



Up Front

► by John Crouch, executive vice president

Working toward greatness

The first line in Jim Collins' book Good to Great states, "Good is the enemy of great." I have considered this philosophy many times while analyzing the successes and shortcomings of purebred beef organizations.

Ups and downs

In his book on corporate America, Collins proposes, "We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools. We don't have great government, principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good — and that is their main problem."

The Angus breed and the American Angus Association have enjoyed a certain amount of success, particularly in the past half century. This success, however, has not been without setbacks. Annual registrations peaked in 1968 when Angus breeders recorded an all-time high of 407,000 animals.

Just when Angus breeders thought success

would last forever, registrations began heading south and did not stop their decline until 1986, when registrations reached an all-time low at 133,000. This adversity stimulated the minds of the Association's Boards of Directors and resulted in two distinct defining periods in the early and late 1970s.

The first defining year was 1972, when the Association made two monumental decisions. The first was to allow unrestricted use of artificial insemination (AI). The second was to adopt a program called the National Sire Evaluation. The long-term effects have been incredible.

The second defining period in our recent history was 1978-1981, which is known for five major decisions:

- the formation of the Certified Angus

- Beef (CAB) Program (the forerunner to Certified Angus Beef LLC);
- the purchase of the *Angus Journal* by the Association;
- the formation of the Angus Foundation;
- the organization of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA); and
- the combining of structured-sire-evaluation data and field data submitted through Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIRSM) into expected progeny differences (EPDs).

These major cornerstones provided the most extensive program of combining genetic evaluation, end product marketing, communication, research and youth activity the purebred industry had ever seen.

No time for complacency

While it is very comforting to bask in the warm sunlight of success, I am also reminded of a quote from Winston Churchill: "There is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold out false hopes soon to be swept away."

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ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Executive vice president: John Crouch

Executive administrative assistant: Diane Strahm

Vice presidents—Finance—Richard Wilson ■ **Information & Data**

Programs—Bill Bowman ■ **Industry Relations**—Jim Shirley

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF BY DIVISION

Finance—Milford Jenkins, director of Foundation development; Kenny Miller, assistant director of finance; Richard Wilson, director of finance
Industry Relations—James Fisher, director of activities & junior activities; Ty Groshans, assistant director of commercial programs; Sara Moyer, director of industry & member communications; Jim Shirley, director of commercial programs; Shelia Stannard, director of activity communications & event coordinator

Information & Data Programs—Lou Ann Adams, director of information systems; Bill Bowman, director of performance programs; Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software; Sally Northcutt, director of genetic research; Bryce Schumann, director of member services & office management; Carol Waller, assistant director of member services & office management

AMERICAN ANGUS AUXILIARY

President—Sharee Sankey, Council Grove, Kan. For a complete list of officers, visit www.angusauxiliary.com.

REGIONAL MANAGERS—Refer to page 130

CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

President—Jim Riemann, Wooster, Ohio. For a CAB staff listing, refer to page 72.

Another excerpt from *Good to Great* relates: *In the early 1950s, The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, commonly known as A&P, stood as the largest retailing organization in the world and one of the largest corporations in the United States, at one point ranking behind only General Motors in annual sales. Kroger, in contrast, stood as an unspectacular grocery chain, less than half the size of A&P, with performance that barely kept pace with the general market.*

Then in the 1960s, A&P began to falter while Kroger began to lay the foundations for a transition into a great company. From 1959 to 1973, both companies lagged behind in the market, with Kroger pulling just a bit ahead of A&P. After that, the two companies completely diverged, and over the next twenty-five years, Kroger generated cumulative returns ten times the market and eighty times better than A&P.

How could such a tragedy happen? The

answer is simple. The management of A&P failed to recognize and adapt to changes in consumer preferences. They failed to accept the fact that we live in a dynamic and changing world wherein consumers wish to purchase an array of goods under the same roof.

The Angus industry is no different. The competition for the seedstock market is becoming increasingly stronger. Perhaps we were given the greatest reminder of that at

the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Research Symposium. Conducted a little earlier in the year than normal, the 2006 meeting was April 18-22 in Choctaw, Miss.

This meeting pulls together the brain trusts of the various breed associations, university personnel and the leaders among the seedstock and commercial cattle production sector to discuss the genetic future of the industry. This year's conference

focused on matching cow herds to the needs of the 21st-century consumer and our own production environments.

Angus Productions Inc. (API) provided online coverage of the event at www.bifconference.com. I encourage you to read the summaries and listen to some of the sessions to see for yourself how the leaders of our industry envision the future.

To be competitive in tomorrow's seedstock industry, just being good is not

going to be good enough. There will be plenty of good seedstock backed by good records managed by good associations. Being described as a "good organization" is comforting, but we must not forget, "Good is the enemy of great."



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