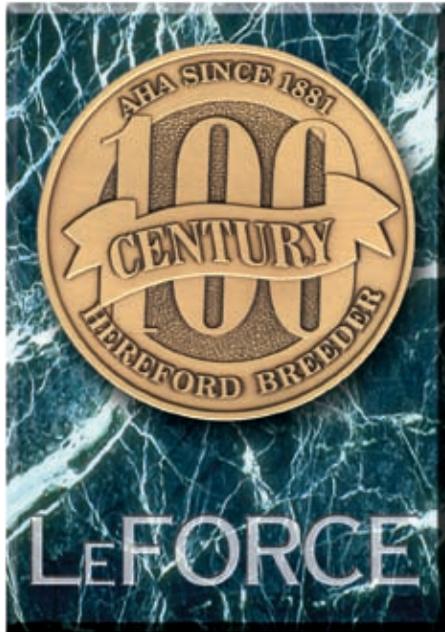


# A Long Line of LeForces



**Registered Herefords have been a staple in the LeForce family business since 1898.**

by Teresa Oe

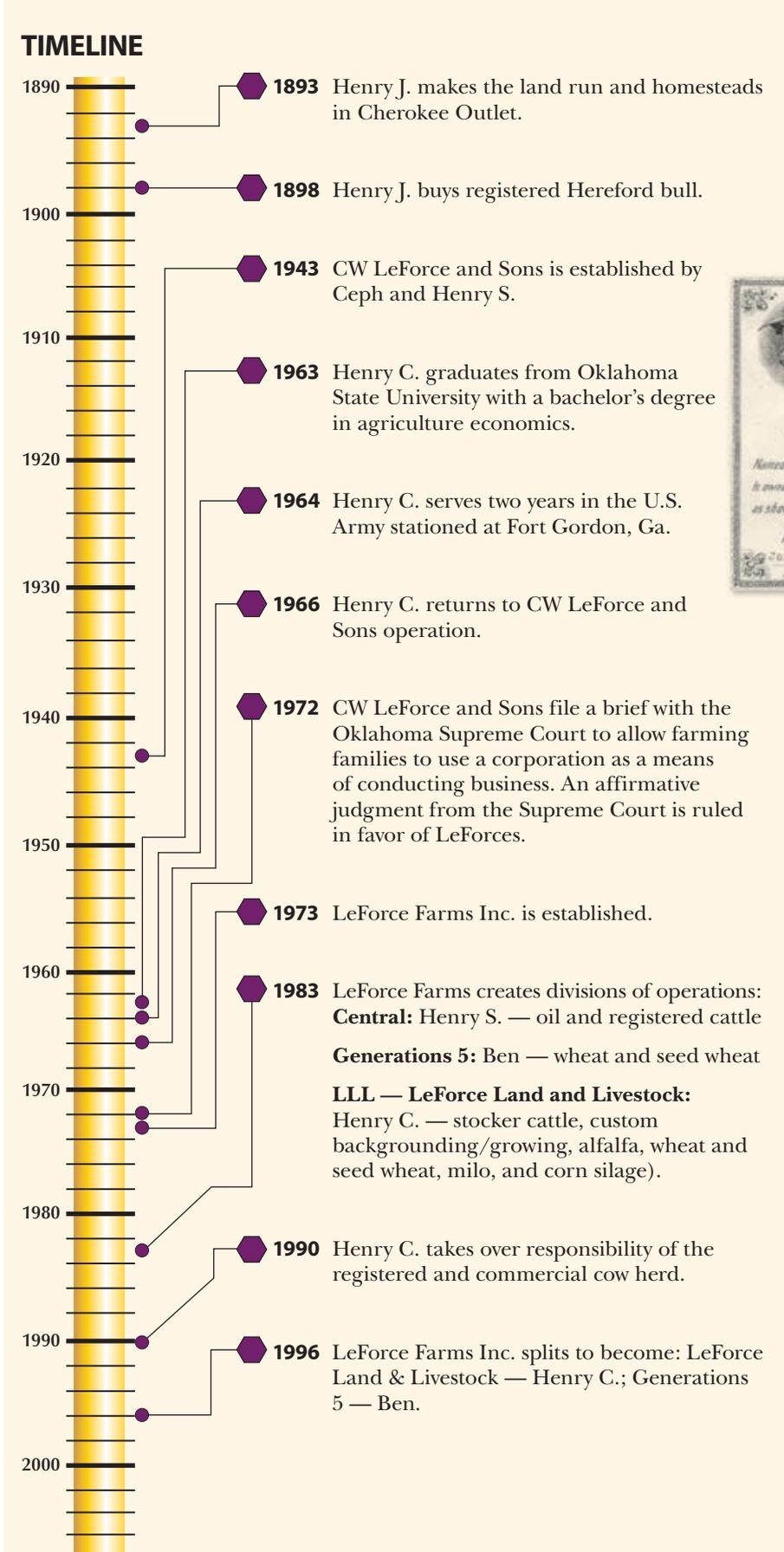
Henry J. and Alafair LeForce homesteaded in the Oklahoma Cherokee Outlet in 1893. Five years later the couple purchased their first registered Hereford bull and 113 years later, great-grandson Henry C. continues the long line of LeForces in the Hereford business. With the slogan, "A Family Affair Since 1893," LeForces reference the role each family member has played in the success of this Pond Creek ranch.

