

MEMBER FEATURE: BILL FAIN

BY JANICE BRYSON

Arizona's Centennial celebration has brought attention to our state's 5 C's that were key to Arizona's early economic development—cattle, cotton, climate, citrus, copper. Bill Fain's family has been a part of the history of the cattle industry in Arizona since the arrival of Bill's great-grandparents William Marion and Cary Fain in Camp Verde in 1874.

William was born in Kentucky and raised in Missouri. Like many young men of his time, he became a Forty-Niner, traveling to California to search for gold. Moving on to Nevada, he met Cary Burch, a Missouri native, who at the age of fifteen had sailed around Cape Horn to California. The couple married and returned to Missouri before heeding the call of the West again. Their westward journey ended at the cavalry post of Camp Verde. William began cutting "hoe grass" that grew waist high in some areas and selling it to the military. Hired to care for animals at the fort, William began buying and trading cattle as he and Cary built up their holdings.



Bill and Norman Fain on the Rafter 11.

The couple homesteaded a small ranch on the east side of the Verde River before moving to Beaver Creek. Their holdings grew to include the Bar-16 Ranch four miles north of Stoneman Lake. Acquiring a place near Cornville on Oak Creek, the family built their home there and ran cattle, farmed and raised hay. Fain Mountain, on the Mogollon Rim near Cornville, was named for William as is a nearby spring.

William and Cary were parents of nine children. Their sixth child Dan was born in Cornville in 1879. Dan had only three years of formal schooling and felt that was enough book learning. He was put in the saddle shortly after learning to walk and never seriously considered any other life than that of a cowman.

At the age of five, Dan was in the corral when his father and a few cowboys were branding. He was given one of the calves and when asked what he wanted it branded, yelled "hey." One of the cowboys branded the calf HA. Dan used that brand well into adulthood. At the age of ten, Dan was sent by his father to help Theodore Canfield round up 200 head of cattle. Canfield agreed to pay \$2.50 a day if Dan brought the cattle in. Dan rounded up the cattle and went to Canfield for his wages. The rancher told him he would pay as soon as he returned from a quick trip to Jerome. The cattle did not have access to water and after three days, Dan asked a neighbor to help him move the cattle to a watering trough and back into the pen. After another length of time, the cattle were thirsty again when Canfield finally returned from a bender in Jerome. He told Dan he would only pay him

\$2.00 a day due to his care of the cattle. Dan threatened him with a gun, but Canfield wouldn't relent. The next day, with a neighbor at his side, Dan persuaded Canfield to pay the \$2.50 per day.

As a teenager, Dan worked with the Hashknife Outfit, The Aztec Land and Cattle Company, on the eastern slope of the Mogollon Rim. He represented the western cattlemen in the area by helping organize roundups that brought cattle in from hundreds of miles away to a meeting place on the rim. Dan also ran the 101 Ranch owned by Babbitt and Greening for four years.

Dan married Mildred Back in 1902 at Beaver Creek. Mildred's family had acquired the Montezuma Well Ranch, part of which is now a national monument. The couple's only child, Norman, was born in 1907 at Camp Verde. When Norman was seven, Dan bought him twenty heifers and it was his job to look after them. One of Norman's early memories was traveling with his family to Long Valley at the age of four. Dan, Mildred and a crew of men spent all summer building a drift fence from Lake Mary all the way to Strawberry. This fence, well over fifty miles, was to keep the Texas cattle wintering in the Little Colorado Basin from mixing with Dan's cattle.

Bill notes that his grandfather owned or managed at least sixty-five different outfits. In the days before fences, Dan had twenty cow outfits in the Verde Valley running west of Granite Mountain all the way over to the Mogollon Rim. In 1914, Dan partnered with Arthur Heath, buying the OK and Bloody Basin outfits. Kooge Wilkins had purchased the ML Ranch in Lonesome Valley in 1915.

Dan went into partnership with Wilkins in 1917 and Dan and Wilkins moved their cattle to the ML and renamed it the Rafter Eleven. Dan bought out Wilkins within several years and the Fain Family has operated the ranch ever since.

In 1918, Dan sold the Bloody Basin outfit and invested in a sheep outfit. He owned more than 70,000 ewes with winter quarters west of Wickenburg and summer ranges in the White Mountains. Dan served as a loan appraiser for the Bank of Arizona for thirty years. In 1928, he deeded a square mile of his Rafter Eleven Ranch to city of Prescott for a municipal airport.

