

## HISTORY OF NORTH DAKOTA RED ANGUS ASSOCIATION (Long Form)

The history of the ND Red Angus Association reflects its humble beginnings with that of the Red Angus Association of America (RAAA). Inherently, the history of the Red Angus breed really is the history of the Red Angus Association of America. The Red Angus Association of America was officially formed on March 27, 1954, at the Worth Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas with charter and original members present. The foresight of the charter members was intuitive and amazing. According to "The History of Red Angus" authored by Dr. Bob Hough, "Not only was the goal to have performance-based registry, but it was also to have the Association maintain a clear focus on the commercial industry, even inviting commercial producers to join as associate members "to foster a spirit of closer cooperation between commercial breeders and purebred breeders." The fact that the founding members' initial vision has stood the test of time is what makes Red Angus special."

From the eleven charter members, seven of them founding members, came tremendous breed leadership. It was through the leadership of these individuals that a group of individuals in the Northern Plains became interested in the Red Angus breed. In 1964, Ray and Minnie Messmer, Messmer Red Angus of Richardton ND became the first registered Red Angus breeders in North Dakota. The foundation of the Messmer herd came from Beckton Stock Farm in Sheridan Wyoming.

It is believed that North Dakota and South Dakota were one State Red Angus Association in these early days. Influential members included Ray Meyer, Reva SD who also served on the RAAA Board of Directors as early as 1968. Joint field days between North and South Dakota were usually held at Messmer Red Angus in Richardton. Often, Mrs. Sally Forbes attended these field days serving as a mentor and supporter of these fledgling Northern Plains breeders. As the Red Angus breed was gaining influence, Larry and Sally Forster, New Salem ND joined the ranks of Red Angus seedstock producers in 1967, as Forster Red Angus. The Messmer and Forster families then became the driving force of the beginning of the ND Red Angus Association.

## **NORTH DAKOTA RED ANGUS ASSOCIATION**

In the late 50's and 60's Ray Meyer's dad, Otto Meyer, was purchasing red calves from black angus ranches. Ray had a passion for Angus cattle "red or black" and went on to serve as president of the Red Angus Association of America. The Sodak Ranch, Reva SD, continues to raise red and black angus genetics, with son Vaughn Meyer as the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. It is believed that the Meyer, Messmer and possibly the Pederson families were collaborating and functioning as a "Red Angus Group" in the Dakota's as early as the late 1950's and early 1960's.

The exact date that the Northern Plains group split is unknown, however, from 1972-74, Red Angus Association president, Ken Thatcher, Iowa, pushed for State to have their own Associations. It is known that meetings for the ND Red Angus Association were held between the households of the Messmer's and the Forster's for several years. The officers were assumed by members of these families and rotated in the beginning.

### **Messmer Red Angus**

Rapheal (Ray) and Minnie Messmer were the first purebred Red Angus breeders in North Dakota. Ray Messmer was born in 1913 and was raised on the farm that would become the headquarters of Messmer Red Angus located near Richardton, ND. In 1936, he married Minnie Jahner at Scheffield ND.

Together they farmed and raised 11 children on this farm. Ray took an interest in Red Angus cattle and influenced by the Forbes Family at Beckton Stock Farm he became the first purebred Red Angus breeder in North Dakota in 1964. In 1988, Ray and Minnie retired and moved to Richardton. Ray died on June 16, 1990, and Minnie passed away on March 28, 2004.

In 1969, Tony Messmer, the son of Ray and Minnie Messmer, married Karen Hoerner. Tony served as a tax auditor in the ND State Tax department for five years before returning to Richardton, ND. It was then that Tony and Karen assumed the responsibilities of the grain farm and the Messmer Red Angus herd. Together, Tony and Karen would grow Messmer Red Angus into one of the most influential herds in the country. In 2000, at the National Red Angus Convention, held in North Dakota, Tony and Karen were recognized as the national Breeder of The Year. Tony served as a director of the Red Angus Association of America and as president of the ND Red Angus Association. Karen took on the role of secretary of the ND Red Angus Association for years. Tony and Karen continued Messmer Red Angus until 2010. Tony passed away in June 2019, after a battle with cancer. Karen is a member of the ND Red Angus Association and continues to sell semen and embryos.