Henry J. started buying Herefords in the late 1800s. They wintered so

much better than the rest of the herd that the other cattle were replaced with the hardy whitefaces, which have been found in majority ever since on LeForce land. "They have always performed well and have given us what we were looking for over the years, and have remained the breed of choice," Henry C. says.

J.M. Winter of Irving, Kan., transferred ownership of Hereford bull, Van, No. 74560, in 1898, commemorating the first LeForce Hereford registration. From then on, Henry J. raised, registered and sold Hereford cattle to neighboring farmers.

Two of Henry J's sons — C.W. (Ceph) and Will — started feeding out their home-grown steers when they were in their teens. They'd drive the steers on hoof 10 miles to the railhead cattle pens at Pond Creek to load on boxcars. From there the cattle would ship to Wichita, Kan., or Kansas City, Mo., where the steers were sold via commission company to a packer.



This certificate marks the first LeForce Hereford registration. J.M. Winter transferred ownership of "Van" to Henry J. in 1898.



Pictured (l to r) are: Henry S., Betty Ann, Bambi (calf), Ceph, Henry C. (showman) and Harold Dedrick (Grant County agent) at the Oklahoma Livestock Show in 1948.



During his eighth grade year, Randall LeForce, Henry C's son, entered this bull in the Oklahoma BEEF Inc. (OBI) Bull Test west of Stillwater, Okla. He won the 140-day test with an average daily gain of 4.48 lb. and a 15.51 ribeye area at 13.5 months. LeForce Herefords maintains membership in OBI today, and has also participated competitively in several of the American Hereford Association Genetic Outreach Program (National Hereford Feedout) feedlot and carcass tests.

The reins of LeForce Herefords were passed on to Ceph after Henry J. passed in 1927. Ceph was a smart, hard-working man “who had the reputation of being able to turn out more work than anyone in the county,” according to his grandson, Henry C.

Henry C. also notes that his grandfather never cut him any slack, expecting his work to also be done well and on time. Over the years Ceph added to the land holdings his father had left him and grew the herd from 200 to 400 head under the name CW LeForce and Sons.

At the age of 14, Ceph’s son, Henry S., had already assumed much responsibility on the ranch. He took a train with a load of steers to Kansas City, Mo., riding in the caboose. Upon arrival, he picked up the commission company check and carried it back to his father by way of a passenger train headed for Pond Creek. This was one of Henry S.’s favorite stories, says Henry C.

Henry S. went away to Oklahoma A&M College, but returned to the ranch upon graduation in 1938. He and his wife, Betty Ann, carried on the family tradition of raising registered Herefords. Their sons were quickly taught how to exhibit Hereford cattle and were active showmen in 4-H and FFA.

### Becoming a corporation

In 1972 CW LeForce and Sons (at the time included: Ceph, Henry S. and Henry C.) filed a brief with the Oklahoma Supreme Court for the right of farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma to establish farm corporations. The effort was successful, and the operation became LeForce Farms Inc. in 1973.

Henry S. then started a major expansion of the Hereford herd in the early ’80s. “For several years, LeForce Herefords was in the top 20 in registrations in the Hereford breed,” tells Henry C.

“He (Henry S.) was a deep thinker and a shrewd businessman,” adds Mike Deewall, who was recruited by Henry S. and served as LeForces’ herdsman from 1983-98.

