

Selfless Service

Being a soldier and a rancher are two career choices that generally don't go together, but for General Butch Funk, they are the perfect combination.

by *Angie Stump Denton*



“It was my duty to try to serve our breed. I felt like I could help — not because I was the best cattleman — but because of my other experiences. I was committed to be a steward of the Association’s assets — finances and people. You have to do both if you are going to have a good organization.”

— *Butch Funk*

Whether leading troops in the U.S. Army, making breeding decisions or serving Hereford members as chairman of the American Hereford Association (AHA) member service committee, Paul “Butch” Funk has always made serving others a priority.

“A good commander rides to the sound of guns,” Butch explains. “If someone is in trouble I will come.”

Butch has served both our country and the Hereford breed with this philosophy. After a distinguished 32-year career with the U.S. Army, Butch retired as a lieutenant general and returned to his second passion in life — being a rancher. Today Butch and his wife, Danny, own Spearhead Ranch near Copperas Cove, Texas. Butch served on the AHA Board from 2008 to 2012.

Butch says being both a soldier and a rancher are 24-hours-a-day commitments. As an officer in the Army, he was responsible for protecting his people and their families around the clock just as he is now as a rancher with his Hereford cow herd.

Early years

Born and raised in Montana, Butch owned a small herd of registered Hereford cattle while

working for the ES Bar Ranch near Roundup.

He went to Montana State University (MSU) and earned a degree in animal science. During this time, he had to sell his herd to pay for his college education. While at MSU, he joined the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) and got his first taste of the Army.

He says he did not set out to have a career in the Army; joining ROTC was a way to help pay for his education. "There were no career soldiers in my family until I became one," Butch explains.

After graduating from MSU, he went on active duty for two years as part of his ROTC commitment.

"About six months after I got out of the Army I knew I had made a mistake," Butch recalls. "I really liked the Army and I wished I had not left. I had not thought much about an Army career until I was on active duty — I was just doing my duty. I came back to duty about 16 months after I had gotten out. We (he and his wife) went immediately to Germany and things really went quickly after that."

Army career

"It was the people — the soldiers — and the dedicated and important missions and being part of something much bigger than oneself that made me want to come back and to stay," Butch says. "And then, there was the leadership challenge, particularly the challenge of command, which really appealed to me. Frankly, there is nothing like being in command of U.S. soldiers in war. I was privileged to do that twice."

During his 32 years in the Army, Butch served in a variety of leadership positions from platoon leader of 20 warfighters to corps commander of 162,000.

"It was a superb honor and very humbling to command in war as it was in peacetime," Butch adds.

He served in combat in Vietnam as an air cavalry troop commander. At the young age of 30, he was responsible for 27 helicopters and 248 soldiers. His troop lost 32 soldiers and more than 100 were wounded.

"Our troopers were terrific fighters and the bravest soldiers I know," Butch says. "I still miss those we lost."

After Vietnam the Army sent Butch to graduate school, where he earned a doctorate in education. He then went to Korea, where he was stationed for a year.

During Desert Storm, Butch was the 3rd Armored Division Commander. His division fought through three Iraqi divisions.

"From the U.S. Army standpoint, it was a terrific victory," Butch says. "The difference between the Iraqi Army and ours wasn't the equipment it was the quality of the soldiers, their training and their junior leaders."

Butch and Danny's son Paul was one of those junior leaders



Butch chose to name his ranch Spearhead Ranch based on the division he commanded during Desert Storm. He is pictured here with a replica of the Spearhead division colors.

who served in the 3rd division lead by Butch during Desert Storm. Paul was a company commander of 120 troops.

When Butch's division was getting to move, Paul's unit had been told to stay back to provide security in Germany. Danny then told Butch, "You are going to take your son with you. You are taking everyone else's sons and husbands, you are going to take our son."

For more on Butch's military career, see the military biography sidebar on Page 40. During Butch's career, the Funk family lived in 30 different homes. "It was challenging," Butch says, "but I attribute our ability to be flexible to Danny. She has said many times, 'I'm her ticket to heaven.'"



At one time Butch was in command of 162,000 soldiers when he was in charge of the corp including active military and National Guard.

Spearhead Ranch

When Butch decided it was time to retire from the Army, he called his friend Donlie McMullin, whom he had met in 1962 while both were stationed at Fort Hood, to help him look for property (see "Army buddies, Hereford partners," Page 42).

Butch says Danny was willing to live in the country, but cats topped her list of animals on the ranch while owning cattle was Butch's plan.

Donlie found the Funks a place not far from his, near Copperas Cove, and Butch got his opportunity to return to his childhood passions of owning a ranch and raising cattle.

"My desire to care for animals and land are rooted deep," Butch

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explains. "I was excited to get back to my roots and be actively involved in good husbandry and stewardship practices."

When choosing a ranch name, he decided to tie his Army career to his next adventure. "Spearhead" was the nickname given to the 3rd Armored Division during World War II. This is also the division he commanded during Desert Storm. Following Desert Storm, the division was decommissioned.

