

Looking forward to a weekend with wife Sheri and daughter Alyssa ... Beaming with pride for sons Jared and Brett, both attending the University of Missouri ...

Enjoying being out among the cows on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, with the trees turning color and the air full of that woody smell that defines fall in cattle country ...

Somehow, I can just picture Dick Spader looking upward and saying, "You might as well take me now, Lord, 'cause life sure can't get any better than this."

And what trailboss would turn down an offer from such a good hand?

Richard L. Spader, executive vice president of the American Angus Association, died Saturday, Oct. 13, of a massive heart attack at his farm in Rosendale, Mo., while in the pasture tending to his Angus herd.

We were not ready to lose our trusted leader, a valued friend.

Family first

If the measure of a man is the family and children he leaves behind, few can sit in the saddle as tall as Dick Spader. Dick enjoyed talking cattle, but his eyes lit up when he started talking about his family. I've never seen a man take finding the perfect Christmas present for his wife so seriously. And he always had a story to tell about Brett and "them dogs."

If we belonged to any other organization, we might not hear about our exec's family activities or his preoccupation with Quarter horses. But this isn't just any organization. And Dick Spader was no ordinary leader.

It's hard to imagine the Angus business without Dick Spader. He has played such a central role in the industry for more than three decades. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Dick joined the Association public relations department in 1969, after graduating from South Dakota State University (SDSU) with a major in animal science and a minor in journalism.

Soon named assistant director of public relations, in 1973 he was given added duties as assistant director for the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program. In that role, he helped publish the first *Sire Evaluation Report* in 1974. In 1976, he became full-time director of performance programs, overseeing the first *Pathfinder Report*, the first estimated breeding values (EBVs) and issuance of



Richard L. Spader — Jan. 31, 1945 - Oct. 13, 2001

Father Leader Friend

the first *Sire Evaluation Report* based on field data.

Dick assumed the role of executive vice president almost as suddenly as he relinquished it. At its February 1981 meeting, the Board interviewed and promoted Dick Spader all in the same day. In *A Historic Angus Journey*, author Keith Evans notes, "He had come to work that Monday morning expecting to take part in the last day of the regular quarterly board meeting and went home the ninth chief executive officer of the world's largest beef cattle registry association." He was 36 years old.

A steady hand

Dick assumed the reins of an organization that had experienced more than a decade of declining registrations. His gift to the breed and to the industry was a steady hand that served as a calming influence in troubled times and in times of abundance.

Under Dick's leadership, the Association successfully weathered the early 1980s. The performance movement gained momentum, and the Association — through the participation of the membership — established the database that has made the breed the source of dependable, predictable genetics that it is today.

During Dick's term as executive, the Association launched such performance programs as nonparent expected progeny differences (EPDs), performance registration certificates, the development of ultrasound to evaluate progeny for carcass merit and the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS).

The *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand has led the entire industry to a focus on the beef consumer and has hastened the development of programs through which producers could be paid for end-product value.

Dick was at the helm to oversee the integration of the *Angus Journal* sales force and the regional manager team, as well as publication of the first *Angus Beef Bulletin*; the creation of an Association long-range plan; development of an Angus software package that would expand into its own department, now known as Angus Information Management Software (AIMS); establishment of the Commercial Rela-

tions Department and the Supply Development branch of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB); and the transition from blood-typing to DNA-marker-typing for parentage verification.

Many milestones were reached during his tenure:

- The Angus Foundation surpassed the \$1 million mark;
- Sales of CAB grew to more than 565 million lb. in 2000;
- The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) membership reached 11,854 this past year; and
- AHIR submissions reached an all-time high of 693,700 weights, including 278,217 birth weights, 273,159 weaning weights and 142,324 yearling weights submitted by 5,367 active members.

In the role of executive vice president, he worked with 21 boards of directors, providing a continuity to the leadership of the Association. His steady influence

helped to make the Association one of the most solid institutions in the cattle industry.

Mr. Spader led the Angus advance with a love for the breed, a confidence in his staff and the integrity of a true cowboy.

We extend our deepest sympathies to his family. He will be missed.

— **Shauna Hermel**



Editor's Note: *The family has requested memorials be made to the Angus Foundation for scholarships in memory of Richard L. Spader. (Please make checks payable to the Angus Foundation.) Memorials and cards of sympathy for the Spader family can be directed to the American Angus Association, 3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506.*

Photo: *The photo of Dick and Sheri Spader accompanying this article was taken by Cheryl Oxley.*