

The First Century of Angus Cattle at Michigan State University [2010]

By

David R. Hawkins, Professor Emeritus

Michigan Agricultural College (MAC) was founded in 1855 and was chartered as the first land grant university in the United States after the Morrill Act was passed in 1862. Its mission was to educate the sons and daughters of the working class and to teach practical classes in agriculture and applied science. The name was changed to Michigan State College (MSC) in 1925 and then to Michigan State University (MSU) in 1955. Cattle were part of classroom instruction from its founding. The first importation of Galloway cattle to the U.S. from Ontario was made by MAC in 1866. In 1872, some of the MAC Galloway, Devon and Shorthorn cattle were sold at public auction on campus. Herefords were added in 1885.

In 1902, Robert S. Shaw was hired as Professor of Agriculture and in 1906 the Animal Husbandry Department was formed. In 1908, Shaw was named Dean of Agriculture at MAC, a position he held until he became President of Michigan State College in 1928. He held this position until 1941. He was a nationally recognized judge of beef and dairy cattle and officiated at many shows including the International. He was inducted into the Saddle and Sirloin Portrait Gallery in 1933. In 1908, when Shaw became Dean, he hired George Brown, a 1907 MAC graduate, to be the Head of Animal Husbandry, a position he held until he retired in 1950.

In 1909, Dean Shaw sent Professor Brown to the Elm Park herd owned by James Bowman at Guelph, Ontario to purchase two bred Angus heifers. Elm Park Pride 6, reg. no. 108071, and Elm Park Rosebud 8, reg. no. 108069, were selected as the foundation females for the Angus herd at MAC. In 1921, Bessie of Rochester was purchased from Barnett Brothers at Rochester, Michigan and in 1926, a Queen Mother female was purchased from Wildwood Farms at Lake Orion, Michigan. These four cow families established the College Prides, College Rosebuds, College Bessies and College Queens and their descendants formed the cow herd until the 1970's. The last College Pride female was the dam of MSU Black Revolution 165.

In the early 1900's, many of the land grant universities used the livestock exhibitions to showcase improved nutrition and management programs and to recruit students. MAC exhibited Angus steers that produced the Grand Champion Carcasses at the International Livestock Show in Chicago, Illinois, in 1901 and 1921. MSU has continued exhibiting cattle at national shows throughout the century.

Early Angus sires used at MAC included Plumb Square and Level, a son of imported Edgar of Dalmeny, donated by W.E. Scripps in 1921. He was Grand Champion Bull at the Ohio State Fair in 1923. Next in 1930 came Revolution of Wheatland, a grandson of Blackcap Revolution, the 1923 International Grand Champion who sired three International Grand Champion sons. He had a successful show career and was later used at Purdue. Following him was Revalloch of

Sunbeam, a second prize winner at the 1938 International, by Revolution 100th, the 1931 International Grand Champion son of Blackcap Revolution. Thus the cow herd of the 1930's was heavily influenced by Earl Marshall. Other bulls used in the MSC herd during the late 1940's and early 1950's included Evader Mercury's Eric, Blackcap Pardolier 2nd and Eileenmere 1171, a heavy quartered son of Eileenmere 1100 who was leased from J. Garret Tolan in Illinois.

One of the leading Angus herds of the 1940's was Grand River Stock Farm founded by Drs. J. J. & O.S. Hendren at Webberville, Michigan. Their foundation herd sire, Black Bardolier, a son of Bandolier of Anoka, had been selected from the W.E. Scripps herd at Lake Orion, Michigan. Black Bardolier proved to be a dominant sire of the Angus breed and his full brother Black Bardolier 3 was acquired by MSC. This bull was somewhat disappointing as a sire and in 1944, MSC traded Black Bardolier 3 to the Hendren brothers for Blackbird Grenadier G.R. 2, who proved to be a very popular sire. In 1948, MSC sold Blackbird Grenadier G.R. 2 to Brays Island Plantation in South Carolina for \$15,000.

At the Grand River Stock Farm Dispersal in 1946, the last cow due to calve to Black Bardolier was sold to White Gates Farm in New Jersey. She calved on the truck in route to New Jersey and her bull calf was named Black Bardolier of White Gates 3. By 1951, he had become the model bull of the Angus breed and his photo was used extensively by the American Angus Association. At the White Gates Farm Dispersal, Black Bardolier of W.G. 3 was acquired to return to Michigan and was used in the Grand River, Raona and MSC herds as well as Wilton Farms in Iowa. When mated to the larger framed MSC Angus cows, he sired numerous winning progeny. When his daughters entered the cow herd, the average size of the herd diminished.

