



Up Front

by **JOHN CROUCH**, executive vice president, American Angus Association

Home from Louisville

It is 5:45 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2002, and the National Angus Show in Louisville, Ky., has just been completed with resounding success. The grand champions and other show winners selected by the judges are outstanding representatives of our breed. Their breeders, owners and exhibitors are to be complimented. It was a great event, and I feel proud and honored to have been a part of it.

Change of the guard

During the course of the four days surrounding the 119th Annual Meeting of the American Angus Association, the Board of Directors convened twice. All Board duties and assigned tasks were completed with dispatch. At the Annual Meeting, we watched four directors retire after six years of service. Their contributions toward the advancement of the Angus breed will be forever etched in the annals of history. Correspondingly, four new directors were elected. They, in turn, are destined to make like contributions.

A new slate of officers was elected to

lead the efforts of the largest beef breed organization in the world. Retiring president Leroy Baldwin of Ocala, Fla., spoke of future opportunities in a changing beef industry. He charged the delegates and members to take advantage of every opportunity to make the public aware of the importance of agriculture to the well-being of the world. He spoke of the immeasurable value of our youth programs and expressed his appreciation to the membership for their support.

The incoming president, Steve Brooks from North Dakota, reminded delegates of the importance of positioning the breed and the Association in such a manner as to take full advantage of a changing economic environment. He spoke of courage — the courage required to propel the Association to the next level of service to the beef industry.

As I reflect on the events of the week,

I am awed by the sense of history and tradition that surrounds the breeding and care of seedstock. What a rich history it is! The program on Saturday evening, produced and directed by the American Angus Auxiliary in celebration of their 50th anniversary, vividly pointed out the dramatic changes that have occurred during the past 50 years, not only in the type and kind of cattle we produce, but also in the clothes we wear, the music we listen to, the cars we drive and the attitude we have about life.



Steve Brooks

I am reminded of past officers and directors and the tremendous conflicts and struggles they experienced in order to ensure the growth of the Angus breed and the strength of the Association. An old saying proclaims, “No one ever said it would be easy,” and the decisions that resolved past conflicts certainly did not come easily. History does prove, however, that those decisions were in the best interest of the breed and have ensured its accelerated growth and development.

Derivative debate

During the past year we have been engaged in a struggle as to whether or not the adoption of a program to record ancestral information and provide genetic values on percentage Angus cattle would be in the best interest of

the Angus breed. At the request of several individuals and state associations, the Board of Directors asked that an informational forum be held on the subject prior to the candidate-delegate open forum in Louisville.

It was obvious that emotion ran high, as some 600 people were on hand for the presentation. It was a thrill to have that many people interested. After opening remarks and a historical perspective, six panelists, three for and three against, aired their views. Many written questions were directed to the panel members, with respect to the mechanics of the program and how it would affect both small-scale and large-scale breeders. Many people fear that such a program would have a detrimental effect on the purebred market, while others feel the long-term effects would be beneficial. Even though opinions differed, the debate and exchange of ideas was a healthy exercise.

Regardless of our opinion of the Angus derivative concept, we must take caution not to close our eyes to other “departures from tradition” in the American Angus Association. Just as each of us today sees a customer base with different needs from just five or 10 years ago, we will likely see this trend continue at an even quicker pace in the near future. We must continue to keep an open ear to the beef industry and to structure programs that will give Angus breeders every opportunity to continue to grow their business and market share.

As alluded to previously, and as with many controversial ideas, people become passionate about the outcome. We should not forget that passion and controversy are tremendous stimulants for growth. Were this not so, America would never have been born.



New officers and directors of the American Angus Association are (seated, from left) Keith Arntzen, Hilger, Mont., treasurer; Steve Brooks, Bowman, N.D., president; Joe Elliot, Adams, Tenn., vice president; (standing, from left) Bill Davis, Sidney, Mont.; Gregg Blythe, Decatur, Ala.; Leo Baker, Saint Onge, S.D.; Bob Schlutz, Columbus Junction, Iowa; and John Schurr, Farnam, Neb.