

President's Perspective

Association President Paul Hill weighs in on the issues of the day.

by *Shauna Rose Hermel*



►“Life is full of choices; you make choices every day,” Paul Hill says, adding that he chose to seize opportunities as they presented themselves rather than back away.

“The worst day for us in the Angus business may be the best day for another breed.”

Q. Where do you see the beef industry headed in the future?

A. In the future, the beef industry will see fewer cattle numbers. People are going to look for more high-quality beef products. The opportunity is there for more market share for the Angus breed.

Q. What are some of the biggest obstacles and challenges Angus producers will have to contemplate in the next few years?

A. In the next few years, one of our greatest obstacles will be production cost. We also face the challenge of genetic abnormalities.

Q. Your presidency has been marked by some unusually sensitive and time-consuming activities. Curly calf syndrome (CCS) is about as big an issue as one can expect. How have you gone about handling that?

A. The detection of CCS and our ongoing response to it has, in my opinion, truly demonstrated our strength as a breed, as a membership, as a Board and as a professional staff. No one willingly wants to go through such a process, but we have approached it with the mind-set that we are going to deal with the issue head-on.

From the start, our goal has been to protect our members and their customers. I think we have done that by working around the clock and hand-in-hand with the scientists, by being transparent with the membership and the public, and by focusing on the process we envision playing out over the next several months.

Everything we have done has been with an eye on avoiding panic. Panic usually gets started by people trading on rumor, false innuendo or misstatements of fact. By reminding our members from the outset that this is no longer the 1950s and science will allow us to avoid having to abandon a line of cattle, we got out in front of this issue. That early and repeated reminder has worked. Our membership simply has not panicked.

Our Board members and our staff have combined to devote literally hundreds of hours to this issue. Just recently (early October), the Board spent a tremendous amount of time coming up with the concepts it would follow in drafting a policy for the handling of registered animals with the potential for CCS in their pedigrees, assuming, as we do, that there will soon be a test. The result of that effort is the preview of an aggressive but prudent policy that does not throw the baby out with the bath water.

CCS is being addressed. We remain

confident that we will soon have a test and protocol that will allow us to quickly wind this matter up. In the meantime, I think we have kept the marketplace calm and our members informed.

Q. What would you consider the biggest five decisions considered by the Board during your eight-year tenure?

A. During my eight-year tenure the Board has faced many decisions.

1. After the death of Richard Spader, the Board faced the challenge of filling the post of executive secretary.
2. I'm proud to be one of the leaders and advocates of advancing the Angus Foundation to a new level.
3. The Board has spent years working on a way to be of service to the beef industry and ultimately to advance the use of Angus genetics. The result was the formation of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI).
4. After John Crouch announced his retirement, the Board again faced the challenge of selecting a new chief executive officer (CEO) to lead the American Angus Association and advance the Angus breed.
5. The most recent challenge is that of curly calf syndrome. We must be open and transparent in our reporting and ultimately rid the breed of this genetic abnormality.

Q. What is a Board member's role?

A. A Board member's role is to serve the membership and chart the course of the Association. Hopefully he/she will make good decisions that will advance the Angus breed.

Q. What does it take to be a good Board member?

A. A good Board member must try to be informed and not be afraid to render his or her opinion. A good Board member must be respectful of the membership and fellow Board members — respectful of one's right to his or her opinion even if it doesn't coincide with their own.

Q. Who should run for the Board of Directors of the American Angus Association?

A. Anyone in our membership who has the experience and the time to render informed opinions should run for the Board of Directors. Candidates should be able to communicate with the diverse membership

and ultimately do what is best to advance the Angus breed.

Q. What advice would you offer incoming Board members?

A. I would advise an incoming Board member to be a good listener. Don't be afraid to voice your opinion. And make sure that your opinion is well thought out and informed.

Q. What is the biggest thing you have learned serving as a Board member?

A. While serving on the Board, I have learned that every Board member will make his or her contribution. Being respectful of others' opinions brings people to work together for the betterment of the organization. If one's opinion is respected, one will buy into the ultimate decision that is made.