In 1946, Dr. Ron Nelson joined the faculty at MSC and later became Chairperson of the Animal Husbandry Department in 1950. During his 34-year tenure as chairperson, he also was actively involved in the supervision of the MSU Beef cattle teaching herds. He became recognized internationally as a beef cattle geneticist and judge. He was instrumental in developing pedigree analysis as a means of combating dwarfism and was instrumental in developing the AHIR program for the American Angus Association. Dr. Nelson acquired an interest in O. Bardoliermere 32nd, the 1954 American Angus Futurity Supreme Champion, from Professor Herman Purdy at Pennsylvania State University. This son of Bardoliermere 2nd was larger than his contemporaries and his progeny were considered large for the times. A daughter of the 32nd produced MSU Spartan Bardoliermere who topped the Denver Bull Sale at \$10,000 in the early 1960's.

By the mid 1960's, MSU faculty and staff were trying to increase the size and growth rate of the cattle. Artificial insemination was permitted only if you were a co-owner of the bull. Dr. Nelson arranged with Ankony Farms to lease a promising bull, Ankonian Jingo 2nd for a six-month period so that MSU could breed cows via A.I. and be able to register the calves. His offspring at MSU were growthier than those sired by other bulls at that time and commanded top prices at the Michigan Angus Futurity sales. After Ankonian Jingo 2nd, came leases of Ankonian Galahad, O.

Bardoliermere 122, Dor Macs Bardoliermere 444, Proud Bardoliermere, K. Maximilian 100 and Powerhouse K 10, all growth bulls for the mid 1960's but they lacked the ability to consistently transmit their size and growth rate.

In 1967, the MSU faculty, including Dr. Ron Nelson, Dr. Harlan Ritchie and Professor Byron Good decided to search North America to find outcross genetics to change the MSU Angus herd. The first bull selected was Atlas Marshall from the Jim Bradford and Wayne Lacock herds in Iowa. He was linebred to Earl Marshall and later an interest sold to Ankony Farms. A son of Atlas Marshall produced the Grand Champion Carcass at the International. A daughter of Atlas Marshall from the College Pride family produced MSU Black Revolution 165.

In the spring of 1968, Megaton of Wye was purchased for the MSU herd after he set a record 205 day adjusted weight of 782 lb. The Wye Plantation herd, under the direction of James Lingle maintained extensive records of performance including individual feed efficiency of its young bulls. Megaton of Wye was later used in both the Premier and Ankony programs. In 1971, three additional Wye Plantation bulls were added – Bonanza of Wye, Freestate of Wye and Collaborator of Wye. All three became breed leading sires of the 1970's, after the American Angus Association opened A.I.

In the summer of 1968, Ritchie, Bradford and Lacock visited the Erdmann Angus herd in South Dakota that had been successful in breeding top performing bulls at Montana bull test stations. The pedigrees of these cattle traced to old line Earl Marshall breeding, but were not considered fashionable for that time. Earlier Bradford had purchased Marshall Pride 4 (“Big John”) from Erdmann Ranch. In October, 1968, Dr. Ritchie and Dr. Nelson returned to purchase 10 heifer calves for the MSU herd. At that time, they secured a two-year lease on an exciting young herd bull, Black Revolution 317. When he arrived at MSU in the spring of 1969, he was so long, tall and trim that Professor Good nicknamed him “Pipeline”. Prior to Pipeline’s arrival, Big John and his outstanding son, Marshall Pride 476 (“Little John”) were sent to MSU and used for a short time. In 1969, after the arrival of the Wye and Erdmann bulls, MSU became the focal point for changing genetics and breeders from across the continent came to MSU to see these bulls. Two sons of Big Elban of Moore were also added to the MSU herd sire roster. Graham Bardolier 4 in 1970 and Graham Bardolier 59 in 1972.

The ten Erdmann females made such an impact in the MSU herd that it was decided to purchase heifers from other herds noted for superior performance. In 1969, females were purchased from: Graham Angus in Georgia, Ideal Farms in New Jersey, Bellemonte Farm in Virginia, Appleland Angus in Washington, Thompson Angus in Washington plus six more heifers from Erdmann Ranch. In 1970, additional females were purchased from Graham Angus, Appleland Angus, Biffle Ranch in Oklahoma and Kalamal Angus in British Columbia. Included in the Kalamal group was an outstanding cow with her bull calf. The calf was Kalamal Lancelot 37A, who went on to be the 1970 International Reserve Grand Champion Bull. In 1971 and 1972, heifers from Valley View Farms in Maryland were added and in 1973, six more heifers were acquired from

Ideal Farms. By 1972, all of the older MSU cows had been sold carrying the service of the newer sires for more dollars than the cost of purchasing the newer females.

In the 1970's, MSU became a major seedstock source for Angus breeders around the world. The first calves sired by the Erdmann and Wye bulls out of the new females were born in 1970 and 1971. When they were exhibited at the All American Futurity, the International and the National Western Stock Show, they started to win major awards. MSU Miss Revolution 105 by Pipeline out of a daughter of Graham Bardolier 4 was the Grand Champion Female and Supreme Champion at the 1972 All American Futurity. MSU Black Revolution 165 by Pipeline out of an Atlas Marshall daughter was Intermediate Champion at the Futurity and Reserve Intermediate Champion at the International. An interest in him was sold to Kinglore Farms in Illinois before he was leased to Curtiss Breeding Service. MSU Miss Freestate 236 by Freestate of Wye out of an Erdmann cow was the Reserve Grand Champion Female at the 1973 All American Angus Futurity.