After Army retirement

After retiring from the Army, Butch accepted a position as vice president of Middle Eastern Operations for General Dynamics in Saudi Arabia and later was named vice president for services for General Dynamics Land Systems in Sterling Heights, Mich.

During this time, he traveled between Texas and Saudi Arabia and then Michigan.

He then worked eight and a half years at the Institute for Advanced

Technology at University of Texas-Austin, leading Army War College students and helping with the electric gun program.

As he started the ranch and sought genetics to purchase, he chose to get back into the Hereford business. "While I was away from the breed a lot happened," Butch says. "Hereford breeders made a lot of positive changes."

In 1997 he purchased his first Hereford bull from the late Frank Felton over the phone while in Saudi Arabia.

He says he decided to contact Frank because of an article published in the *Hereford World* about Frank winning the Beef Improvement Federation's Seedstock Producer of the Year award.

"Through the years Frank and I became good friends," Butch says. "He was always willing to share ideas. Frank was ahead of the times focusing on EPDs (expected progeny differences)."

That first year Butch also purchased five registered heifers from Knoll Crest Farm and two from Wiese & Sons.

His herd

With the mission to provide cattle producers with affordable, high-quality Hereford genetics and to do so in a largely forage-based program under conditions similar to his commercial customers, Butch currently has a herd of 52 cows.

"It is important to find programs to follow," Butch explains. "It always comes back to fertility. That's why I started with Felton genetics. You've got to have a calf every year or you won't be in business."

He says he enjoys the challenge of finding great breeding sires. When looking for sires to use or females to retain in his program, he wants balanced EPDs and a sound phenotype. Of course

Military biography: Paul E. (Butch) Funk, lieutenant general, U.S. Army, retired

Butch Funk has a doctorate in education and a master's in psychological counseling from Montana State University (MSU). He earned distinguished military graduate honors from MSU, where he was commissioned a second lieutenant. His basic military education includes armor officer basic and armor officer advanced courses, helicopter flight school, the Armed Forces Staff College and the Army War College.

General Funk has held a variety of command positions, from platoon through division, leading to his assignment as the commanding general, III Corps and Fort Hood, Texas. He served as the commanding general of the U.S. Army Armor Center and Fort Knox, Ky., from June 1992 to Oct. 1993. He commanded the 3rd Armored Division, U.S. Army, Europe, from Dec. 1990 to April 1991, when the division distinguished itself as part of the VII Corps during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.

He was the commanding general of the National Training Center and Fort Irwin, Calif.; assistant division commander, 9th infantry division (motorized), Fort Lewis, Wash.; Commander of the 194th Separate Armored Brigade and 5th Battalion, 33rd Armor, Fort Knox, Ky.

Prior assignments at Fort Hood include deputy G3 for training; III Corps; chief of staff, 1st Cavalry Division; and several platoon leader assignments with the 2nd Battalion, 13th Armor, and 1st Armored Division.

Other key assignments include vice director, J3, the joint staff, Washington, D.C., and assistant commandant, U.S. Army Armor School, Fort Knox, Ky. Funk served a combat tour in Vietnam as executive officer and then Commander of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. General Funk has also served in the Republic of Korea.

His awards and decorations include the following: the Distinguished Service Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), Meritorious Service Medal (with three Oak Leaf Clusters), Air Medal with "V" device and (twenty-five Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal with "V" device and (three Oak Leaf Clusters), Vietnam Service Medal (with three Oak Leaf Clusters), Kuwait Liberation Medal, Saudi Service Medal (with three bronze stars), the Army Aviator Badge, and the Joint Chief of Staff Identification Badge. He was selected as one of the top 100 graduates in the first 100 years from MSU. In 1998 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering from MSU.

He retired from active duty on Jan. 1, 1996.

— courtesy of Mounted Warfare Foundation

fertility comes first followed by doability or efficiency to convert grass to muscle.

He artificially inseminates (AI) about 75% of his cow herd as well as utilizes embryo transfer (ET) to propagate some of his best females each year.

Butch has also focused on improving carcass quality within his herd. He has collected ultrasound data for the last 10 years. Because of his efforts, marbling scores have improved and the ribeye area of his calves is increasing.

The program

His primary marketing goal is to produce females that are marketed as yearling heifers and a few young pairs plus carefully selected bulls for commercial producers.

Butch and Donlie have been testing bulls at PX Feeders in Evant, Texas, for five years. Because of the drought the last several years, they have also sent their replacement heifers to the lot to develop.

Butch says what he likes about PX Feeders is that the bulls are fed a forage-based ration. He also appreciates Donald Parrish, the lot owner, for his assistance with marketing the bulls.

“On test at PX Feeders the bulls realize growth potential but they can still be turned out and go to work,” he adds.

Serving the breed

Just as a leader in the Army, Butch has sought to be a leader in the Hereford breed. He says a good leader has the ability to change and strives to learn. With this philosophy, he has worked to build his Hereford herd and to serve the industry on the state and national levels.

