

We'll Be Missing You

Phyllis Breckenridge retires after dedicating 46 years of service to the American Angus Association.

Story & photo by *Tosha Powell*

Humility. It's defined as the quality or condition of being humble or the modest opinion of one's own importance, rank, etc. Humility is an understatement when it comes to Phyllis Breckenridge.

"I'm not sure why you're making a fuss," she says, reminiscing on her 46 years of dedicated service to the American Angus Association. Breckenridge will retire May 21 from her post as computer operator in the Information Systems (IS) Department.

However, 46 years is definitely something to fuss about.

A reputation as a solid worker helped Breckenridge get her start at the Association. A friend told Iris Pankau, then head of IS, of Breckenridge's work ethic and efficiency. Pankau asked her to come to the Association for a job in the Pre-Audit Department. She didn't stay long in Pre-Audit before she was moved into IS. She then began a long list of duties that grew as technology continued to advance.

"My journey started with the Association on Aug. 6, 1961. My first position was in the general office, but after two months I started working with the operation of IBM machines and sorters. I have a long list of things to do," Breckenridge says. "I get to work with just about every department in the Association."

Her job responsibilities as the computer operator include, but are not limited to, working on the Association's servers, databases, files, etc. A list of her daily job requirements total more than two pages, single-spaced. But she does them all, and well.

"Phyllis is an excellent employee, and I have a great amount of respect for her," says Lou Ann Adams, IS director. "She is always ready to work and takes her job very seriously. We never have to worry about the work getting 'messed up' or not getting completed on time.

"Phyllis has many responsibilities. As computer operator she is presented with many challenges, running multiple jobs from several different users at the same time — sometimes very large (several days



in length) jobs — however, it never seems to frustrate her or bring her down."

Keeping up with change

Breckenridge has witnessed many changes in the Association as well as implemented them in her own work setting. Her start in the Association was during the age of the IBM machines, and data was entered into the Association's system on 80-column cards.

"Along the way, there were many server upgrades," she says. "We began with a Honeywell 400, then moved to 1250, 64, a DPS7 mainframe, and now we use Rodeo client servers."

"With changing technology as it is, [Breckenridge's] job has changed a lot over time. She embraced the change and was willing to learn new things and new ways of doing things. It will be difficult to replace her," Adams says. "One bad mistake on the computer system could set us back several hours or even days. We never had to worry about that with Phyllis at the helm."

Breckenridge has witnessed not only

changes in technology, but also changing faces within the Association, from changing executives to new department heads, even new departments.

"I have seen much growth since my beginning here," Breckenridge says. "One-day turnaround service for certificates, large growth in *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®), development of the Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) Department, added services for members on the Internet, not to mention the change in [executives]." Breckenridge notes she has worked for Frank Richards, Glen Bratcher, Lloyd Miller, C.K. Allen, Richard Spader and John Crouch.

"In leaving I will miss all the interesting and challenging things that [are yet to] come for the members and employees. I will greatly miss all the lifelong friendships I have made with employees, as well as a few members. I am proud to have been a part of the Angus team for 46-plus years."

Slowing down

After working nearly a half century, retirement looks good to Breckenridge, she says. She enjoys camping, playing racquetball with friends and traveling with her husband, Dennis Boteler, in their travel camper.

"My husband is retired, so it will be nice to spend more time with him. We are both healthy and would like to travel and enjoy life together while we can," she says.

She hopes to visit more with all her children (two daughters, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild) during retirement. "I want to be able to spend more time with the kids, too," she says. "The oldest [grandchild] is in college, while the youngest is 13 months old."

Breckenridge can also be found volunteering at the House of Bread, which provides services for food pantries, shelters, temporary and permanent housing, and support programs to the needy. Her kind heart and spirit will be missed.

"I have worked with Phyllis for 25 of her 46 years here at Angus," Adams says. "She is not just a co-worker, but a very dear friend of mine. We will miss her terribly."

