

# Creative Writing, Creative Ideas

Creativity is abundant in NJAS writing winners.

compiled by *Kasey Miller*

**C**reativity makes things interesting. Three National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members combined creativity with an Angus theme and, as a result, won the NJAA Creative Writing Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Louisville, Ky., July 15-21.

Co-sponsored by the NJAA and the Junior Activities Department of the American Angus Association, the writing contest is designed to encourage the enhancement of written communication skills while providing another opportunity for NJAA members to compete prior to the NJAS. Entries were due June 1 and evaluated prior to the NJAS.

Junior entrants were asked to write an essay between 300 and 500 words describing a friendship that they developed through the NJAA. Intermediate entries used 600-800 words to explain how they balance showing Angus cattle and their school-related activities. Senior entrants used 1,800-2,000 words to answer the question: "How can the American Angus Association develop or improve relationships with Angus breeders overseas?"

Contest victors were Daniel Rohrbaugh, Seven Valleys, Pa., junior winner; Will Pohlman, Prairie Grove, Ark., intermediate winner; and Lindsay Upperman, Chambersburg, Pa., senior winner. See the photos with this story for those placing second and third in the respective divisions.

Posted below are the winning entries.

## An Inspiring Friendship

by *Daniel Rohrbaugh, junior winner*

It was March 14, 2011, and I was showing my bred-and-owned heifer, Bree, in my

showmanship class at the Mid-Atlantic Junior Angus Classic (MAJAC) in Harrisonburg, Va. Since Bree was born, I had been working with her to prepare her for life as a show animal. Bree was a doll baby.

But on that cold day, when I pulled her towards me around the first turn, something scared her outside of the ring. Her back end swung around and knocked me to the ground. Then she jumped over me. Bree landed awkwardly so that she wouldn't fall on me. I learned later that one of her hooves landed right beside my head.

This could have been a very serious accident that would have impacted my life forever with a head injury. As it turns out, it did influence me, but in a very positive way. That day I met Cody Smith, one of the directors on the National Junior Angus Board. Cody was working in the showring that day. I didn't walk out of the ring with my heifer after the incident because Cody stuck with me to give me assurance that I would be okay. I was very scared that Bree would jump again.

**"This could have been a very serious accident that would have impacted my life forever with a head injury."**

Later that day I showed my steer, and Cody complimented how my steer looked. It made me feel good because someone who was so much older than me showed an interest in my animal. From that day on, Cody always talked to me. It wasn't always me walking up to him. He would come to see me, too.

At the National Junior Angus Show in Pennsylvania, my dad and I went to check in my animals. Cody checked our papers, and he remembered me

from MAJAC. He asked how my steer was. Later on in the day, my steer was used in the judging contest. Cody came over and talked to me about my steer. I couldn't believe that he remembered my steer and me. It made me feel special because someone who was so important would remember a little kid like me. Cody is a true friend to me. While I may be one of hundreds of National Junior Angus members that Cody knows, he is one of the few that I know.

Because Cody cared about who I was, I decided at nationals that I wanted to be a director just like him. I want to befriend younger members and make them feel as important as I do. Looking back, it's hard to believe that getting knocked down in the showring would have created the most awesome friend that a little kid could ever have and make a lasting impact on my future as a National Junior Angus Association member.



► Winning the junior division of creative writing are (from left) **Daniel Rohrbaugh**, Seven Valleys, Pa., first; and **Bryanna Hite**, Valley Center, Kan., third. Not pictured is **Madison Weaver**, Coatesville, Pa., second.

## The Balancing Act

by *Will Pohlman, intermediate winner*

"What's this?" my teacher remarked as

I handed in my make-up work from the previous week.

“My homework?” I responded, confused to say the least.

*I'm sure I finished it ... or did I?*

“Don't get smart with me now! I mean, what is THIS,” Mr. Thomason repeated, this time pointing to the large boot print on the front page of the packet.

“Oh THAT! Well, my work fell out of my chair and my dad stepped on it.”

Mr. Thomason replied smartly, “Were you raised in a barn?”

A smirk spread across my face, and I retorted, “Why, yes. Yes, I was.”

In an attempt to balance my Angus and academic careers, incidents like this have become commonplace. Sure, the first few weeks of school are a shocker for most of my teachers, but by the end of the year, an understanding is reached: I'll complete my homework, barn stains and all, and no questions would be asked.

My friends think I'm insane trying to balance my academic and extracurricular activities, and, frankly, there is reason for concern. Born with a showstick in one hand and a textbook in the other, I've been participating in the large-scale balancing act since I began school. After 12 years, however, I am pleased to say I seem to have it down.

The first thing that became evident to me when trying to balance all of my activities was the importance of budgeting time. Establishing a routine perfected over the years, I can proudly say in the course of a day I can accomplish most of my to-dos. The

routine goes a little something like this.