Q. What is the biggest challenge facing the beef industry today?

A. Among the challenges facing the beef industry today is production costs — feed, transportation, fertilizer, etc. Food safety and other challenges from organizations that seek to discredit the meat industry and our way of life will be larger challenges in the future.

Q. How does the Association assist in overcoming those challenges?

A. The Association can assist in overcoming these challenges in several ways. Through the Angus Foundation, the research projects are ongoing. We have efficiency studies to evaluate effects in the feedlot and cow-calf sector. Educational programs funded partially through the Angus Foundation educate not only our membership but also the beef industry.

A long-range benefit will be through our youth programs. Our contributions to their education enhance leaders that will ultimately be a part of society. Even if they are not directly involved with agriculture, they will have an understanding of production agriculture and the meat industry. They will be a strong voice to sway opinions in a positive way for the meat industry and agriculture.

Q. During your tenure on the Board, you have put a great deal of time and effort into bolstering the Angus Foundation. What is the Foundation's greatest purpose?

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A. Some would say that the greatest purpose of the Angus Foundation is its funding of research. Others would say that the education of our membership, beef industry and society outside of agriculture is the most important contribution. And many would say the individual education of our youth and youth development programs are the greatest purpose of the Foundation.

Q. Who benefits from the Angus Foundation?

A. The investment in the selected research projects will hopefully yield dividends in the near and distant future. Our education efforts benefit Angus breeders, the beef industry and other agriculture-related industries. It has influence on society outside the circles of agriculture. I feel that youth education, development and activities are of the greatest importance. This investment is a gift that never quits yielding dividends. These youth will make a greater contribution to all of society as a result of our investment in them.

Q. Who should support the Angus Foundation?

A. It is in the best interest of all Angus breeders to invest in the Angus Foundation in some way each year — large or small. I think we should encourage industry and people of all walks of life to support the Foundation. The young people the Foundation touches will gain from the influence of all who contribute.

The Foundation provides leaders who would not consider running for the Board or who are not currently in the business an opportunity to be involved in supporting youth development and scientific advancement. It gives a vehicle for them to use their talents, skills and treasury to make a difference.

Most people who have been successful never quit wanting to make a difference. The day they die, they still want to contribute to the betterment of all the things they care about. The most unique thing about our Foundation is it gives opportunity for those people to make a difference.

Q. Why does the Foundation need to collect \$11 million by December 2011, and why isn't more of the original donation spent at the time it was given?

A. As we all know, meaningful research is expensive. The Foundation Board members desire to fund educational projects and youth development on a greater scale each year. In a long-range planning session, the Foundation Board of Directors and the Foundation Cabinet set goals and budgets for the various programs. The endowments must reach a level that, when invested, will yield the interest needed to fund these programs.

Q. Who oversees how Foundation money is allocated?

A. The Angus Foundation Board of Directors, with advice from the Foundation Cabinet and the Foundation President, oversees the allocation of funds.

Q. How have shows changed over the years?

A. At one time, cattle that won were thought to be the elite. If cattle won shows,

Peer Review

During their tenure on the Board, Directors of the American Angus Association interact closely with each other as they discuss the issues and conduct the business of the world's premier beef cattle breed registry. In doing so, they get to know each other on a unique level. We asked Paul Hill's contemporaries to share their insights about him as a Director and officer of the Association.

What is unique about Paul Hill's leadership?

"Paul works very hard to get a consensus about an issue with which the Board is dealing. He encourages all Board members to express their thoughts and ideas. Paul also recognizes the different strengths of Board members and uses these strengths accordingly."

— **Cathy Watkins**

"Paul's leadership skills have been refined over the years ... from his service to our country in Vietnam, to management of highly successful Angus herds, to service with American Angus business. Successful leaders like Paul learn how to utilize all their resources available to make sound decisions and create an environment that brings out the best in people."

— **Gordon Stucky**

"Paul Hill knew what ideas he wanted implemented and the direction he was going, but without Lynn's help with his travel schedule, he never would have gotten there."

— **Jim Rentz**

What was the most significant thing Paul Hill contributed as an Association Board member?

"When Paul came on the Board, he brought a wealth of history, a unique viewpoint, and a genuine passion for the Angus breed."