### **Forster Red Angus**

Lawrence "Larry" Forster was born March 4, 1931, at Richardton, ND. On September 12, 1955, he married Sally Doll at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Richardton, ND. Larry and Sally then moved to Seattle, WA, and then back to the family farm north of Richardton. Together they farmed and ranched. In 1960, the family moved to New Salem where he farmed and raised registered Red Angus, milked cows and raised their family. Larry and Sally moved to town in 1991.

Larry had a very good eye for cattle and this interest led him to the Red Angus breed. The red hide of the breed matched the red headed Forster's! Larry and Sally were both civic-minded people and were involved in several organizations. Larry and Sally Forster started their Red Angus herd in 1967 using the bull Storm as their herd's foundation sire. They diversified with the addition of a bull at the Wyoming Test Station that went back to the renowned Becton Rocky Mt. breeding. Their first exposure to the rest of the world of Red Angus breeders came in 1975 when they hosted the Red Angus field day for North and South Dakota; when the Dakota's were joined as one association.

They worked tirelessly to form the ND Red Angus Association and in 2001, Larry and Sally were awarded for their years of service and dedication to North Dakota Red Angus Association. They were the founding members. Larry and Sally were also members of the National Red Angus Association and were awarded National Pioneer Breeder of the Year in 2000, in recognition of their dedication in promoting the Red Angus breed. Larry was a member and Past President of the North Dakota Red Angus Association and Sally served as secretary. Larry passed away on May 5, 2011. Sally continues to live in New Salem, ND.

Son, Kenny and his family have taken the reigns of the Red Angus operation and moved the headquarters back to Richardton. Kenny and his family have continued the tradition of quality cattle that Larry and Sally originally set forth. In 1984, Kenny married Amy Ketterling. Together they have 4 children, who have been involved in the ND Red Angus Association or ND Junior Red Angus Association. Unfortunately, Kenny and Amy went their own ways but their love for the Red Angus breed has endured. In the ND Red Angus Association, Kenny served as president for 8 years and Amy as secretary for many years. Forster Red Angus donated the first donation heifer for the NDRAA annual heifer raffle. In 2001, both Kenny and Amy were recognized for their dedication and service to the ND Red Angus Association. Kenny continues

to support the ND Red Angus Association by serving and committees and supporting the ND Junior Red Angus Association.

## **1970's, 1980's and 1990's**

Through the decades of the 1970's and 1980's the ND Red Angus Association was very small and continued to be driven by the Forster and Messmer family. Field days were split between North Dakota and South Dakota with the earlier North Dakota field days held at Messmer Red Angus. Nationally, according to the "History of Red Angus" by 1970, several State and regional Red Angus associations had been formed, including the Northern Plains Red Angus Group. These grass root groups became the strength of the Red Angus Association of America. Between 1970-1972, Ray Meyer, Reva, SD served as President of the Red Angus Association.

Somewhere in the decade of the 1970's the ND/SD Association split. It is believed that when Ken Thatcher, Iowa, was president of the Red Angus Association (1972-1974) the affiliate Associations were split into separate State Associations. Thus, the beginning of the ND Red Angus Association as a separate affiliate. Membership meetings were held around the State in homes and cafés. Slowly, membership began to grow and the leadership of the ND Red Angus Association as a separate organization began to change with more members. In 1992, in the basement of a café in Tioga, ND Bill Whiteman took over as President from Kenny Forster. The focus of the NDRAA in those days was to promote the Red Angus breed and to grow the Association. Breeders from South Dakota continued to be a part of the North Dakota Red Angus Association and its growth and development.

