

Facing Adversity

Newly crowned Miss American Angus shares her perspective on facing adversity.

by *Madison Butler, 2015 Miss American Angus*

On October 25, 1920, my great-great-grandfather, R.M. Peek, and his son joined the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association after purchasing a few Angus heifers and a bull. A few years later, the era of "baby beef" began, and so he purchased a smaller Scottish-bred bull in order to meet the need for a different type of "ideal" Angus cattle.

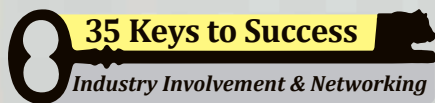
In the middle of an early spring night, his first generation of the new calf type was born, but to his surprise there was not an all-black Angus calf, but rather a calf with several white markings. Now, no one really knows for certain the accuracy of this family Angus lore, but I do know my great-great-grandfather was not pleased with the results. Instead of giving up on the Angus breed, he took this adversity, returned the new bull, and continued to improve his herd's genetic value.

Adversity — one of life's main challenges has many different faces. As a child, one of our biggest adversities may have been losing a favorite toy. To a teenager, not having a prom date can be monumental. As we grow older, the adversities become more personal, depending on our paths. Even our government faces adversity in dealing with other countries or in facing disease outbreaks. Adversity challenges us, makes us grow, and ultimately, changes things for the better.

Just about 50 years prior to my family's start in the Angus breed, George Grant, a pioneer in the breed, brought four Angus bulls from Scotland to the Kansas prairie in 1873. The breed faced many adversities in the beginning. Cattle breeders wanted to shy away from using these black-headed, polled "freaks," as they were called, but as they began to realize the value of these cattle, the breed began to experience tremendous growth.

Use your resources

A primary tool in dealing with adversity is making wise use of all the resources possible. Being selected as the 2014 National



► Madison Butler presented this speech to a packed room as part of the Miss American Angus contest at the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show.



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

Junior Angus Show junior chairman was a huge honor, but little did I realize the enormous amount of work, responsibility and obstacles the title entailed. Lots of young people in Indiana enjoy showing Angus cattle, but I felt it was extremely important for all of these showmen to be a part of the decision-making for our show.

Whether it was requesting class sponsors, selecting awards or simply preparing the fairgrounds for our thousands of guests, I felt it was critical for all members to have a role beyond just showing their cattle. By constant communication and through meetings and team-building activities, this

obstacle was overcome. What started as adversity led to a very cohesive group of Indiana Angus juniors.

The American Angus Association provides a plethora of resources to all cattle producers. Whether it's a prestigious group of American Angus Association Board members making difficult decisions affecting our industry, a select group of junior board members planning a LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) conference for many junior members to enhance their leadership skills, or the Angus Auxiliary continuing to support the junior association through cook-off and

scholarship opportunities, this association is giving its members tools to use as they face challenges in life.

Another approach to facing adversity is using the resources that lie within one's self. Past President Bill Clinton once said, "If you live long enough, you'll make mistakes; but, if you learn from them, you'll be a better person. It's how you handle adversity, not how it affects you. The main thing is never quit, never quit, never quit."

This quote highlights perseverance, a trait that has allowed me to face personal adversities. When I moved 12 hours from my Indiana home to the middle of Kansas to attend Hutchinson Community College, I was faced with many new and challenging situations. Fortunately, persevering has allowed me to gain more knowledge about the livestock industry. By being a member of the livestock judging team, I have learned the importance of low-maintenance, productive livestock. I have learned in judging contests and practice to persevere in using the skills that make me more successful at placing classes and giving reasons.

Likewise, the American Angus Association has persevered in managing the different aspects of our industry to work together. The Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) program uses the excellent genetic

traits of Angus cattle and marketing tools to produce and market a more wholesome product. CAB makes it possible for the commercial producers to have a preferred outlet to sell their product and be able to garner more premiums at the rail. The resources that lie within the American Angus Association allow producers to persevere through the many changes in our industry.

Be prepared and adaptable

The final point I want to make about adversity is that it is inevitable. No matter how cautious a person is or how much planning and preparation a person does, sooner or later everyone will be faced with a difficult challenge of some kind. After the end of the show season a few years ago, I turned out one of my favorite show heifers with a neighbor's bull to get her bred. A month later I found her in the back of the pasture, unwilling to get up. A visit from the vet verified that something was seriously wrong.

My heifer was diagnosed with fescue toxicity, a disease caused from eating fescue hay infested with a fungus. It causes lameness and eventually loss of the hoof. Regardless of treatment, my prize show heifer would never be able to be a productive

female. Losing the heifer was a devastating blow to my small cow herd, but I had to say goodbye.

In the beef cattle industry, there are many inevitable situations producers deal with every day. A few years ago the drought in the western states caused many ranchers to have to sell their cow herds because of a lack of grass, hay and feed. Of course, this led to fewer animals to market and, eventually, an increase in the price of beef. Now, as producers, we have to continue to encourage consumers to pay these higher prices at the grocery store. Though this inevitable factor caused great adversity, the American Angus Association provides resources to help producers continue to have a sustainable product.

Adversity is a part of all of our lives, but it can be used to help us grow as individuals. Using our resources, both external and internal, and realizing that adversity is inevitable will help us deal with the obstacles that we have to face.

I'll leave you here today with this quote from Lou Holtz, the famous Notre Dame football coach: "Everyone goes through adversity in life, but what matters most is how you learn from it."



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- ▶ Texas Angus Association: Fort Worth Stock Show travel
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- ▶ Atlantic National Show Committee: show lodging and banquet tickets
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