



Foundation Fundamentals

► by *Milford Jenkins, president, Angus Foundation*

The courage to try

92. At print time, this will be the number of days we have left to achieve a mighty thing for the future of our Angus breed.

The challenge

We've dared what others believed impossible to achieve. Glorious triumphs have been enjoyed, and, yes, failures have tested our resolve along the way. Obstacles have stood in our path, beckoning us to throw in the towel and give up. Uncertainties in the economy, harsh winters, drought, fires, flooding and rising input costs further threaten profit margins in our Angus and livestock operations.

Yet, Angus breeders are resilient, tough, and exhibit dogged determination and incredible courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversities. In difficult times and struggles, agricultural producers are known for their compassion. They are known for valiantly rising to the occasion and unselfishly giving of their time, labor and yes, even their hard-earned and limited resources.

Whether it's buying that Angus youth's steer or heifer project in the county fair premium auction; helping an elderly farm neighbor finish baling his hay or working his calves; rebuilding fence after a devastating tornado, flood

or grass fire, Angus breeders eagerly lend a hand to help others.

While back in Oklahoma in early August, I witnessed firsthand the devastating consequences of this year's drought on the farm of my life's heroes — my father and mother, Donald Ray and Judy Jenkins, and my brother Dennie, who returned to the family farm full-time in the early 1990s.

My father, who has been farming and raising registered Angus since the late 1940s, had been telling me this was the worst drought our area of the country had experienced in his memory, and he has experienced several.

“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.”

— Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States (1858-1919)

The questions

Our family, like many others this past spring and summer in the severely drought-stricken Southern High Plains, has had to make some difficult decisions. Do we buy hay or not buy hay? Do we sell cows or not sell cows? Should we have sold the bulk of those nice coming yearling heifers targeted to be replacement females? Do we lock in cattle cubes now or wait another 30-60 days? Will the price of

salvage/cull cows stay high? How long will this drought continue? Will we be able to plant wheat this fall?

One afternoon after coming in out of the sweltering 110°-plus heat, gathered around the kitchen table over a cold glass of ice tea talking through the challenges currently affecting my family's Angus herd and operation, my parents and brother asked me how they could again financially support the Angus Foundation this year. I couldn't have been more proud!

The lesson

For you see, at that moment, it wasn't about the size of their gift. It wasn't about the Angus Foundation. Nor was it about the *Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus* all of us collectively have been working so hard on for our Angus breed these past few years.

It was about character. It was about integrity. It was about values. It was about work ethic. It was about love for a way of life. It was about compassion for our fellow man. It was about one generation believing in the next generation.

More profoundly, it was about a lesson, along with so many others my brother and I had learned from our parents early in our lives growing up on our farm: No matter the challenges we faced in our life's journey, faith in God, giving to our church, coming to the need of a neighbor, caring for friends and supporting financially those causes and things that have helped us along the way was what was really important in our lives.

The courage

Dad, Mom and Dennie, thank you all for being my heroes and daring me to attempt mighty things, both in my professional and personal life through the years!

Our Angus breed, and all of us as Angus breeders across the country, have dared mighty things, endured hardships and enjoyed victories. With rich spirits, we refuse to live in the grey twilight.

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Author's Note: Visit www.angusfoundation.org for more information regarding the Angus Foundation, scholarships and the campaign.