Livestock shows that recognized Red Angus as a separate breed show included but not limited to the ND State Fair, Minot ND; West River Ag Expo, Dickinson, ND; Agri-International, Bismarck, ND and the Valley City Winter Show, Valley City, ND. Nationally, the Red Angus Association split the State Associations into Regions. The North Dakota Red Angus Association became part of Region B along with the South Dakota and Minnesota Red Angus associations, respectively. Members of this regional association and the ND Red Angus Association who were to serve as president of the Red Angus Association of America include Ray Meyer (1970-1972), Sodak Angus Ranch, Reva SD; Melvin Leland (1992-1994), Leland Red Angus, Sydney MT, and Steve Koester (2021-2023), Koester Red Angus, Steele, ND. Other NDRAA members to serve on the national board as directors include, Ron Bieber, Bieber Red Angus, Leola SD; Craig Bieber, Bieber Red Angus, Leola SD; Larry Gill, Gill Red Angus, Timberlake, SD; Tony Messmer, Messmer Red Angus, Richardton, ND; Gary Jacobson, Jacobson Red Angus, Hitterdal, MN; Bruce Ketchum, Milk Creek Reds, Ekalaka, MT, Stephanie Jung, Lazy J Bar Ranch, Mina SD, Steve Koester, Koester Red Angus, Steele ND.

Breeders began to offer Red Angus cattle for sale through private treaty sales and production sales. The first Red Angus production sale in North Dakota was a joint sale between Messmer's and Forster's in 1972. The ND Red Angus Association was on the fast track to becoming one of the strongest State Associations.

The 1990's were a time of membership and breed growth and for the ND Red Angus Association. The association held a sale under the management and in conjunction with the Agri-International Livestock Show and Expo at the Bismarck Civic Center starting in 1994. This sale was the forthcoming of the ND Red Select Sale as it is known today. By 1998, The ND Red Select Sale sponsored by the NDRAA stood on its own with the first sale held at Farmers Livestock in Bismarck ND. The sale remained at this location

until Farmers Livestock closed its doors after the sale in 2011. In 2012, the sale was moved to Kist Livestock in Mandan ND where it continues today.

In 1998, the 1<sup>st</sup> annual ND Red Select Sale featured 49 lots with 20 consigners. The sale was managed by Kyle Gilchrist who also served as the auctioneer. Sale manager, Kyle Gilchrist wrote in his catalog comments, "What makes a Select Auction so special is the diversity of the breeding programs that the cattle originate from and the diversity of their bloodlines, heritage, and goals". "Many of the consignors to this event are nationally recognized breeders of Red Angus cattle and are literally showcasing their herd—to offer the buyer a glimpse at their best—and in essence, they open the depth of their breeding program, giving the aggressive cattleman an opportunity to purchase cattle that would normally not be offered for sale". To the present, these words by Kyle still ring true and the ND Red Select Sale remains a herd showcase for NDRAA members.

As the Association grew, so did the need for the Association to stand on its own, financially. In 1993, the Association started its main fundraising campaign in the form of a donation heifer raffle. The raffle was held at the sale. The first donation heifer was donated by Forster Red Angus. By the late 1990's, the Association although still financially struggling gained enough stability to put in a bid to host the National Red Angus Convention in 2000.

## **2000-2010**

The new millennia brought excitement for the NDRAA. Troy Presser, Turtle Lake, ND was elected president of the NDRAA. Somewhere along the line, regions were set up by the RAAA and the location of the national convention was set up on a rotation. The Great Plains region was on rotation to hold the 2000 national convention. The North Dakota Association took the lead and hosted the National Red Angus Convention to be held September 7-9, 2000, headquartered at the Dickinson Travelodge Center in Dickinson ND. In tradition with Red Angus innovation, the ND Red Angus Association held the first "Cattleman's Symposium" ahead of the convention. The symposium consisted of NDRAA members cattle on display as well as educational workshops and a small junior program. A cattleman's symposium has been held at every convention since. This convention was well attended and successful. Craig Bieber, Bieber Red Angus, Leola SD was serving as President of the Red Angus Association at the time of the convention.

Financial hardship again began to plague the ND Red Angus Association in the early and mid-2000's. There was fear that the association was going to face bankruptcy. The tenacity and leadership of the board during these times allowed the association to get through this difficult time. A pro-rated advertising program was initiated for the membership to participate in if they wished. The donation heifer raffle started taking hold and successfully started generating much needed funding for the association.