In 1973, Early Sunset Emulous 44D, a large framed son of Biffles Emulous 775, was purchased from John Grant in Saskatchewan. After use and development at MSU, he was named the Reserve Grand Champion Bull at the Canadian Royal Winter Fair and became one of the top selling bulls at the Denver Bull Sale to Laffin Ranch in Kansas. MSU Miss Emulous 436, a daughter of 44D out of an Ideal Farms female was the Reserve Calf Champion at the 1975 National Western Stock Show and Grand Champion Female at the 1975 All American Angus Futurity. MSU Miss Collaborator 422, a daughter of Collaborator of Wye out of a Pipeline daughter was the Grand Champion Female at the 1975 International Livestock Show.

MSU Freestate 343, a son of Freestate of Wye out of a daughter of Graham Bardolier 4, was the high selling bull calf in the first MSU Angus Production Sale in 1973. This was the first of a series of sales held on campus as part of a student managed Purebred Livestock Merchandising class. He was purchased by Premier Angus in Michigan and Raul Firpo in Argentina. As a yearling he was the Reserve Grand Champion Bull at the 1974 North American International. As a two-year-old, he was the Reserve Grand Champion Bull at the 1975 All American Angus Futurity and the 1975 International Livestock Show before being named the Grand Champion Bull at the 1976 National Western Stock Show. He was leased to Curtiss Breeding Service and sired many productive cattle in both North and South America. A son of MSU Freestate 343 out of a Pipeline daughter, MSU Headliner was used very successfully in the MSU herd after being the Junior Champion Bull at the 1977 North American International. Another son, MSU Generator, was the Reserve Grand Champion Bull at the 1978 American Royal before being purchased by Sitz Ranch in Montana.

The advent of open A.I. in the 1970's allowed Angus breeders to use sires from the entire breed and MSU began using many of the popular sires. MSU Legacy, a son of Thomas Chaps out of a daughter of MSU Freestate 343 x Pipeline dam, became the high selling bull at \$ 100,000 at the

1981 National Western Bull Sale to a syndicate headed by Dievert Farms in Kentucky. He was used at MSU after a successful show career.

In the fall of 1981, MSU purchased an interest in Kruegers Foolish Pride, a full brother to Kruegers Scaara of Sayre, the Grand Champion Female at the All American Futurity, the North American International and National Western Stock Show. This son of Sayre Patriot out of a Great Big Northern x Dynamo dam generated enthusiasm in the breed and helped MSU average \$ 5,059 in its 1983 Production Sale. A daughter, MSU Proud Lady 8388, was the Reserve Junior Champion Female at the 1985 National Western Stock Show. Her dam was sired by MSU Headliner (343 x Pipeline) and her grandam was by MSU Black Revolution 165.

Herd sires from Wehrman Farms in Virginia were added to the MSU program in the mid to late 1990's. Rito 4V3 of Rita 2SE3 692 and Rito 1A9 of 8FM0 205 were purchased to moderate frame and incorporate the Jorgenson and QAS Traveler influence into the MSU herd. Both bulls have outstanding productive daughters in the MSU herd.

Several breeders have donated semen, cattle and /or embryos to the MSU Angus herd. The most recent champion developed in the MSU program is MSU Lucy 830, the Supreme Champion at the 2009 Arizona National and Reserve Grand Champion Female at the 2009 North American International Junior Angus Show exhibited by Kirbe Schnoor in California. MSU Lucy 830, sired by SAV Net Worth 4200 out of a daughter of Twin Valley Precision E161, was the result of a joint embryo flush with Little Cedar Cattle Co. in Michigan. She is an example of the partnership and support that the MSU Angus herd has received from breeders that have helped the program succeed through their donations.

Over the last 100 years, the MSU program has been characterized by consistent leadership with the goal of breeding outstanding cattle for use in classroom instruction. There have been only 6 faculty coordinators – George A. Brown, George A. Brannaman, Ronald H. Nelson, Harlan D. Ritchie, David R. Hawkins and Kenneth R. Geuns. Since 1946 there have been 14 talented and dedicated cattlemen serve as managers or assistant managers for this program – Amos Fox, Frank Benham, Doug Nielsen, Larry Cotton, Jerry Carrico, Dee Woody, Pete Sweeney, Chuck Reid, Merle Boehmer, Carl Buehrley, David Walker, Brett Barber, Geof Bednar and Cody Sankey. The graduate and undergraduate students who earned degrees while being an integral part of this program have become industry leaders. The Michigan State University purebred beef cattle program has leased bulls to most of the major A.I. organizations in North America and also exported semen, embryos and/or live cattle to breeders on every continent except Antarctica.