In 1983 the family divided LeForce Farms based on operations. Henry S. continued his work with the registered and commercial cattle, with help from Deewall. His son, Ben, took charge of the wheat and seed wheat operations, and Henry C. expanded the operation to include stocker cattle and custom backgrounding/growing. He also began an extensive crop business, including growing alfalfa, milo and corn (for silage), and handling some of the farm’s wheat and seed wheat business with his brother, Ben.

Henry S. long had dreamed of holding a production sale, but passed only six months before it became a reality. Henry C. took over the cow herd and, with the help of his wife, Billie Jayne, and Deewall, kept the dream alive. The family hosted its first LeForce Hereford Production Sale in 1991.

In 1996, Henry C. and his brother Ben decided to divide LeForce Farms into separately held corporations. Henry C.’s corporation, LeForce Land & Livestock, retained the Hereford operation.

As tradition would have it, Henry C.’s children took an interest in the cattle business while participating in 4-H and FFA in high school. Randall Scott (Randy) and Henry Jefferson (Jeff) exhibited in local, state and national junior shows. Their sister, Jennifer, could be found at many Hereford events, especially LeForce sales, serving as the main public relations person and assisting the office staff as needed.

### Industry events

Hosting junior events became a favorite LeForce family activity. In 1989 and ’97 LeForce Herefords hosted the Oklahoma Junior Hereford Association Field Days. The field day in ’89 was one of the last Hereford functions Henry S. attended. “I know he enjoyed being able to do that for the juniors,” says Deewall.

The ranch has also been one of the stops for the Oklahoma Hereford Tour, the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Tour and the Kansas Hereford Tour.

People coming to visit the ranch aren’t the only ones who’ve had the opportunity to see LeForce Herefords at their finest. Throughout the 113-year history, the family has shown their cattle in local, district and state shows, as well as at the American Royal in Kansas City, Mo., and the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

While the LeForces are proud of the many bulls they’ve raised and shown throughout the years, one particular bull seems to take the cake — LF L1 Domino 605. “605 may have been one of the top bulls that has been produced by LeForce Herefords,” Henry C. says. This bull was sold in the family’s eighth production sale to Adams Ranch of Maple Hill, Kan.

“It has always been our goal to produce bulls that have the muscle where they need it with the production of growth and milk, with light birth-weight calves, and yet still have sound females that are able to travel well and maintain themselves easily,” Henry C. says.

Deewall testifies to the success of this goal. “LeForces produce performance-oriented, practical, productive cattle and are responsive to the needs of the commercial industry,” he says. “They have a long tradition in agriculture in Oklahoma and a lot of loyalty to Hereford cattle.”

### Today’s herd

2000 marked the last LeForce production sale, but certainly not the last LeForce Hereford. Henry C. and Billie Jayne have a herd of about 90 head and continue to move registered bulls by private treaty. All bulls come with birth, weaning and yearling weight data, as well as ultrasound measurements. The family has also begun collecting DNA on the cattle, “knowing this information will be a great resource to provide us information to be able to produce the optimum individual,” Henry C. says.



The LeForce family was recognized as a Century Breeder at the 2004 American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting in Kansas City. Dale Venhuizen, 2004 AHA president, (right) presented the award to Henry C. and Billie Jayne LeForce.



LF L1 Domino 605 was a prized bull produced at the LeForce ranch. He sold to Adams Ranch, Maple Hill, Kan., on Feb. 13, 1998. The LeForce family maintained semen rights.

The Hereford business is thriving at this Oklahoma ranch, no doubt. “It’s been an exciting year,” Henry C. notes. “We’ve had a lot of calls, really the best year since I’ve started.”

Longtime friend, bull buyer and occasional business partner, Haskell Hammontree of Hanna, Okla., attributes Henry C.’s success to honesty and hard work. “He’s an honest person, a man of his word,” Hammontree says. “His dad was that way, too.”

From Henry J. to Henry C., the ranch has changed in name, size and methods, but two things remain the same: hard work and Herefords. While Henry C.’s children are presently successful in ventures off the ranch, his grandchildren, Will and Matthew, certainly have many opportunities to learn about Herefords and LeForce history at Grandpa Henry’s. **HW**



Members of the Henry C. LeForce family (pictured seated, l to r) are: Henry C. (father), Billie Jayne (mother), Matthew (grandson), Cyndi (daughter-in-law) and Will (grandson). Standing (l to r) are: Jennifer (daughter), Dorrie (daughter-in-law), Jeff (son) and Randy (son).