



TRADITION & PROGRESS



“I suppose his passion for cattle grew at the same time as his drive to find and drill for oil,” says Steven Noack, a grandson of E.H. “Grandpa had drilled around 600 oil wells with seven cable tool rigs, which is where the ranch brand, 7-, came from. My father was born 14 years after my grandfather started raising Herefords.”

As E.H. was growing his Hereford herd, he acquired the property which became the foundation of the ranch.

Steven’s father, Ernest Leon Noack, and his wife, Billie Swanzy, raised five children — Nanette, Alan, Steven, Jeff and Darla — all who grew up on the ranch and around Hereford cattle.

“During breeding season, my dad would walk through the cattle every day with a bucket of feed for the bulls,” Steven says. “We spent our summers fixing fence and hauling hay. Whether it was planting, plowing, or helping on with the oil operation, we helped with whatever needed to be done.”

Leon is said to have been a passionate man who enjoyed playing dominos, music and dancing; he often attended social events in the town of Rockdale.

“The Hereford breed provided him the opportunity to socialize and he went at it with tremendous dedication,” Steven says.

In particular, Leon liked to travel to Hereford ranches all over the U.S., the world and to attend Texas Hereford events whenever possible.

“He made friends all over the world thanks to the Hereford breed,” Steven says. “He studied the art of the registered cattle business. He believed that there was a balance to the ‘perfect cow,’ and that balance had to be respected, even when the industry would find itself lured in the direction of the current trend.”

Leon stuck to that belief throughout his years as a Hereford producer. Steven says Leon understood efficiency was the ultimate goal.



Shiloh Doehring, oldest granddaughter of Leon Noack, and her husband Vernie, operate Noack Hereford Ranch by blending tradition and technology.

After 95 years in the Hereford breed, Noack Hereford Ranch carries tradition as it moves forward.

by *Katy Holdener*

Just like the time-strengthened roots of an old oak tree, the roots of Noack Hereford Ranch run deep in the heart of Rockdale, Texas.

Located an hour east of Austin, Noack Hereford Ranch was founded by E.H. Noack in 1921.

E.H. was born in 1887 in Fayette County, Fla., and after his father passed away, E.H. moved to Rockdale to live with his brother, Andrew, during the Texas oil boom. He later began raising Herefords at the age of 34.

Steven remembers his father spending countless hours searching for the right combination of genetics to improve not only his herd but the Hereford breed as a whole.

“Some may understand how difficult it was to give my dad up to Alzheimer’s about the time his grandchildren came along,” Steven says. “He was there in the heart, but he was unavailable to questions so desperately wanting an answer.”

Still in the family

Leon continually reminded the family they would accomplish more working together to achieve success. Steven hopes his children, along with his nieces and nephews, will continue to love the land and the cattle that have been in the family for almost a century.

“We are blessed to have my niece Shiloh and her husband Vernie Doehring managing the ranch now.” Steven says. “They are completely immersed in the Hereford world, and I see in them the same passion that Leon possessed.”

While she didn’t grow up on the Noack Hereford Ranch, Shiloh, daughter of Leon’s youngest, Darla, has always considered it home.

“We moved around a lot growing up,” Shiloh says. “My granddad and grandmother stayed put in Rockdale. My brother and I spent a few weeks here each summer helping around the ranch.”

Shiloh remembers her grandfather fondly, stating his clear passion for the Hereford breed stood out through his battle with Alzheimer’s.

Shiloh’s Hereford story began when she caught a scramble heifer during her freshman year of high school. It was not a Hereford calf, so after the show she later sold it in order to purchase two Hereford heifers from her grandparents.

“My brother and dad roped, and I somehow wound up starting their young horses, and later started colts for a reining horse trainer, but I never really got into rodeo the way they did,” she says, “It’s a running joke with them that they are ‘cowboys’ and Vernie and I are ‘cattlemen.’ I was more at home working cattle in Rockdale than I ever was in High School rodeo.”

Shiloh remembers her grandfather meticulously scrutinizing the cow herd, with one pasture taking a full day to study. Her similar passion for the industry lead her to Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, where she studied agricultural business and animal science.

As a member of the beef show team, she traveled to the Louisiana State Fair in 2010, where she met the man she would later marry.

Vernie, of Buffalo, Mo., was attending College of the

Ozarks and working on cattle at the Louisiana State Fair. He purchased his first Hereford heifer for a 4-H project at age 11, sparking his drive to purchase three more heifers with help from an FSA loan.

A few years after they married, Shiloh followed her roots back down to Texas to join Noack Hereford Ranch — a goal she had on her mind from a young age.

“All I ever wanted was to ranch, but I always thought I would have to start my own,” Shiloh says. “But, after I met Vernie everything fell into place. It’s like a dream come true. I get to live on the ranch my grandparents started and raise the type of cattle my granddad would be proud of.”

Same goals, new course

Shiloh and Vernie returned to the Noack Hereford Ranch in June of 2014 and actively began to revamp the program. They have replaced the entire bull battery and culled any cows not earning their keep.

