

State Auxiliary Strikes Gold

Montana Angus Auxiliary celebrates 50th anniversary this fall.

by Corinne Patterson

The Montana Angus Auxiliary celebrates its 50th anniversary at the Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE) in Billings, Mont., Oct. 11-16. As in years past, it will be a time to see old friends, make new connections and share the common bond of Angus cattle and Big Sky Country.

On June, 12, 1960, a group of women seeking to find camaraderie with those who shared a common passion for Angus cattle met in Helena, Mont. They formed the Montana Angus Auxiliary. Membership 50 years later numbers nearly 120 active members spread throughout the vast expanses of the state. Much like many other state groups, the Montana Angus Auxiliary is involved in many aspects of promoting the Angus breed, youth and the beef industry.

Foundation ladies

Ranchers in the vast, rural areas of Montana did not enjoy the luxuries of private phone lines in 1960, and they certainly did not have Internet access or cellular phones to stay connected with the rest of the state and nation. Life on the ranch was often a lonely and tedious post for the ranch wives who worked side-by-side with their husbands and family to care for the land and livestock. A trip to a Montana Angus Association-sponsored event or annual Angus production sale was often a welcomed reprieve from day-to-day life on the ranch.

"The Auxiliary was formed by a group of forward-thinking ladies as a means to help promote Angus. Many of them were 'hat and glove type' gals, and clubs and

meetings were a very important part of their lives," recalls Marian Stevenson of Hobson, Mont. "It provided a means for them to get out and do something other than homemaking. There were also some who worked alongside their husbands with the cattle and farm work, but in those days joining the men's association was unheard of."

A handful of wives did travel with their spouse to the larger national events that were hosted by the American Angus Association. It was at these gatherings the ladies realized they were not alone; there were many Angus women from across the nation who also enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship that a breed auxiliary offered.

"Esther Harrer and her husband, Wib, attended the big stock show in Chicago where the American Angus Auxiliary held their annual meeting," Stevenson says. "I am sure that group was encouraging states to form their own organizations."

Upon seeing the great potential and benefits that a state auxiliary could offer, Harrer, of Helena, Mont., took up the reins and brought the ideas she had gathered in Chicago back to her home state.

"She came back to Montana enthused and energized to get a Montana organization established," says Melanie Lund of Wibaux, Mont., the current president of the Montana Angus Auxiliary. "She and 14 other women had a charter meeting that took place June 12, 1960."

At that meeting, she shares, Esther Harrer was elected president; Jeanette Stevenson, vice

president; Kay Conzelman, secretary-treasurer; Marj Huffine, publicity chairman; Evelyn Eblen, trophy chairman; Betty Davis and Dorothy Griswold, Ways & Means Committee; Millie Boylan, scholarship chairman; and Donna Sitz, beef promotion chairman.

Expanding the herd

With a core group of officers and members in place, the Montana Angus Auxiliary was now in a position to outline its goals and objectives for the future.

"The main purpose of the Montana Angus Auxiliary was to promote the Angus breed and encourage youth participation in cattle showing, as well as rewarding them with a scholarship each year," Lund says. "The auxiliary may have started with 15 charter members, but because of their enthusiasm and their setting up booths at county fairs and Angus events, the auxiliary grew exponentially over the next few years to more than 64 members."

Recruiting and inviting new members to join the Montana Angus Auxiliary has always been an important part of the group's focus. But the Montana ladies didn't stop at recruiting their cohorts to join them in state events alone.

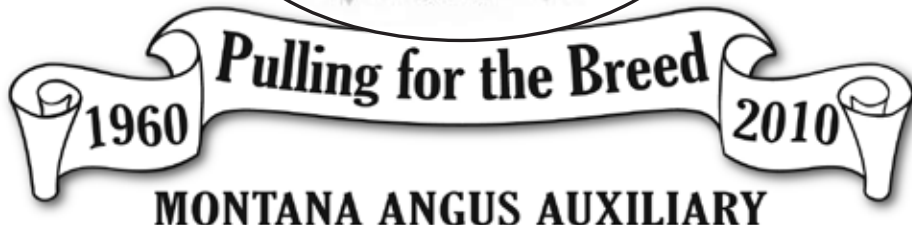
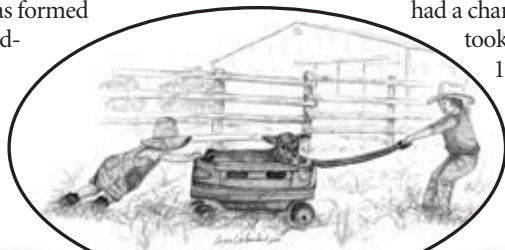
Yvonne Hinman of Malta, Mont., recalls her initiation into the American Angus Auxiliary family. "In the mid '90s, I attended the annual American Angus Association meetings in Louisville, Ky., with my husband, Dave, who was a delegate," she says. "We were standing in the hotel lobby when Jeanette Stevenson came up to me, took my hand and said, 'Come on with me; we are going to the Auxiliary meeting, and I am going to introduce you around.' And she did! Of course she knew everyone and everything and has since then been a great source of inspiration to me."

