



Carter Behrens

Cattle buyer- Bullrider

By El Deano

Born in San Saba, Texas on August 22, 1942 Carter Behrens was raised on a small ranch near the southwest edge of San Saba. His dad Albert worked in the bank after World War II until retirement as vice president in 1984 and died in 1987. "I learned how to ride a horse by the time I was 4 years old and went with Dad to run Grandma's ranch. I was the oldest of four children, three boys and one girl. I went with my dad to the ranch and developed a love of the land and livestock by the time I was five. During the drought of 1950s, Dad would pick us up after school and we would burn pear for the cattle and goats. My brother and I would have a grubbing hoe and grub the roots left from the day before's burning to pile up."

Behrens reflected that he played football in high school mainly to get out of ranch work, "Dad picked us up at school and we had to go with him to feed cows every afternoon before dark. We also had to milk cows."

"I was the star benchwarmer in football," mused Behrens. As already mentioned he only played football to miss work. Behrens was on all of the livestock judging teams in FFA and during his senior year qualified for State at A&M but instead of going to the state judging contest he went on his senior class trip. It was much to the chagrin of his FFA advisor due to the fact that his advisor had put in a lot of time training the various teams.

When the big RCA rodeo came to San Saba each year, his dad was one of the event coordinators and so he got to meet the contestants. "Kajun Kid took a liking to me and let me sit up on the chutes above the bullriders when I was just a kid. Later when we would be at any of the big shows such as San Antonio, he would see me and get me a pass to get in and I would be behind the chutes or on them," stated



Carter.

He started rodeoing when he was a freshman in high school. “I rode bulls and tried bareback riding but could not ride the horses very well and so quit the bareback riding. He also roped off friend’s horses when available. The rodeos he contested at in high school were mostly FFA rodeos.

After graduating from San Saba High School, Carter attended Tarleton State University for two years and then transferred to Texas Tech University where he graduated in 1964. He traveled with the NIRA teams at Tarleton and Texas Tech in the bullriding event. He tried bulldogging at Texas Tech but in those days was just not big enough.

While at Texas Tech, he worked at the meats lab and that is where he learned a lot about the meats end of the livestock industry from Dr. ‘Bull’ Durham. (‘Bull’ Durham was so far ahead in his research of meats and animals—that they’ll never catch up to his ideas). “ While at Tech we did extensive research on meats and meat quality.”

“I didn’t have much time for the normal social activities,” said Carter. His main goal was to win the Texas Tech Rodeo because at that time Tech used the famed string of Walt Alsbaugh, (RCA now PRCA) producer’s stock which was probably as good as any RCA producer. Alsbaugh had most of the college shows in the Tech NIRA region. If you could compete—and win in that region, you could go and make it RCA, that is if you had the desire to do so. Tech also had the biggest indoor coliseum rodeo of those days and biggest and prettiest buckle. He placed in a few but never won first place at any of them. College was the best experience for him in life because of the friends he made there.

When he graduated from Texas Tech University August 1964 with 167 hours of credits, he started looking for a job in banking because his degree was in agriculture economics. “ First National Bank in San Antonio was one of the ones that interviewed me. They told me that I needed to go to work for one of their clients because of my background in meats. I interviewed with Roegelein Provision Co. and got a job as a cattle and hog buyer in September of 1964,” said Behrens. He worked there until June of 1966 and then joined the Naval Reserve because of the draft in 1965 (It’s always better to join than to be drafted). “When I was with Roegelein Provision Co. I had the privilege of working the San Antonio Stockyards and that was when there was private treaty selling before there was ever an auction. “I was working the stockyards when the auctioneering process started.

I bought butcher hogs, cattle and feeder cattle. Roegelein was the largest hog slaughterer in the state of Texas and became larger,” said Behrens (Now there are no hog slaughter plants in Texas.)

He went to the Navy in 1967 for two years active duty and was stationed on a destroyer out of San Diego. In November 1967, he was assigned to USS Lofberg DD759 which was deployed to Vietnam where he spent 9 months. There they participated in gunfire support for US Troops during the 1968 TET Offensive. “I enjoyed my travels in the Navy because I saw a lot of the world that I will never get to see again: Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Guam, Korea, Hawaii and Vietnam,” Carter remembered.

He was released from active duty in February 1969 to attend graduate school at Texas Tech. After one semester, he got a job with Gene Newman in San Angelo who owned Veribest Cattle Feeders at that time. In May of 1969, he went on the road for Newman buying and receiving cattle. Behrens was associated with Gene Newman for 17 years until Newman’s death in 1985. After Newman’s death he took over the order-buying company called Ochoa Cattle Company, which he was associated with until recently.

Mr. Behrens met Laura Pool in 1969 when she was attending Trinity University in San Antonio. He had known her family for years since her family was also from San Saba.

“My cousin Marsha was her best friend and while Marsha was going to ASU encouraged me to call Laura when I traveled to San Antonio. We had our first date during the San Antonio Rodeo in 1969. When she was at home during summer of 1969 we dated more and I spent a lot of time in San Saba (needless to say). Laura transferred to TWU in the fall of 1969 and I would look for an excuse to go to the Ft. Worth area to buy cattle.” During the San Angelo Rodeo in 1970 they went to Nathan’s Jewelers and he bought her an engagement ring, they set a date for June 1970 and were married on the 12th at New Hope Church in San Saba County. Laura transferred to ASU in 1970 and finished her postgraduate and graduate degrees. They have lived in San Angelo since their marriage.

Laura began teaching English at Central High School and taught for 5 years before going into furniture sales and decorating. Their daughter Alicia was born in 1980 on June 4th. Laura continued working part-time until the furniture store closed and Alicia started junior high. At that time, Laura taught freshmen English at ASU one semester then went back to Central High School when her mentor and best friend retired from teaching. She is currently still teaching senior English at Central High School. Alicia graduated Central

High School in May 1998 and is presently attending ASU in San Angelo and will graduate this year. Alicia recently married Sterling Cole from Sterling City in Las Vegas. Mr. Cole is in the insurance and livestock trucking business.

Behren's hobbies are hunting and ranching. Laura has a ranch in San Saba County where they like to spend their spare time. "I have an annual mule deer hunt at Sanderson and we like to travel some but not too far from home. We never take a long vacation because of work schedules. We sometimes go for weekend trips to San Antonio or Austin for a play or concert," commented Carter.

Livestock is a risky business and his goal is to keep from going broke and to keep buying cattle. His advice to others is to maintain honesty at all costs! Ethics are not considered in some business but it is the utmost in the cattle business.

Carter summed it up when he said, "A person's reputation is the most important thing in the cattle business! I feel my word is as good as my life or visa versa. I always feel it is better to tell the truth and even to lose business, than lie to keep it! Learn from one's mistakes. One sometimes learns more from doing something wrong than from doing it right."

While stationed in the Navy in California he was able to rodeo in that state.