In 2002, the North Dakota Red Angus Association secretary, Paulette Westrum filed with the ND Secretary of State to be recognized as an official operating nonprofit business in North Dakota. In 2007, under the presidency of Chuck Steffan (Heart River Ranch, Belfield ND) the North Dakota Red Angus Association officially became and was recognized as a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Throughout the 2000's the membership of the NDRAA grew. In 2009, Region B was host to the National Convention. The Shooting Star Casino and Convention Center was chosen as the site. NDRAA President,

Robert Campbell appointed members, Annette Steffan and Steve Koester to serve on the convention committee. At this time financial stability was also a major concern in the NDRAA. Successful efforts were made to gain sponsorships to help with the National Convention.

## **2010-2020**

The decade of 2010 to 2020 was focused on bringing the Association into a more successful financial status. Hard work was focused on enhancing the ND Red Select Sale and to truly bring it to being a “Premier and Elite” state association sponsored event in the country. NDRAA President’s during this era included, Robert Campbell (Campbell Red Angus, MacIntosh, SD), Mark Barenthsen (Barenthsen-Bullinger Red Angus, Powers Lake, ND), Bryan Huber (Huber EY Red Angus, Jud, ND), Todd Leland (Leland Red Angus, Sidney MT). In 2016, Tracey Koester, Cow Camp Promotions and Koester Red Angus, Steele ND a talented graphic designer and promoter of the Red Angus breed helped organize and promote the first ND Red Angus Directory. An auction for eight premier color pages was held with proceeds going to the NDRAA. Additional black and white pages or ads could be purchased by ranches and affiliated business. The directory has proved to be a success and the sale of the premier pages occurs every other year.

Covid Year 2020 was an epic and monumental event that took place across the world. However, the North Dakota Red Angus Association, under the direction of President Scott Kueffler, did its best to keep the organization functioning and organized.

## **2021-Present**

The present decade of the NDRAA has been focused on rebuilding the structure of many programs. The most notable being the reorganizing of the ND Junior Red Angus Association. Jodi Schrieffer, the first female NDRAA president, had the goal of reorganizing the NDJRAA. The fall of 2019, Annette Steffan took the helm of the main Advisor of the ND Junior Red Angus Association. With the help and support of the NDRAA, the mission and goals of the NDJRAA were reestablished. The NDRAA recognized that the Juniors were the future foundation and leadership of the ND Red Angus Association. The County Buckle program was immediately established to try to recognize youth showing Red Angus on the County level who show a Red Angus influenced animal. This program has been gaining acceptance with 3 buckles given in the first year in 2020 to 17 buckles given in 2023. The County Buckle program is conducted through the NDJRAA. Sponsorship for the buckles is through the “Sponsor Campaign Program” which is also conducted through the NDJRAA.

President Sam Twedt took the helm of the NDRAA in 2022. Under his watch, the Constitution and Bylaws were completely revised. The bylaws committee consisting of Annette Steffan, Bryan Ressler, Robert Campbell, Kenny Forster, and Marc Schrieffer worked tirelessly to revamp the Bylaws. The Red Angus Association of America extended help by allowing the NDRAA to use their legal counsel to help get the new proposed bylaws into correct legal grammar. Some major clarifications to the bylaws included that only Red Angus, red-hided, category 1A or 1B be allowed into the ND Red Select Sale.

2023 the ND Red Select Sale marked the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ND Red Angus Association hosting a State Sale. 2024 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ND Red Angus Association. The immediate goal and focus of the NDRAA at this time is to build bridges between the commercial Red Angus producer and to enhance marketing strategies for Red Angus Cattle.

As the times change so has the vehicle of communication and information. The NDRAA revamped its website hiring Ranch House Designs to redesign and host the website. In addition, Cow Camp Promotions was hired to manage the ND Red Angus Association's Facebook page.

## **NDRAA Secretary**

It is said that "Behind every great office, there's an exceptional secretary" and that "A secretary's heart is the compass that guides the organization to success." These two statements are truly what the secretary's role has been in the ND Red Angus Association. The individuals who have served as secretary of the NDRAA often have had different objectives and goals to attain but have tirelessly worked and served for many years to get the mission of the NDRAA accomplished. These individuals include Karen Messmer, Amy Forster, Cindy Greelee, Paulette Westrum, Lisa Pederson, Betsy Huber, Karissa Daws and Annette Steffan.