My alarm goes off at 6:15 every day and, after a few snooze button presses, I feed and tend to the cattle by the light of dawn. After a quick shower, I'm off to school until 3:20. Completing the majority of my homework during school, I set aside the remainder until after chores. After a quick snack, I'm off to the barn to wash heifers and work hair. While the heifers stand under the fans, I feed and check on everything else. I spend 30 minutes working each heifer in a small grassy lot outside our barn, then turn them loose and feed them. By the time I finish outside, the sun is either setting or set. I'll scarf down my dinner, then spend the remainder of the evening working on homework, sometimes past midnight, then head to bed to start the cycle over again.

**“I find working with my cattle clears my mind and enhances my ability to focus on any homework I have.”**

Of course there are exceptions and variations to my routine. Fridays during football season, for example, I'm forced to leave the heifers to my parents, as I have to march in our school band. When judging season picks up in the spring, I'm forced to leave my cattle more often as I may practice from the end of school to 7 or 8 o'clock. However, any free nights I have are spent in the barn.

The largest stressor to the balancing act of academics and Angus, however, occurs when I must be absent from school to attend a fair or show. Although I usually only miss a Friday, there are times when I must miss an entire week of school. It is these instances where I am forced to sacrifice free time at a show to complete my various assignments. It is then that my homework acquires the various stains, smudges and smears that have become an ongoing joke between my teachers and me.

Often I'm asked if the balancing act is even worth the effort. Common logic concludes that my academics would benefit from dropping my Angus project and focusing all of my attention on my studies. However, I find working with my cattle clears my mind and enhances my ability to focus on any homework I have. Furthermore, I prefer the environment of sitting in a lawn chair, feet propped on a water bucket, with roaring fans and loud radios in the background at shows to a silent room with a wobbly desk and squeaky chair. I would be willing to bet

that my grades are superior with my Angus project amongst the balancing act vs. what they would be without my projects.

After 12 years of practice, I'm pleased to say I've mastered the balancing act of Angus and academics. Establishing a routine and budgeting my time, I can accomplish all that needs done in a day and, more often than not, even have extra down time at the end. Although this balancing involves late and stained homework and numerous absences, it's become a part of my school career that I would not trade for anything.

## Communication Foundation

by *Lindsay Upperman, senior winner*

Connie Podesta once said, “Effective communication is the cement that binds an organization together. It is the foundation upon which successful teamwork and good customer relationships are built.” Not only is communication the essential first step in creating a cohesive organization, but it is also an important factor that needs to be worked on constantly.

Therefore, if we are able to communicate, then we can start to build upon our organization by developing new ideas to help the Angus industry grow around the world. In order to provide this organization with the most future, conferences, global *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> production and EPD (expected progeny difference) similarities are just a few ideas to jump-start a working relationship with Angus breeders overseas.

### Communicate face-to-face

Communication is the act or process of exchanging information or news. Though we now have many different ways to communicate globally through phones, text or email, it is a much more difficult procedure. Through text, one can't see the emotions on the other's face, or even see the body language that is being used. Furthermore, one can't always understand the tone of voice, for example, if it is sarcastic or serious. Although there are more ways to communicate, they are less effective than speaking face-to-face.

In order to do this though, a world Angus

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► Winning the intermediate division of creative writing are (from left) **Will Pohlman**, Prairie Grove, Ark., first; **Katie Friederichs**, Walcott, Iowa, second; and **Esther McCabe**, Elk City, Kan., third.

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conference would have to be held at least once a year. This conference would allow the Angus leaders from any country to join together at one time to solve the problems that are occurring and to make direct decisions. This conference would move around the world to different places each year to ensure that every nation would have a chance to be present at one time or another. I believe this would be the best solution to allow every nation to have their own input, while also further uniting our associations to be able to produce a better product for our consumers and to maintain a better relationship with Angus breeders.

Yet, I believe that this type of communication also needs to start at a younger age. LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Angus Development) is a conference that is held in the United States in order for kids in the nation to get together without cattle to make new friends, learn about the industry and develop their skills to stand up for our industry and become the

leaders of agriculture. This is a great way to ensure that the children of today will stay in agriculture and be knowledgeable to answer the questions consumers have about our industries. However, this conference should not stop in just the United States.

It needs to become a worldwide seminar for kids around the world. Then we will be able to create the relationships with breeders around the world at a much younger age. The children will then be able to learn how to communicate even in long-distance situations, which will allow them to be able to better communicate what they want to say in the future. Our industry will be that much more prepared for the issues that might arise and be able to handle them with much more ease by being able to consult with other breeders around the world. Although, this is only the first step in being able to further develop our relationships with our Angus enthusiasts.

#### Similar EPDs

The next idea that would help to further



► Winning the senior division of creative writing are (from left) **Samantha Schermer**, Latimer, Iowa, second; and **Lindsay Upperman**, Chambersburg, Pa., first.

connect our world Angus breeders would be through EPDs. EPDs are used all over the world; however, it is harder to compare the cattle overseas with ones here, for the same EPDs are not always used. In Europe, the main source of income is through meat cutability. They do not get paid for marbling in beef; it is strictly on how much meat is



produced. Yet, in America we all know that a good steak-tasting experience starts with the right amount of marbling. *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) has been a great way to brand beef for certain qualities, like marbling, that allow the producer to get more premiums for meeting certain criteria, and the consumer to be guaranteed a great eating experience.