Butch is a member of the Texas Hereford and Polled Hereford associations. In 2008 he was elected to serve on the AHA Board of

Directors. “It was my duty to try to serve our breed,” he explains. “I felt like I could help — not because I was the best cattleman — but because of my other experiences. I was committed to be a steward of the Association’s assets — finances and people. You have to do both if you are going to have a good organization.”

During his tenure, he served on the performance, breed improvement, financial, Hall of Fame/Merit, Certified Hereford Beef and member service committees.

“It was a significant honor to serve on the AHA Board,” Butch says. “The AHA, the AHA Board and the AHA staff exists to serve our constituents. The leader is never equal to the led. A leader must serve its members.”

In 2010 when AHA President Bob Harrell decided to develop a member service committee, he chose Butch to lead the group. As chairman, Butch says, he wanted the Association to become more responsive to its members. He was also challenged to assist with helping the Association implement digital technology.

“You don’t incorporate new technology just because it is ‘sexy’ or the newest thing,” Butch says. “You do it because it will enhance performance. Look at your goals and apply technology to them. As



Improving sire lines is a goal for Butch. Pictured here is X16 a bull that Butch raised and is working in his program.

an Association we need to utilize technology to enhance the breed.”

Today Butch says he believes the tools developed are helping members; and the Association is on the right track related to technology.

Once a soldier, always a soldier

“I can’t unplug completely from the Army,” Butch says. “I get to live through (still on active duty son) Paul and serving on different boards.”

Today Butch serves as president and chief operating officer of the Mounted Warfare Foundation and

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On May 22, surrounded by Army pageantry and traditions, Major General William Mayville Jr. passed command of Fort Riley and the Army’s Oldest Division, the Big Red One, to Major General Paul Funk II. Paul is the son of Hereford breeder and retired general Butch Funk.



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is also a member of the Mounted Warfare Foundation board of directors. The foundation is raising funds to build a world-class museum in the heart of Texas next to Fort Hood to honor mounted soldiers and to tell their untold story.

The museum will represent the history of mounted soldiers — the ones who rode into battle horseback, as well as the tankers and infantrymen, the artillerymen and aviators, the logisticians, engineers, military policemen, signalers, and intelligence soldiers who fought alongside.

“We hope to build a good museum that will honor the soldiers who have done such a great job in the mounted force,” Butch says.

His family

Butch and Danny have three children and eight grandchildren.

Paul has continued to follow in his father’s footsteps and is a major general in the U.S. Army. Paul and his wife, Beth, are stationed at Fort Riley.

Butch and Danny traveled to Fort Riley, Kan., in late May to watch their son take command of the historic fort and the Big Red One division. See photos on Page 41.

Son Jim and his wife, Wendy, live in the D.C. area as well as Butch’s daughter, Becky, and her husband, Colonel Dave Clonts.

Looking forward

Although a multi-year drought has hit much of Texas and has led to reducing herd numbers, Butch says his plan is to stay up-to-date with industry trends, to avoid fads and continue to improve his herd.

“The drought has been a problem. If I had the land available I would continue to increase

numbers, but at this time that is not an option, so I will continue to improve sire lines, continue to focus on being a performance breeder and improve the genetics of our herd,” he says.

Just like a commanding officer in the Army, Butch says Hereford breeders have to be willing to change and sometimes take risks. “Whether fighting in a war, raising cattle or a family, you’ve got to be able to change to be able to grow,” he says.

During the change of command ceremony, the Big Red One’s motto was repeated multiple times. “No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great. Duty First!” It also is a perfect description of General Butch Funk and his service to this country and to the Hereford breed. **HW**



Army buddies become Hereford partners

In 1962 Butch Funk and Donlie McMullin met at Fort Hood in Texas. They were assigned to the same unit. Today — both retired from the Army — they are neighbors and partners who enjoy raising Hereford cattle.

Donlie says he recalls when the two were on a maneuver one night while stationed at Fort Hood: “We were on Shell Point looking over the Copperas Cove region,” he says. “That night we agreed how we would like to own land some day in that region.”

Today both are retired from the Army, and instead of spending time on Army maneuvers, they spend time talking

Herefords and attending industry events; and, yes, both purchased land in the Copperas Cove area, just like they had hoped to do in 1962.

Donlie retired from the Army in 1983 after 22.5 years of service. During his tenure, he was stationed at Fort Hood seven times, and he married a Copperas Cove native in 1980, so when he retired, he chose to start a real estate business and began buying land around Copperas Cove. For more on Donlie, see “Serving With Honesty and Integrity.”

Prior to retiring from the Army on Jan. 1, 1996, Butch contacted Donlie and asked for his assistance in locating a ranch in the Fort Hood area.

Donlie found Butch some land not far from his, and, eventually, they both ended up in the Hereford business like their families had been at one time.

Today they partner on cattle, both focused on producing performance cattle that will work for commercial producers in their area. They are also traveling buddies who regularly attend sales and industry events together. Five years ago they also started developing and testing their bulls together at PX Feeders in Evant, Texas.

Thanks to the Army, a friendship between two soldiers developed into a great partnership. **HW**