Ohio Farm Science Review and Husker Harvest Days, as well as the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) annual convention. The American Angus Association was the first breed association to mount this kind of display, although others would eventually follow suit.

Advertising touted the "new" Angus cattle. In 1969 national ads were dedicated strictly to the AHIR program and to the availability of performance-tested breeding cattle. In 1976 actual photos of Angus cattle were used for the first time, illustrating large, attractive Angus cattle to counteract the baby beef stereotype.

In 1972, when some were worried the Association wasn't doing enough to fight the invasion of Continental cattle, estimated breeding values (EBVs) for growth were calculated for the first time. Rules for artificial insemination (AI) were changed in 1970, eliminating most restrictions on registering cattle sired by AI even when the breeder was not an owner of the sire. The Association's second computer was purchased in 1971, primarily to handle the growing number of AHIR records being processed.

The first *Sire Evaluation Report* was published in 1974. Two years later the first maternal EBVs were calculated. In 1977 the Liberty Bell Sire Evaluation Contest was completed, putting more national emphasis on Angus cattle performance. The first *Pathfinder® Report* was issued in the spring of 1978.

The Certified Angus Beef (CAB) program was developed during the 1970s, and the first *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) product was sold in October 1978 in Columbus, Ohio. The fledgling program

went through some tough times during its formation and early years. No one had ever seen a program like it, and many — even meats industry people — were skeptical. Furthermore, it required a substantial investment at a time when Association income was declining. It survived, then prospered, and has since shown the industry that consumers prefer and will pay more for high-quality beef.

After nearly a decade as executive secretary and 32 years as an Association staff member, Miller announced his retirement. In his farewell statement in the March 1978 *Aberdeen-Angus Journal*, Miller reflected on the fads he had seen. Angus cattle had been bred into small, blocky miniatures of their original Scottish ancestors. Concerned with the industry trend to breed extremely large Angus, he wrote in his last column in the *Aberdeen-Angus Journal*, "It makes one wonder if we might be going down another path of fads today. Or, can we be hopeful that AHIR and National Sire Evaluation will provide us enough [information] to maintain the most useful cattle no matter what size they reach at maturity?"

Short, but meaningful tenure

The search for a new leader culminated in the selection of C.K. Allen, then vice president in charge of education and research for the American Polled Hereford Association. His title would be executive vice president. Allen was the second Angus executive officer to come from another breed association.

The 35-year-old Allen was an animal science graduate of Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. He earned his master's degree and doctorate at Michigan State University, East Lansing, making him the

ASSOCIATION TIME LINE



- 1974
First *Sire Evaluation Report* published
- 1976
Photos of Angus first used for advertising
- 1976
First maternal EBVs calculated
- 1977
First Liberty Bell Sire Evaluation Contest completed
- 1978
First *Pathfinder® Report* issued
- 1978
Lloyd Miller retired; C.K. Allen hired



only “doctor” to ever hold the top Angus office. His broad background in animal science and nutrition and his university research, along with six years of breed association experience, attracted the Board’s attention.

Although Allen only served for three years, he helped make two lasting and important contributions to the Association. First, he headed the drive for the Association to purchase the *Aberdeen-Angus Journal* from its owners in Webster City, Iowa. The *Journal*, started in 1919 by Fred Hahne, had declined in influence and circulation over the years, and in 1978 it reached no more than two-thirds of the Association’s members. With Allen’s leadership, the Association signed the agreement in November 1978 to purchase the magazine. The first issue produced in Saint Joseph, Mo., was issued in July 1979. For several years, until finances dictated otherwise, it was distributed free to every Association member.

For the first time, every member received monthly information directly from the Association. What’s more, in time the magazine proved to be a valuable profit center. Its support of half the regional manager staff kept that force intact despite falling Association revenue. The *Journal* also supported other Angus educational activities.

Second, Allen also helped save the CAB program. In November 1978 Carol Tucker Foreman, the enthusiastic but sometimes misguided assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services, read a story about the new program. Skeptical, and looking to prove that she and the administration were committed to protecting consumers, she concluded that the program was some kind of consumer rip-off.



C.K. ALLEN

- 1978-1981
- Purchased the *Aberdeen-Angus Journal*.
- Gained permission to continue the CAB program.
- First *Sire Evaluation Report* based on field data was issued.
- Field data and structured sire evaluation data were combined into one *Sire Evaluation Report*.

Looking further into the program, she discovered there was no completed form in the USDA files allowing the Association to use a carcass roll. It was a technicality; the program, from its inception, was developed with the help of USDA personnel. On Nov. 12, 1978, she pulled the CAB program carcass roll, effectively shutting down the program.

Once the bureaucratic decision had been made, it was difficult to reverse, even

in the face of overwhelming evidence. Allen and Louis “Mick” Colvin, director of the program, swung into action, writing letters, making personal contact and even meeting with members of the USDA. Four months later, on April 2, 1979, the USDA gave permission to resume the program. A negative decision would have changed the course of Angus history.

The growth of the AHIR program continued in Allen’s administration. In 1980 the first field data *Sire Evaluation Report* was issued. This report made use of AHIR records collected in herds all over the country and was not the result of a structured program. It greatly expanded the source of expected progeny difference (EPD) information. The following year, the field data *Sire Evaluation Report* and the structured *Sire Evaluation Report* were combined.

At the March 1981 Board of Directors meeting, Allen submitted his resignation, to be effective May 1. At three years, his was the shortest administration of any of the Association’s chief executive officers. There was no long search this time. At that same March meeting the Board hired the Association’s director of performance programs, Richard Spader, to be executive vice president. It was the second time in 98 years that a staff member was selected for the job.



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	1978	1978	1978	1979	1980	1981
	First <i>Certified Angus Beef</i> ® product sold	CAB program carcass roll pulled, shutting down the program	<i>Aberdeen-Angus Journal</i> purchased	Permission granted to resume CAB program	First <i>Sire Evaluation Report</i> based on field data issued	Sire evaluation reports from field data and structured sire evaluation combined
						