



Multiple generations of the Grote family were present to enjoy the grand opening of the exhibit. Pictured (l to r) front row are: Doris Grote, Jarrett Worrell, Lorine Metz. Second row (l to r) are: Warren Grote, Koy Grote, Shannon Worrell, James Worrell, Cheryl Grey, Jeff Grote, Dawn and Hans Hogan Krusehka.

# Bigger Than a Banner

Artifacts from generations of the Grote family are on display at the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

by Kayla Jennings

Early mornings and late nights spent working by the flickering light of the barn. Mile after mile spent chasing white lines to the next show. Dirty boots and tired little ones — tired parents, too — heading back after a long weekend showing to wake up and do it all over again.

Raising and showing livestock is not for the faint of heart. It takes hard work, dedication and a desire to achieve excellence. Even when faced with adversity, the character of showmen pushes them forward. Those things culminate in banners, ribbons and trophies on display — a treasure trove of success and passion. However, those awards are covered in dust now.

The stories they could tell would surely outshine their lost luster. They could tell of all the memories made in the barns where they were so proudly on display or on the road trips they took home from the show. They could tell of the wisdom a dad shared with his child or a cheesy joke the same

dad told a million times — accompanied by an obligatory laugh without fail. While the banners alone are just old, dusty pieces of cloth held up by a string, they represent so much more.

That “so much more” is why the Grote family can proudly say they are going five generations strong of cattle showmen. That “so much more” is also why the Bullock Texas State History Museum decided to highlight the Grote family in its newest exhibition — *RODEO! The Exhibition*.

## The exhibit

The Bullock Texas State History Museum sits in the capital city, Austin, with a mission to share the history of the state with its visitors. While the museum boasts 34,000 square feet of core exhibits sharing recollections of Texas history, it also has two rotating exhibit galleries. The rotating exhibits change two or three times per year, highlighting a specific theme within the Lone Star State. These

rotating exhibits, in addition to the artifacts changing frequently in the core displays, provide a fresh experience for returning guests.

The museum's efforts have not gone unnoticed, as nearly eight million visitors worldwide have been immersed in Texas culture at the Bullock since its opening in 2001. The newest exhibition, however, may be of special interest to the rodeo and livestock show population. The 7,000-square-ft. exhibit allows guests to explore the deep roots and rich history of rodeos and livestock shows in Texas. Namely, the exhibit highlights five of the largest rodeos and stock shows in the state — Fort Worth, San Angelo, Houston, Austin and San Antonio.

The museum also aims to teach guests about the nature of rodeos and livestock shows today. Kathryn Siefker, museum curator, wants guests to see not only the history of these events but also their influence on communities today.

"I hope they take away what the rodeos and stock shows mean to the communities they are in," she notes. "From the stock show side, specifically, I hope they walk away understanding what a commitment it is for the kids, and what an amazing experience it can be for them to raise animals and learn skills from participating."

As the museum began to collect artifacts to achieve this goal, Shannon Grote Worrell and her family came to the museum's attention. As a decoration in the Fort Worth livestock office, Shannon provided a silver platter and a purple rosette her grandfather won for champion steer at the Fort Worth Stock Show in 1939. As fate would have it, the Fort Worth Stock Show was already looped into the museum project and show staff members immediately knew the Grote family would be a perfect addition.

"It is kind of surreal. We never thought we would be there," says Shannon, a fourth-generation showman. "We were honored because, yes, we have done it for five generations, but there are other folks that have also done it for five generations. We are honored they picked us. We are thankful the generations of my family kept all that stuff because it meant so much to them, and that we actually had those things to share."

In addition to the historical artifacts from generations of the family, the exhibit informs guests about what preparing for a stock show is like and presents the opportunities stock shows afford youth. In fact, on the opening night of the exhibit, Shannon, her husband, James, and son, Jarrett, were in attendance and even brought cattle to the museum for members and attendees to see firsthand what the exhibit is illustrating. The family also offered their calf scramble contest awards and all the supplies needed to set up a trimming chute, including a blower, clippers, soap, wash brushes and more, to display for the duration of the exhibit.



Second generation showman, Oliver Grote, exhibited his grand champion Hereford steer at the 1939 Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth.

"One of our goals with the stock show section was to really underscore what stock shows do from an educational and scholarship standpoint, the amount of funding that goes into those scholarships and the incredible programs that all the stock shows have," Siefker says. "Using Will Grote's calf scramble belt buckle was just one way I could illustrate that idea."

### Generations

The family's rich history in showing cattle dates back to Shannon's great-grandfather, Marvin Grote. He and his wife homesteaded in the beautiful Texas Hill Country just south of Mason. At that time Marvin and his wife raised their boys — Oliver, James, Gordon and Lee — to show market steers competitively across the state. At the ripe age of 12, Shannon's grandfather, Oliver, exhibited his Hereford steer, Real Prince, and won the grand champion prize at the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth. Also, at Fort Worth, he won the grand champion carload of fat steers in 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942. Like his father, Oliver maintained the legacy with his four boys — Gary, Glen, Jeff and Warren.

