

Angus Announces Plans for Expansive Communications Center

New venture will create unified platform for expanded breed communications, marketing.

by **CRYSTAL ALBERS**,
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The American Angus Association announced Feb. 20 a historic move that unifies the organization's communications efforts and expands the marketing platform for the nation's Angus cattlemen.

The Association's public relations (PR) department, producers of Angus TV, and Angus Productions Inc. (API), publisher of *Angus Journal* and *Angus Beef Bulletin*, will unify to form one cohesive communications center.

As part of the unification plan, longtime API President and General Manager Terry Cotton will be named vice president of sales. Cotton will also represent Region 12, serving Angus breeders in California, Nevada, Arizona and Utah.

Eric Grant, Association director of public relations since 2009, will serve as API president and general manager, effective May 1, 2014.

The unification plan brings all Association communications, advertising and public relations assets — including press releases, websites, social media and breed advertising, as well as television and radio programs — into Angus Productions Inc.

The decision also brings together a team of more than 30 talented professionals — editors, writers, graphic designers, web developers, photographers and videographers — dedicated to advancing the Angus breed.

Most notably, it marks the first time in the Association's 130-plus-year history that all aspects of breed promotion and communications will be under one roof and management.

"By unifying these various components, we will strengthen the Angus brand and message, eliminate confusion and improve the effectiveness of each individual media platform, all of which points back to increased strength for Angus breeders and their customers," says Bryce Schumann, Association CEO.

The communications center will also benefit the Association's many programs and services.

"Today's rapidly evolving genetic selection tools and other technological advancements require effective communications with members and others in the beef industry," says Bill Bowman, Association COO. "Only through

coherent communications to and from our members can we improve the understanding and application of Association programs and tools. This move toward a more unified communications effort will greatly assist us in accomplishing that goal."

Association President Gordon Stucky of Kingman, Kan., says the announcement represents the next step in a decades-old tradition in breed communications excellence.

"We believe this is a pivotal move for the Angus breed — one that will allow us to better communicate the many advantages of registered Angus genetics to all sectors of the beef business, from seedstock to cow-calf producers, from feeders to consumers," Stucky says.

Cotton and Grant

Cotton was named general manager in 1986 by Dick Spader, Association executive vice president, following a successful tenure as a regional manager and as manager of API Special Services.

Under Cotton's watch, API's revenue has grown by nearly 500% since 1986, reaching a peak of \$9.7 million in FY 2008.

Today, the *Angus Journal* and the *Angus Beef Bulletin* are collectively the industry's largest single source for information, producing more than 1,500 pages of editorial, 600 breeder sale books and brochures, and nearly 4,000 pages of advertising each year. API also manages nearly 300 breeder websites, and each day

distributes news updates through its various digital channels.

"We would not be here today without Terry's leadership and record of achievement," says Schumann. "It is because of Terry that we are now unifying these entities — and preparing to meet the opportunities of the future. We are deeply grateful for his service to the Angus breed and fortunate that we will continue to benefit from his leadership."

A 28-year ag communications veteran, Grant has made noteworthy contributions to the field, spanning nearly every media platform. He began his writing career with *Simmental Shield* in 1986 and served as

assistant editor for *National Cattlemen* and *Beef Business Bulletin* for the National Cattlemen's Association. Later, he served as contributing editor and photographer for *Beef Today*, *Range* and *American*

Cowboy magazines, among others. Grant joined the Association in 2007, first as manager of API's Creative Media Division, and then as director of public relations in 2009.

Under his supervision, the Association successfully launched *The Angus Report* and *I Am Angus*, two popular television programs on RFD-TV. More recently, the department created *Angus Talk*, a 30-minute talk show on Rural Radio Channel 80 on Sirius XM Satellite.

In addition, Grant also brought the breed's national advertising campaign into the public relations department, the first time in more than 50 years that all advertising functions were conducted in-house and not by an outside agency. On top of distributing more than 140,000 news releases last year, the department also produces weekly radio news releases and weekly TV news releases.

"The *Angus Journal* and API enjoy one of the storied legacies of the cattle business, and we believe Eric's leadership will strongly position us for the future," remarks Schumann. "He has a track record for innovation within the beef business, and no one is better-suited to lead this venture into new marketing endeavors."

History

Until this venture, Association PR and API have operated independently for nearly a century.

The *Aberdeen-Angus Journal* was founded by publisher Fred Hahne of Webster City, Iowa, in 1919. It remained in the Hahne family until 1979, when the magazine was purchased and renamed *Angus Journal* by the American Angus Association.

Over the years, the publication has not only claimed numerous awards for writing and graphic design, but also has been home for some of the most colorful and influential people in the beef industry.

Hahne is credited with reinvigorating interest in the Angus breed in the mid-20th century, notably playing a pivotal role in preserving the Earl Marshall bloodline, from which almost all contemporary Angus cattle trace.

Visionary livestock marketer and communicator Michael Sweet was named the *Journal's* first general manager following the Association purchase in 1979. Sweet was not only known for his communications prowess, but also for pioneering the marketing of cattle via satellite TV.

Longtime publisher and editor Dale Runnion served as acting general manager in the early 1980s; notably, he hired Cheryl Oxley, who was the publication's production manager for more than 30 years. Runnion was inducted into the Livestock Publications Council Hall of Fame in 1987; Oxley in 2003.

The Angus public relations department also enjoys one of the industry's most celebrated histories.

Tracing its roots to the golden era of advertising in the 1940s and 1950s, the then Chicago-based Association had access to some of the brightest minds in advertising.

Recognizing the need for more aggressive breed promotions, longtime Association CEO Frank Richards, whose background was in ag journalism, hired Lloyd Miller to be his "publicity man" in 1946, a responsibility he assumed for 22 years.

Under Miller's leadership, the Association recruited a top-flight team of writers and artists, including Harry Barger, a talented ad copy writer, and Frank Champion Murphy, a Chicago-based artist who would spend the next 40 years creating paintings and illustrations of Angus cattle. His vast body of work now comprises the world's largest single collection of original cattle paintings and illustrations, most of which are on permanent display in Association offices.

In 1984, the Association launched the "Elephant ads," arguably the most memorable advertising campaign in the history of the cattle industry. The campaign was created by PR director Keith Evans and Bob Watkins of Fletcher-Mayo Associates.

"We are excited to build on our historical legacy — and to open the next chapter in Angus promotions and communications," says Cathy Watkins, Middletown, Ind., Angus breeder and API Board chairman. "Angus breeders everywhere will benefit from our improved efficiencies and the much more aggressive posture we will be taking in promoting Angus and advancing the interests of our breeders."

For more information, visit www.angus.org.



Eric Grant



Terry Cotton