However, this main difference between America and overseas means that most EPDs used here are not typically used over there. Thus, when trying to compare or notice the differences in genetics, it makes it much harder for breeders to see how their herd stacks up against the rest.

Thus, I believe that it would be a great benefit for this industry to try and create a reward or premium for breeders overseas if their cattle qualify for a certain amount of marbling. In this case, we can then as a world industry produce a more consistent and better-tasting product for the consumer. Furthermore, EPDs will be able to better compare cattle worldwide and can create an easily explained selling point to breeders and producers around the world. Consistent EPDs can make things easier, but it can also be used for another cause.

**Common cause**

*Certified Angus Beef* has already been able to reach 2.2 million pounds (lb.) of product, yet they are still setting their goal higher by wanting to reach 3 million lb. of product sold daily. This is a very big task for just this nation to try and complete by itself. Though I still believe the United States could expand this brand by itself, it would be much easier to reach this goal, and even surpass it, if the breeders overseas would get involved. Now that we have set in motion a reward for more marbling, this will have already helped the breeders to get started on meeting the 10 qualifications for *Certified Angus Beef*.

Through the World Angus Conference, we could first educate the leaders of these Angus industries around the world, and then they would be able to educate their breeders through programs within their country. Yes, this would take many years in order to educate, set up and start a *Certified Angus Beef* program; but soon after, every person around the world would be able to appreciate

a great steak, and the Angus industry as a whole would gain more recognition and popularity in the human population.

However, there still would need to be one other part to guarantee *Certified Angus Beef*. We would have to make sure that USDA-certified slaughter facilities and inspectors have been included into each country, along with the proper programs to keep these facilities and inspectors up-to-date and knowledgeable on the task at hand. This would probably become a much larger issue, since inspectors need to be rotated constantly as to not become too friendly with the slaughterhouses, which includes a higher organization to run all of these procedures.

It would have to include creating a larger food safety organization that handles all facilities and management around the world to ensure that

it truly is *Certified Angus Beef* and exactly what the consumer expects out of this brand of beef. I know that this would take a long time from start to finish, but with the enormous possibilities that could take place in the future, I believe that this mission is definitely worth the risk, if not worth even more!

Although the Angus breed is known for its quality beef, not all producers are in the market to send their animals to slaughter. Some producers would just like to be able to increase their herd genetics, by focusing mainly on their cow families. Yet increasing the genetics in your herd gets harder each year, for we are mostly using the genetic pool that is located in America.

This is never a bad case, but for those breeders who are looking for a special trait to help their herd or even just for some outside genetics, bulls overseas can help to provide that special something to your herd. Not only are the genetics different, but, as I said before, so are the purposes of the cattle overseas. Because our countries have been developing their cattle for what fits their consumer needs, Angus cattle have been bred to excel in certain areas such as lean beef or beef with excessive amounts of marbling.

This can actually play an important role for breeders around the world. In this way, if we were able to take our high-marbling genetics in the United States and incorporate

the genetics of a great yield-grade bull, then we could combine genetics to produce cattle that excel in both areas. This move would also provide heterosis to the next generation of calves, for it would be a type of outcrossing when using two animals whose genetic pools do not overlap as closely as most do.

I believe that this step would allow us to generate a new name for the Angus breed. Not only will Angus be the mother breed and the high-marbling breed, but we will finally be able to say that our Angus cattle also produce more pounds of sellable product. Overall, the Angus breed has many valuable traits for the consumer and breeder; that is why it is one of the most popular breeds around the world. Yet taking advantage of the multiple purposes of this breed and combining them into one animal can take this breed to the next level.

All in all, improving our relationships with breeders overseas can provide many new doors to be opened in the Angus industry. We can finally have a place to meet with everyone around the world to discuss what will happen next in the Angus breed. However, these conferences must be made available to the Angus juniors around the world, to be able to start valuable relationships at a young age.

Then, we can further help to bring our breed together as one by providing a reward to breeders overseas for marbling. This way we will then be able to better compare and make our breed more sellable as all cattle will be based off the same EPDs.

Furthermore, we can help to meet the *Certified Angus Beef* brand's goal of 3 million lb. of beef sold daily. This can be easily met if the time is taken to educate and set up the necessary requirements for the *Certified Angus Beef* brand to be incorporated into countries around the world. Then, we can hope to help the breeders around the world by being able to use the bulls from each nation to improve the genetics of other countries' cattle in order to be able to provide a trait that the Angus breed can be known for.

In the end, though, these ideas can't be fulfilled unless we start with the crucial first step, communication. Communication is not only about getting your ideas across or being able to say what is on your mind, it is also about being able to listen to what people have to say around you.

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