— **Ben Eggers**

"Paul was instrumental in getting the fitting rule updated. This resulted in a more favorable environment for everyone at shows, especially our juniors."

— **Cathy Watkins**

"As a Board member Paul tried to keep an open mind on matters of controversy. If he didn't know or understand the issues, he was forthcoming about saying so and extremely willing to learn about and understand both sides."

— **Bill Davis**

"Paul exercised patience in the boardroom. Many times Paul was the last person to speak regarding an issue; however, his comments were direct, well-planned and in keeping with serving the best interests of the entire membership."

— **Gordon Stucky**

they were the most valuable in the breed. With EPDs and all the other ways we have to evaluate cattle, that is not as important. Today, the shows provide an opportunity to interact with people.

Over the years the number of shows has increased. There are several regional shows for the juniors. The number of breeders exhibiting cattle has decreased, while the number of cattle shows by juniors will continue to increase.

Q. What value do shows have for the American Angus Association and the National Junior Angus Association?

A. Junior shows give an opportunity for families to have a common interest and do things together. The interaction with people and the whole junior experience is very educational for the development of youth. Junior members in the show setting enhance their communication skills. Many have gone on to be leaders in our industry and other walks of life.

The national shows bring people together to exchange ideas and make their own evaluation of the cattle. If you analyze the show programs, the genetics of cattle shown

are the same as the genetics that are being offered by many breeders that classify their cattle as performance cattle.

Q. How should the Association make the most of that value?

A. In order to make the most of a convention atmosphere at the larger shows, the staff and Board members could block a specific time to give a general update and a mini-pep rally of the most current activities of the Angus Association.

Q. How would you like to be remembered as president of the American Angus Association?

A. I would like to be remembered as one of the leaders in the growth and advancement of the Angus Foundation. I would also like to be remembered as a president who gave the membership, the staff and every Board member respect and an opportunity to make a valued contribution.



► The NJAA develops in young people the life skills that will help them in whatever walks of life they decide to pursue, Hill says. “Our junior leaders can talk to the president of the United States or the man on the street corner.”

“Paul is always open and willing to listen and to learn and to work with folks who may come from different worlds. He isn’t closed-minded to things that he may not have had a preconceived notion on.”

— **Mark Gardiner**

What was the most significant thing Paul Hill contributed as Association President?

“Paul Hill, a strong leader, remained calm, cool and confident when facing difficult challenges. He effectively led the Board in setting up a fair and professional way of selecting a new chief executive officer for the Association. Paul also led the Board to establish a proactive plan to correctly handle the curly calf syndrome. The Board of Directors, members and staff of the American Angus Association owe Paul a round of thanks for giving of his time to be a leader who kept the Angus breed on track during this time.”

— **Norman Garton**

“Paul Hill as President has done a masterful job in staying calm and moving forward on all issues.”

— **Jim Rentz**

“Paul has led this Board through the retirement of John Crouch, the placement of Bryce Schumann as CEO and the subsequent realignment of our executive staff. With the identification of curly calf syndrome, Paul’s leadership has been level-headed, always with the membership of the American Angus Association as his first concern.”

— **Jay King**

“Paul has served through a year filled with added responsibility and controversy. The selection process of a new chief executive officer, led by Paul, was handled in a very professional manner. As other issues developed during year, Paul helped orchestrate the staff and key Board members to develop plans of action that will keep the Angus breed in a position of leadership in the beef industry.”

— **Gordon Stucky**

Was there anything that surprised you in how Paul Hill served as a Board member or leader of the American Angus Association?

“Although Paul is probably best known for his success in the showring, he is acutely aware of the importance of the commercial industry for the Angus breed. Paul has been very successful in breeding and selling bulls to the commercial market.”

— **Cathy Watkins**

“Paul wears his ‘awe shucks’ demeanor like a merit badge, but it is impossible to hide his intelligence.”

— **Joe Hampton**

“As someone closely affiliated with the commercial industry, the thing I appreciate about Paul is he knows all aspects of the Angus industry. Frankly, he knows my world a lot better than I know the showring. He has a very good grasp of the commercial industry.”

— **Mark Gardiner**