As the membership of the Montana auxiliary grew, so did its involvement in the American Angus Auxiliary. On a national level, four Montana women have served as president of the American Angus Auxiliary. Harrer led the group from 1965-1966; Jeanette Stevenson served from 1978-1979; Janiece Mydland, Joliet, served from 1988-1989; and Hinman was president in 1999-2000.

"These four women did excellent jobs representing Montana to the American Angus Auxiliary, the American Angus Association and brought great honor to our state," Lund says, noting that several other Montana members have served on national committees.

The next generation

Supporting Angus youth has always been a





► **Left:** Montana Angus Auxiliary members pose at the Montana Winter Fair in 1964 after their meeting in conjunction with the Montana Angus Association annual banquet.

► **Below:** Montana Angus Auxiliary members proudly pose with a purchase by Montana breeders from the 2000 Louisville Sunday night auction. The work by Frank Murphy was done for the Auxiliary's 50th anniversary, with auction proceeds benefiting the American Angus Auxiliary. Members pictured are (front row, from left) Annette Harrison; Jeanette Stevenson; Yvonne Hinman; (second row, from left) Andrea Spikard; Janie Ward; Kristen Larson; Gale Arntzen; Kris Arntzen, Marian Stevenson; (third row, from left) Debbie Denowh; Sara Stevenson; Kathy Creighton Smith; Berta Stevenson; Pam Patterson; (fourth row, from left) auctioneer Jerry Lehmann and his wife; Sandy Jacobs; and Jennifer Davis.

major priority of the Montana Angus Auxiliary. Scholarships, awards and recognition of individual achievement have been provided for decades to the Montana juniors. Funding these programs requires a great deal of dedication, organization and creativity to come up with new ideas to generate the funds necessary to carry out their objectives.

"In the fall of 1994 when I was elected president, the Montana Angus Auxiliary did not have any funds to operate on, and I was determined to change that," Hinman recalls. "The first fundraiser was a brand scarf, by selling spaces for a ranch's brand and name to be printed on a neck scarf. The scarves sold like hotcakes, so we expanded the brand idea to napkins, afghans and tote bags.

"The next thing we peddled were raffle tickets on a variety of items," she continues. "In no time at all we had the treasury up to several thousand dollars. During Pam Patterson's presidency, she arranged to raffle one of Montana Sculptor Harvey Rattays' big bronzes. That bronze Angus bull went all the way to Louisville and back. We sold so many raffle tickets that I think the cowboys wanted to hide when they saw us coming!"

The members of the auxiliary also coordinate the Country Store, which offers a wide variety of Montana Angus-themed merchandise. Country Store Committee members travel to numerous sales and association functions and dedicate their time to raising funds to keep the auxiliary in the black. Betsy Indreland, Big Timber, Mont., helped the organization develop a Silent Auction conducted annually at the Montana Angus Association's annual meeting. The goal is to raise about \$1,500 each year with the efforts of all the membership.

Due to the tireless efforts of these generous women, Montana Angus juniors have the opportunity to earn several different accolades. Top honors include two \$1,000 scholarships given annually to one male and one female junior member, jackets and belt buckles, as well as the Montana Angus

Royalty program for young women interested in becoming the Montana Angus Queen or Princess.

"The rewarding part of keeping the Montana Angus Auxiliary moving forward is seeing the success of each facet of the Auxiliary working in unison every year," Lund says, referring to the partnerships the ladies have made

across the state. "It's been exciting for me to see youth rewarded with the buckle/jacket awards programs, getting to honor those Angus breeders with well-deserved recognition that have taken initiative to partner with the Montana Angus Auxiliary to make these awards possible. It's been exciting to be able to assist young adults further their educations via the state scholarships, and to see the list of Montana Achievement Awards given out to hard-working Montana Junior Angus members. I've been privileged to see refined young ladies represent the Montana Angus breed as royalty in our state, as well as on a national level."

The trail ahead

Looking back at the last 50 years of service to the Montana Angus community, those who have been involved say the organization is in a great position for further success.

"The Auxiliary has changed and evolved over the last 50 years," Marian Stevenson states. "We now have fewer meetings, but we are sponsoring or helping with more events. The friendships made through membership in the Auxiliary are special, and it tends to make raising Angus even more a way of life, rather than just a business."

Stevenson is optimistic the Montana Angus Auxiliary will continue for the next 50 years.



"A few years ago, when membership was down and few had time to give, there was a thought to just joining forces with the Montana Angus Association," she acknowledges, "but then a new crop of young women came along, with lots of new ideas and enthusiasm, and things are going great again.

"It is hard to get together since Montana is such a big state, but e-mail has become a wonderful means of communication amongst Auxiliary members," she continues. "Planning the 50th Anniversary celebration for this fall has been much easier with e-mail, although at times a real face-to-face meeting is necessary."

Lund agrees, adding, "This 50th anniversary celebration is a benchmark in our history. It is also a time of reflection, of researching our past and re-igniting the spark in our generation that was the catalyst for the formation of the Montana Angus Auxiliary. I hope that our generation and future generations will see the value, importance and validity of the auxiliary's impact on the Angus breed and our youth. I would like to have our existing programs successfully continuing as well as see our organization grow in membership of like-minded women desiring to promote Angus and our youth."

