



# Always Angus

*For the past half-century, Janet Shackelford has been serving Angus breeders as a devoted member of the American Angus Association staff.*

*by Megan Silveira, editorial intern*

Fifty years ago, the television show “60 Minutes” debuted, the first National Junior Angus Show was hosted and a 17-year-old girl walked into the American Angus Association headquarters in Saint. Joseph, Mo., for the first time.

Fifty years ago, Janet Shackelford began her career with the Association. In 2018, she celebrates a half-century of hard work and dedication to the breed.

## Time marches on

Teddy bears of various shapes and sizes scattered across the surface of

Shackelford’s desk observe the data entry employee’s ongoing devotion. While Shackelford is considered a treasured member of Association staff, she did not originally plan to find a career in the agricultural industry.

---

*“Janet has a wealth of knowledge. She’s the one everyone goes to.” — Gina Weigart*

---

Shackelford was raised by her grandparents on a small farm with milking cows, but she was a stranger to the beef industry. She knew, however, she found a place she could

call home from the moment she first stepped through the doors of 3201 Frederick Avenue. Looking back, Shackelford is thankful she became a member of the Angus family.

“I’m kind of lucky I got the job,” she says. “Nowadays, it seems like you’ve got to know something about agriculture to work in the industry.”

Despite not having any experience with the cattle industry, Shackelford still found herself thrust headfirst into life at the Association. Throughout her 50 years as an employee, she worked her way from her position as a pre-auditor to

the job in data entry she holds today.

Naturally, Shackelford says the Association has changed over the past 50 years. When she first started, staff members sat in crowded desks, organized in orderly lines, with mountains of papers scattered across their workspaces.

## High tech upgrades

“When I was first here, it was mainly hands on paper, key punches, hand filing in big bins,” Shackelford explains. “You couldn’t go out like we can now to the Internet. I don’t even think we had it then.”

In addition to the lack of technology, she says they had to play a real-life version of the “telephone” game whenever they had questions.

“Back then, we had to go to the supervisor and then the supervisor would call,” she describes. “It was like you were whispering in someone’s ear and, by the time it came out, it wasn’t what you meant.”

Shackelford says 50 years have taught her a lot about the Association and

herself. With years spent alongside Angus breeders and coworkers, her communication skills have grown. Along with overcoming the shyness she once possessed, Shackelford learned to handle changes the Association has made over the years.

She now enjoys the ease of entering data with high-tech computers and appreciates the individual phones



found at each employee’s desk.

She describes the work environment of 2018 as more relaxed and says the Association has become her “home away from home.”



*Shackelford says the hardest part of staying with the Association is watching others around her retire. This long-time employee says retirement isn’t coming anytime soon.*

From the personalized work areas to the people Shackelford has the pleasure of working with, she says it’s been easy to love being an Angus employee. In fact, Shackelford says the hardest part of staying with the Association is watching others around her retire.

Speaking of retirement, this long-time employee does not envision

her time at the Association ending anytime soon. A friend once told her, “You will know when it’s time,” and Shackelford says her time most certainly has not come.

“I don’t plan on retiring yet. If I retire, I’d have to start doing chores around the house, like dishes for one,” she jokes.

With a love for helping others, Shackelford says the key to staying with a company for 50 years is to find happiness in the day-to-day work.

“Enjoy your job,” she advises. “Always remember that there’s other jobs, but if you don’t enjoy them, then that’s all they are. Just jobs.”

It seems work isn’t the only thing Shackelford has dedicated herself to. In October, she will celebrate her 50th wedding anniversary with her husband, Rickey.

The Shackelfords were married after graduating from high school and settled on three and a half acres in Saint Joseph, Mo., in 1988. They still live on the property today.

Each morning Shackelford says goodbye to her recently retired husband and cat,

Boots, before departing for the office. Continuing the tradition she started years ago, Shackelford arrives at work before the rest of her coworkers, with the goal of having all memberships checked before 8 o’clock.

Despite every day in the office being different than the last, Shackelford says the joy she finds from working with breeders is unwavering. She

*Continued on page 214*

enjoys helping Angus cattlemen and women, and it is this love that brings her back to the Association each year.

## Wealth of knowledge

Over the top of the wall separating their desks, Gina Weigart plays the daily game of “whack-a-mole” as she calls it, popping her head over the obstruction to ask Shackelford for advice. While the barrier might keep Weigart from seeing Shackelford during normal work hours, she says she always makes a point to ask the Association veteran any questions she might have.

Weigart has witnessed her own share of change in the Association since she began working alongside Shackelford in the Association’s data entry department 24 years ago. She says Shackelford, however, has remained a constant presence in the changing cattle industry.

“She’s seen so many people come and go,” Weigart says about Shackelford’s longevity in the work place. “She’s outlasted all of them.”

Besides admirably staying with the Association for a total of 50 years, Shackelford has devoted herself entirely to her work.

“She always comes to work. She doesn’t miss a day,” says Della Horstman, a fellow data entry employee. She jokes, “We sometimes have to fight her to take a vacation.”

The consensus within the data entry department is that Shackelford is one of the hardest working employees they have.

“She is a huge asset to us here,” says Ashley Lyle, data entry and distribution lead at the Association. “If we ever lost her, the amount of

### A unique milestone, a unique gift

  


Two American Angus Association employees have recently hit the 50-year milestone in their career — Janet Shackelford and Marg Dreesmann. This unique anniversary prompted Allen Moczygmeba, American Angus Association Chief Executive Officer, to present them with a special gift.

“We wanted to do something that was unique and classy,” Moczygmeba says. “Something you could not get at a store.”

These special bracelets were made by Champe Jennings Jewelry out of Texas.

*Marg Dreesmann (left) and Janet Shackelford (right) show off their unique Angus bracelets for their 50 years of service to the Association.*

knowledge that would walk out that door would be incredible.”

Lyle says Shackelford takes the initiative to arrive early at work, every single day. Without prompting, Shackelford can be found at her desk, rechecking entries, over half an hour earlier than she is expected to be present at work.

When the rest of her team arrives, Horstman says Shackelford always greets them with a smile. The department is comforted by Shackelford’s experience as her knowledge allows her to answer their many questions.

“She’s got a wealth of knowledge. She’s the one everyone goes to,”

Weigart says.

Despite the cuddly teddy bears and animal-themed calendars covering her desk space, the entire Association staff knows Shackelford is a fierce worker. Her team describes her as precise and thorough, respecting her for her dedication to detail.

And while Shackelford might love the work, her coworkers believe it is her love for the people that has kept her at the Association.

“It wouldn’t surprise me if she stayed another 50 years,” Weigart says. “This is her family. This is her everything.”

For 50 years, Janet Shackelford has been, and always will be, Angus. A