

# Family Tradition for Illinois Scholar

## A report by Diana McLeish

Becoming the Illinois scholar was a great honour for me because my dad, Ewen McLeish, attended the University of Illinois in 1989 with my mother Margaret alongside him. Having heard all about Mum and Dad's time over there, I knew it was something that I was determined to do.

I arrived in Illinois in mid January to a temperature of minus 11 degrees, not counting wind chill factor, and I really thought I could not survive outside in that kind of weather. The girls I lived with at Presby House had a lot of fun laughing at how rugged up I would get to walk to class each day. I attended 4 classes at the University of Illinois:

- Introduction to Animal Science: we covered different topics each week, ranging from nutrition, genetics, and companion animals to beef production.
- Beef Production: bull selection, EPD's, nutrition, joining and calving and crossbreeding. This class highlighted the differences between how we do things here and how they run their cattle farms. In this class I was always asked my opinion because they were really interested to know what we did.
- Breeding Animal Evaluation: this was Dr Doug Parretts' class. We were taught how to assess cattle, sheep and swine. I had to very quickly adjust to the terminology Americans use when judging cattle.
- Market Animal Evaluation: the class where I learnt the most. We learnt to assess four animals live and then reassess them as carcasses. We did



Enjoying her time at the University of Illinois, Diana McLeish (left) with friend Tracey.

sheep, swine and cattle. Live we had to figure out their fat depths, rib eye or loin eye areas, their length, weight, dressing percents, grades and calculate an average price for the pen of four. We also had to figure out carcass traits such as marbling, meat colour and texture and firmness. I really enjoyed this class because it was something that I have never really done before.

I also got the chance to put some of the things I learnt into practice. I traveled to the Illinois Beef Expo at Springfield with the Meats and Livestock Judging teams to take part in some of their practice with them. As a final assessment for Dr Parrett's Breeding Animal Evaluation class, we went to the Spring Showdown in Champaign for a judging practical. We judged something like 12 different classes across sheep, cattle and swine. I had to think about and use everything I had learnt and I ended up coming sixth in my class.

I also had the chance to visit a couple of

farms. I traveled up to Rock Falls in Northern Illinois with Jerry Cassidy, the Angus field man for the area, to the Sauk Valley Angus Bull Sale. Sauk Valley is the largest pure bred Angus herd in Illinois; they run about 500 cows. I had been told auctioneering was different over there, but I couldn't understand a thing they were saying. They really get excited about it.

My final visit to a farm was to Sydenstrickers Angus Farm in Missouri, or SydGen as they are now known. It was a great experience because we have widely used bulls from them so to see their place and the cows they run was really amazing.

I have come away from the U of I with an experience that will remain with me for a long time, friends that mean a lot to me and knowledge that I hope will help me and my family to become better cattle breeders. This trip is something that I believe every Angus Youth member should aim for and I hope this account will inspire you to want to do it.



Sound interesting? Then enter your state's cattle assessment school for a chance to represent your state at the National Judging Competition in Wodonga.

Each year the winner of the Angus Youth National Judging Competition is awarded the Dectomax University of Illinois

scholarship. The National Judging Competition is held in conjunction with the National Angus Expo Show and Sale at Wodonga in March.

To participate in the competition you need to be nominated by your state Angus Committee. Each state may

nominate up to two finalists and two reserves in case the other states are unable to fill their entitlements. In NSW, VIC, SA, and QLD these nominations are based on a state level judging competition. For more information contact Leanne Waters, Angus Youth Coordinator, 02 6773 4608.