“A lot of people thought the Noacks had went out of business,” Vernie says. “And, they hadn’t done any artificial insemination (AI) or embryo work since 1984.”

Shiloh and Vernie have incorporated AI and embryo work since being back at the ranch and are carefully continuing the Line 1 breeding program instituted by her grandfather.

“Since we’ve been working on the ranch, it’s been great to meet people who knew my granddad,” Shiloh says. “We ask them about what he was like, and what his thoughts were on the cattle. We’ve been able to learn so much more about him.”

While preparing for the ranch’s 95th anniversary celebration, Shiloh read a few articles her grandfather kept which were written about him.

“It was reassuring to know we agreed on a lot of our ideas about cattle and how the ranch should be run.” Shiloh says. “I especially like his commitment to efficiency and his independent mindset.”

Along with advancing to AI and embryo work, the Doehrings have also reinstated the American Hereford Association’s (AHA) Whole Herd Total Performance Record (TPR™) system in their herd and have elevated their ultrasound efforts.

“Leon was one of the first in the breed to ultrasound and study carcass data,” Vernie says. “We are picking it back up in addition to intensely studying genetics and considering genomic data. With every bull we buy, if he’s not already genomically tested, we have him genomically tested.”

Their goal is to genomic test their 30 to 40 replacement heifers annually so that in 10



Shiloh and Vernie Doehring returned to the Noack Hereford Ranch in 2014 and began to revamp the program culling any cows not earning their keep.

years their whole herd’s genomic data will be complete.

Shiloh says they collect every piece of data they can and provide it to the AHA records department. The Doehrings also study calf vigor, udder and foot quality and eye pigment in their genetics. Due to the heat in Texas, they also document a color score with a shedding score to select cattle with adaptable and quick shedding hair.

“Single trait selection is always a bad idea,” Shiloh says. “However, we do emphasize the fertility trait in our cows.”

The duo has worked on decreasing the ranch’s calving season from 120 days to 80 days and is looking to tighten to a 60-day season. First-calf heifers and aged cows are culled from the program if they come up open, Vernie says.

A bright future

Shiloh says during the time when her granddad had Alzheimer’s, they were all focused on other things, and the ranch just coasted.

“We are now working to rebuild our cow herd with our oldest cows as a base, because not only are they closer to what my granddad would have raised, but they still raise our best calves,” she says. “We are also sticking with strictly straight horned, but mostly

Line 1 genetics, outcrossing occasionally as we feel it will benefit our customers.”

When it comes to the future progress of Noack Hereford Ranch, the family agrees to prioritize long-term goals, rather than short-term, temporary gains. Steven says while seemingly remarkable progress can be made quickly, it almost always comes with higher risk and at the expense of long-term stability and consistency. While it may not be as glamorous, slow and steady reliably delivers a superior product.

“Just yesterday, we were sorting yearling bulls to use on heifers,” Shiloh says. “We have one we feel is really sharp, and Vernie suggested we promote and sell him. My thought was, we can make money off of him now, or we can invest him back into our program for the long term.”

While studying other programs’ operations, she found that some tend to focus on the short-term profit instead of on long-term productivity, which is Noack’s purpose for raising cattle. They are focused on raising the optimal cow by humanely and efficiently converting available resources into nutritious beef, and they want to help their customers do the same.

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Data collection is a priority for Noack Hereford Ranch along with cow longevity.

95th anniversary celebration

After two years of being back in Rockdale, Vernie and Shiloh Doehring opened Noack Hereford Ranch back up to customers. This past November, Noack hosted nearly 100 friends and customers to walk through its donor pens, view its herd bulls and learn more about its breeding program.

Live music and dancing followed a Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) prime rib dinner. The Doehrings plan to continue hosting the event every fall to build up their customer base and to spark bull buyers' interest in coming to the ranch. They hope that by 2021 they can host a live bull sale on the ranch's 100th year anniversary. **HW**



Shiloh Doehring of Noack Hereford Ranch welcomed Chef Fredrick Brown, Houston, to speak at its 95th anniversary dinner, where he shared words of appreciation and respect for the Certified Hereford Beef program.



Noack Hereford Ranch hosted 200 friends and customers at their 95th anniversary celebration.

“We plan to be in this business for a long time, so we value progress over profit.” Shiloh says. “Our long-term goal is to raise the best cattle, not make the most money.”

Noack Hereford Ranch is proud of its pedigrees; it has several 14-year-old cows, which calve out every year. The ranch is focused on the longevity of its females and making sure they remain consistent producers.

“We feel that dividing the cost of developing a replacement heifer over 15 years instead of five years is using our resources efficiently,” Shiloh says.

Shiloh says Noack Hereford Ranch is committed to honoring principles and values to work toward their purpose — a tradition brought forth by past generations, which is still being carried on today.

“I think it’s because we tend to fear the short term and forget that faith is what molds the long term,” Steven says. “We as an industry have begun to start reaching out to the end customer of our product, which is the family sitting down together for dinner. I know for my dad, that thought process came naturally, and I hope to continue that tradition.” **HW**