

THE PROGRESSIVE RANCHER



Ellington A. (Andy) Peek
January 11, 1952 — January 3, 2008

Traditional Past...Embracing the Future

FEBRUARY 2008

Andy on the cover of the February 2008 issue of *The Progressive Rancher* magazine.

Two excerpts from the issue follow.

Andy's Final Victory

by Lee Pitts

Betty, do you remember when this long ordeal began, when Andy had his first operation? Johnny and I flew up to see Andy and I sat down next to you in the waiting area in the hospital. You grabbed my hand and asked, "Why Andy? He has always been such a good person. He wouldn't hurt anyone. He doesn't deserve this. Why Andy?" Betty your question haunted me for weeks until one day I saw the answer to your question in a beautiful Monarch butterfly that landed outside my office. Did you know, my friends, that your average beautiful butterfly lives but a single day? That butterfly reminded me that most exquisite and meaningful things in this life don't last near as long as they should. A butterfly, a rose, a dollar fat market, a buck and a half calf market, the innocence of a baby, a rainbow and Andy Peek. They are all with us for too short a time. That's why they are so special.

At funerals there is a temptation to make people out to be better than they really were. That's impossible in Andy's case: he was quite simply the most decent human being I've ever known. But still that does not answer Betty's question. "Why?" I think it is for us. It is for we the living so that we can benefit, that we may fully appreciate all that is good in this world. So that we might learn from Andy's pain and live a fuller life because of his example.

On what was truly one of the saddest days in my life Brad called after Andy's second surgery and gave me the news that I feared was coming. Then Brad put Andy on the phone. If it was one of the most dismal days of my life it was also one of the most inspirational and meaningful because of what Andy said next. Please keep in mind that Andy had just hours earlier been told that his life had a finite end. Andy said, "Lee, I know what the doctors have said and I haven't figured out yet what I'm going to do but I'm going to think of some way to turn this into a win." That simple sentence is the essence of Andy Peek.

There is a popular bumper sticker that reads WWJD. It stands for "What would Jesus do?" I didn't know Jesus, not in a physical way. But I was privileged to know Andy Peek. And this past year whenever I was faced with a problem or had to confront my own inadequacies I found myself asking, "What would Andy do?" When I felt sorry for myself or was overwhelmed with sadness about Andy's condition I would think of him and his optimistic outlook on life. Steve Lucas who has fought his own courageous battle lately put it in the right perspective. As Doctors were getting ready to remove his nose and maybe his eyes, I kept asking Steve, "Aren't you scared? How do you feel?" Steve just thought of his good friend Andy and said, "I feel great. Seeing Andy and his optimistic spirit how could I not?" Indeed. Isn't it extraordinary that throughout this entire traumatic ordeal it was Andy who was lifting our spirits, helping us cope rather than the other way around?

If you want to know about a person ask the people who work for him. Let's not forget the wonderful women in the office who have suffered through this too. Jenny, Michelle, Kris. They all loved Andy. As did the people out back, Kevin. To a person I've never heard anyone who worked with Andy say anything negative about him. Andy saw the best in people merely because he did not go looking for the worst.

I have gained greater love for my own family by watching the Peeks these past few months. They were with him every step of the way. Callie worked so hard researching and looking for medical help. As a result Andy got the best medical care possible. I've long known that Laurie was an Angel on earth and she gave of herself unselfishly trying to make things better for Andy, Rhonda and everyone else. She shares Andy's optimistic outlook on life. And then there is Brad. Let me say that no one ever had a better brother. And Andy knew it. He was so proud of Brad and we should be too.

Betty and Ellington. I hope you know how much we all love and appreciate you. Andy was who he was because of you. I hope if you feel the tears welling up think of that beautiful butterfly, or in your case Ellington that dollar fat market, and be reminded that beauty is not measured by a calendar nor character by a clock. Take a cue from Andy, we should all be so thankful that we were blessed with his presence for nearly 56 years. How all our lives would have been diminished had he not come along. And your job is not yet finished. You must be there, as you've always been, to watch Uncle Brad coach Mason in Little League and to welcome your great grandchildren into this world. Mourn Andy we must, but let's also be thankful we have Mason, Matt, Courtney, Dallice and Ramsey. You have the most wonderful family I've ever met. I hope you find comfort and hope in them. That's what Andy did.