A tooled leather scrapbook made by Oliver's wife, Doris, helps tell their story. One of Siefker's favorite artifacts in the exhibit, it was used to record 4-H, stock show and school activities. In addition to traditional recordkeeping, the scrapbook shares a deal Oliver made with his sons. If they won grand champion, they could have a swimming pool. Sure enough, the boys won, but the joke was on them — they were tasked with digging the pool.

In addition to the win with his brothers, Glen, Shannon's dad, actively showed livestock from 1958 to 1969 and boasts many prestigious honors. These include reserve champion steer at San Antonio, champion Angus female at Houston and several division champions in county and major state shows.

*continued on page 30...*

Shannon and her brother, Will, were eager to carry the family tradition of showing cattle through 4-H and FFA. Among their most prestigious wins is Shannon's grand champion junior commercial steer at Houston her senior year of high school. The competition required participants to raise a pen of three commercial steers for the contest and to be tested on their knowledge of the commercial cattle industry through interviews, meat identification and a written test. For Shannon, competing in various shows and other livestock contests provided much more than trophies and ribbons.

"It is not just about walking a cow into the showing," she says. "It is about years and decades of breeding and genetics. It is about taking long trips to shows and making memories because the family that hauls together stays together. It is the little random things that make fantastic memories.

"Even growing up, I remember the things we would get into on long trips like to junior nationals, Denver and Louisville," she quips. "Those things are so funny and every Thanksgiving or Christmas you tell the same story again. It is a way of life, and we don't know any different."

### Today

Shannon and James have followed in the footsteps ahead of them by founding, owning and operating Worrell Enterprises. Through their business, they have the opportunity to raise, show and sell purebred Hereford cattle across the country — in addition to the embryo transfer and artificial insemination services they offer.

The Worrell family is very active in the American Hereford Association (AHA), as well as the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA). Before Jarrett was born, Shannon and James actually supported



The Worrell family is proud to raise their fifth generation showman in the Hereford family.

high school students who wanted to show animals at livestock shows — including the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) — for many years.

"Our deal was buy a calf from us and we will teach you everything we know and haul you anywhere we can," Shannon explains. "We took 15 to 25 kids over those 15 years all over the United States. Those kids just became family. It was fun to win, but it was always about putting in the work and learning how to do it right."

While they maintain great relationships with the many youth they have helped over the years, their focus has since shifted to their own son, Jarrett, the fifth-generation, first stepped foot in the showing at three years old, and he has not turned back. He has exhibited across the state and country and in just a few short years, has received champion honors in many arenas. In fact, he exhibited at his first JNHE this year and was part of the champion team fitting trio — he could not be more excited for next year's JNHE.

"It was a discussion of how we were going to raise Jarrett," Shannon recalls. "It is not just about leading that cow into the showing. It is about meeting people and being part of a team. We just got back from junior nationals and he did all kinds of different events. It is about those things when we talk about building the next generation. It is about building a kid that can function, think for himself and have some work ethic, and yeah, it is cool to drag a cow in there, too."

At the end of the day, Shannon and her family hope this exhibit has a positive influence on visitors. She hopes her family's story and passion for the industry speaks loudly because in urban Austin it is unlikely many of the attendees have been exposed to rodeos and stock shows.

"Agriculture in itself is so important, so I hope those kind of folks see that," she notes. "I hope the future generations of our family recognize how important it is so they will continue it — even if it is not the popular thing to do. I am all about the educational part of it, too. Maybe it will also be an inspiration to a kid who is just starting to show." HW

**Editor's Note:** *Rodeo! The Exhibition* is on view at the Bullock Texas State History Museum through Jan. 27, 2019. For more information, visit [TheStoryOfTexas.com](http://TheStoryOfTexas.com).

## On Display

Some of the family artifacts displayed in the exhibit include:

**Second Generation:** Oliver Grote, 1939 Grand Champion Steer — Fort Worth Stock Show

**Third Generation:** Glen Grote, 1969 Reserve Champion Angus Heifer — Houston Livestock Show

**Fourth Generation:** Shannon Grote Worrell, Grand Champion Commercial Steer — Houston Livestock Show

**Fifth Generation:** Jarrett Worrell, 2015 Grand Champion Female — State Fair of Texas; 2017 Champion Hereford Cow-Calf Pair — San Antonio Livestock Show

**2013 AHA Southwest Region Show Bull of the Year** — WORR Owen Tankeray 79D ET

**2015 AHA Southwest Region Show Bull of the Year** — WORR Tankeray Rangpur 67B1 HW