



T. Alex Edwards (1899-1968)

While serving at different times as Chair of the National Livestock records, President of the Canadian Aberdeen Angus Association and a Director of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair Alex had a profound influence on the policies laid forth by those national institutions. It was, however, under the Anoka Farms banner as a breeder and exhibitor of purebred Aberdeen Angus cattle that he made his greatest contribution the livestock industry. His ability as a quality stock judge was recognized on many occasions resulting in Alex judging at the great Perth Show and Sale in Scotland, the International in Chicago and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and many other major fairs in Canada.

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Alex's interest in breeding and showing Aberdeen Angus cattle began as a member of a Lambton County judging team at the Canadian Royal Winter Fair in 1922. The initial attempts in the Royal show ring began with market cattle fitted on the home farm near Watford, Ontario.

In 1925, the newly formed Edwards Brothers partnership of Alex and his brother Alan started buying a small but select group of Aberdeen Angus females with proven bloodlines. This was followed by the purchase of Blackbird Bandolier of Page in North Dakota in 1928 for \$650.00. As the brothers proceeded to develop the Bandolier of Anoka family with careful line-breeding, this bull and his off-spring were destined to become immortals of the breed throughout North America contributing to the improvement of many herds. Alex was quick to call Anoka the "Home of the Bandoliers." All along, Alex stressed, "We have tried to avoid extremes in our breeding and we try not to forget that the commercial producer of beef is one of the good customers for Angus bulls." The value of this foresight is certainly apparent in the popularity of Aberdeen Angus cattle today in our supermarkets. About Alex, the breeder, it has been written, "He is a man who studied his subject well through the years – a man who is probably his own most severe critic. He is never content with mediocrity, and has been an exact, conscientious breeder who ruthlessly threw aside cattle that did not measure up to his standards; and sometimes in spite of pressing financial need has kept those animals that were needed to carry on the course of this powerful stream of blood."

In 1936, the first Edwards Brothers partnership was dissolved when Alan sold his interest and another was formed with Alex's younger brother Don lasting into the 1950s. Don then concentrated his efforts on his own herd in Watford known as Anoka W, while Alex continued to center his operations on a farm that had been purchased in 1946 just north of London in Arva. Here, with his wife Marion and Ross Kaiser as manager, they welcomed visitors from around the world.

From the beginning, Edwards Brothers decided competition at large shows was needed to reach the highest standards in the breeding program. Under the partnership, they first showed at the Royal in 1926. At the Canadian National Exhibition the following year, they began a run into the 1960s where Anoka cattle it is said, “Won more than half of all the top awards.” Alex was considered one of the “Old Guard” of the Royal as a continuous exhibitor.

The brothers started showing across Canada in 1931 and continued for fifteen consecutive years on the western circuit where their primary competition was owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. They showed at the Chicago International for nineteen years and one of Alex’s proudest moments was in 1937 when Bandolier of Anoka 6th became the “only Canadian-bred Aberdeen Angus bull, fitted and shown by a Canadian breeder, to win supreme (champion) honors at Chicago.” Anoka cattle have also been exhibited in Dallas, San Francisco and the famed Futurity in Lexington, Kentucky.

Alex was a huge promoter of Aberdeen Angus cattle and coached others to get involved. While travelling the show circuit several months of the year, it was always a priority to advertise Canadian Angus cattle. At home, he would often drive visiting cattlemen around Ontario to promote other herds. Alex also connected with many prominent breeders in Scotland, twice selecting and importing groups of females to improve bloodlines. An American cattleman in the catalogue for the Anoka dispersal sale in 1961 commented, “I have noticed down through the years that he has made a definite practice of always visiting his customers and being as helpful to them as he can. I cannot recall an instance of anyone having purchased cattle from Alex Edwards, then later having a sale and not having Alex support it either by his presence or making an effort to interest other people in the cattle.” That dispersal sale in 1961 grossed over \$200 000 and was attended by buyers from all over North America and even the Soviet Union and Japan.

Alex’s ability as a judge was recognized on numerous occasions, as evidenced by the fact that he had the distinction of placing the awards at the great Perth Show and Sale in Scotland, the International at Chicago, the Royal Winter Fair and many of the other major fairs in Canada.

While serving as Chairman of the Canadian National Livestock Records, President of the Canadian Aberdeen Angus Association and Director of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and Western Fair, Alex influenced the policies of those organizations. In 1967, he was made an Honorary Kentucky Colonel. Alex died at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit after attending the final World Series game in 1968. His wife Marion, with the able assistance of Martin Vanderloop, sold the remaining cattle in 1969. The following year, Alex was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in Toronto for his “contributions to agriculture in general and the livestock industry in particular.”