Whenever I want to bundle up in a ball and live the life of a hermit because of all the challenges of modern day life I think of Andy's sense of adventure. He never got used to the high life or spent his years acquiring expensive toys. He'd work like crazy 51 weeks of the year and then one week he'd be off to some exotic location that I never heard of. He'd eat their food, mingle with the people and partake of their customs. He had such a thirst for knowledge and was wise in so many ways. I like to think that Andy is on another such adventure now. He's in an exotic locale with no futures market and no mad cows. And I'm pretty sure there are no lawyers, P and S bureaucrats or folks from the Water Quality Control Board where Andy is.

In dying Andy taught us all how to live. When I feel like giving up I think of Andy. He fought a valiant battle until the end. When he could no longer talk, he crunched his hands into fists and give cancer a couple of upper cuts. Never once did anyone hear him utter a defeatist word. Plenty of tears were shed but I never heard of a single one that came from Andy's eyes. He was good, sweet, decent Andy until the end, without bitterness, depression, fears or tears. We set an example not only in how we live our lives but also in how we exit them. Andy handled his dying as he did his living, with grace, dignity and courage.

As Andy would say... "Everything is gonna be all right." Oh, maybe not today. Today is for grieving, for crying. The flowers are really for us the living. Today we say we have come to celebrate the life of Andy Peek but it is really for us to cry our eyes out and to lean on each other. It is altogether fitting and proper that we do this. The depths of our dismay really shows how much we loved him. Yes, today is for us to console one another, to hug the Peeks and try to give back to them what they have given us all these many years. So cry our eyes out we must, but when we all wake up tomorrow morning I'd suggest a different perspective. If today is for us, then tomorrow and the day after that, and the day after that is

for Andy. Remember I told you Andy wanted to find a way to turn his death into a victory? That's where you and I come in. Rhonda told me that this past year she has learned so much from Andy that will be useful in her life. Haven't we all? When we are faced with hardship think of Andy and handle it with grace like he did. Faced with a tough business decision handle it honestly as Andy always did. And when faced with our own mortality we should remember Andy's example and handle it with the same dignity and courage that he did.

Andy gave something to all of us that can live forever. If because of Andy we in some way become better and more decent people ourselves and in turn pass these qualities on down to our children and grandchildren, we not only become better people, we'll make this world a far more beautiful place... just like the butterfly, the rose, the rainbow and Andy. Isn't it glorious, my friends, that we have been given the power to give Andy a lasting legacy and his final victory. *Let's win one for Andy!*



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Andy Peek

1952-2008



Ellington A. "Andy" Peek passed away January 3, 2008 at his home in Cottonwood, with his family at his side. Andy, with support of his wife Rhonda and family, bravely fought pancreatic cancer this past year. He demonstrated strength, faith and even humor during this difficult time.

Andy was born January 11, 1952 at Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento. In 1955 the family relocated to the Cottonwood area. Andy graduated from Red Bluff High in 1970 and attended Shasta College while working in the family livestock business, Shasta Livestock Auction and Western Video Market, of which he was president of. Andy was involved in numerous local and state programs, projects and organizations dealing with the livestock industry. He was former chairman and ex-director of the Shasta District Fair and served on the National Livestock Marketing Association board. Andy was past president of California Cattlemen's Association and was named Tehama County Cattlemen's 2007 Man of the Year.

He gave his knowledge and talents to help his community in countless projects. Andy could be counted on to give a helping hand to those in need and was known as a man of deep integrity and honesty.

Andy is survived by his wife Rhonda and son Mason of Cottonwood; step-daughter, Tarin Regelin of Anderson, step-son J.P. Vansickle of Red Bluff and four step-grandchildren; parents Ellington and Betty Peek of Cottonwood, sister and brother-in-law Callie and Darrell Wood of Vina; sister and brother-in-law Laurie and Jerry Norene of Wheatland and brother, Brad Peek of Elk Grove. Andy is also survived by two nieces, Dallice Wood of Susanville, Courtney Norene of Wheatland; and two nephews, Ramsey Wood of Susanville and Matt Norene of Cottonwood.

In lieu of flowers, the Peek family would appreciate donations made in Andy Peek's name to one or all of the following charitable causes: Hirshberg Foundation (Pancreatic Cancer Research), 2990 S. Sepulveda Blvd. Suite C, Los Angeles, CA 90064; Mercy Hospice, 1544 Market St. Redding, CA 96049; and Andy Peek Livestock Scholarship, C/O Red Bluff Bull Sale, 270 Antelope Blvd., Suite 3, Red Bluff, CA 96080.