Dan and Mildred divorced and she moved to Prescott with



Dan Fain.

their son Norman in 1920. He graduated from Prescott High School and went on to graduate from Stanford University. After graduation, Norman returned to Arizona to join Dan on their ranch operations. The Depression of the 1930's virtually wiped out Dan's assets but he was able to survive while many Arizona cattlemen were ruined.

While attending Prescott High School, Norman had met Johnie Lee Parsons, a Texas native who had moved to Prescott with her family. Johnie Lee had returned to Texas and after his graduation from Stanford, Norman went to Texas to propose. They were married in October 1928 in Fort Worth. They had no time for a honeymoon as it was roundup time and Norman had to get back to Arizona.

The Fain sheep outfit was one of the largest in the state and Norman was in charge of winter lambing, marking and shearing. In addition, Norman was managing his mother's 44 and Diamond S cattle ranches in the Verde Valley. He eventually sold the 44 and Diamond S permits to Pete Groseta. The couple's first child Donna was born in November 1929 and the family lived in a tent house on the sheep ranch. Their second daughter Carolyn Sue was born in May 1934 in Camp Verde when the family lived at the old Fain ranch house there.

In 1935, the Fain's moved to Yaeger Canyon near the base of Mingus Mountain, ten miles from the Rafter Eleven headquarters. The family camped out all summer while making the 1880's house livable. Johnie Lee was told she

had a choice between running water and electricity; she chose running water and a windmill was installed. Coleman kerosene lamps were used until Norman

brought in a generator. In January 1938 the couple's son Norman William II, always called Bill, joined the family. Norman made sure all of his three children had cattle and to care for them on their own. Bill's cattle wore the "25" brand.

Norman was elected to the Arizona State Senate in 1940 and was in Phoenix for several months a year. World War II bought new responsibilities and longer working hours for Johnie Lee due to the shortage of men at the Rafter Eleven. She drove the children to school remaining in Prescott until school was out due to gasoline rationing. Johnie Lee used her time to learn bookkeeping and worked at a Prescott business. In later years, she kept the books for the Rafter Eleven. When Bill was attending school in Prescott, he would ride to school with his mother and ride back with the postman.

Norman was very active in the legislature introducing twenty-



15th Legislature, 1942.

Continued on page 12...

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...Continued from page 11 Member Feature



Loading cattle at Yaeger.

five bills on state lands alone his freshman year. During his third term, one of his primary goals was to pass the "Right to Work" bill. Norman was also instrumental in the routing of I-17. A gentlemen's agreement was made to build the highway from Phoenix to Cordes Junction and influence would be made to see that the remaining available money would be divided between Prescott and Flagstaff. This would be enough to build roads from Cordes Junction to Prescott and Flagstaff.

Declining a request to run for governor, Norman did not run for any political office after 1946 as he had a family to support. Norman served two terms as president of the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association in the late 1940's. He also invested in farm land in Yuma and Butler Valley. In 1948, a portion of the Rafter Eleven ranch was turned into productive farmland.

Norman served on the Board of Valley National Bank as well as being a Director for the Arizona Stockmen's Loan Association and Turf Paradise. In 1966, Governor Sam Goddard appointed Norman to a blue ribbon panel of Arizona business and industrial leaders to advise him on economic development.

As a member of Arizona State Cowbelles, Johnie Lee worked hard as Cowbelles chairperson for the Arizona Boy's Ranch. The group raised \$40,000.00 to build two of the homes for the boys. She also was involved with the Lil' Dudette beef promotion program. Johnie Lee was the first President of Yavapai Cowbelles and was later elected as state president of the Arizona Cowbelles.

Bill graduated from the University of Arizona in 1960 with a double major in finance and business economics. During his college years, he was not sure the Rafter Eleven would still be in his family as a Phoenix businessman had offered a large amount to purchase the ranch. The sale did not go through and the Fains kept the ranch. Good foremen have been at the Rafter Eleven through the years including Jim Miller who was elected to the Arizona Ranching and Cowboy Hall of Fame in the working cowboy category.

Bill's grandfather Dan told him, "Come home after you finish college. You might make more money doing something else, but you'll find a good living in ranching and have a lot of satisfaction doing it." Bill met his future wife Nancy Williams at the University of Arizona. She was from Calexico, California where her father had established the area's first commercial cattle feeding business. Bill and Nancy were married in November 1960 and Bill returned to the Rafter Eleven to ranch for the next nine years. Bill and Nancy have four children, Norman, Dawn, Ron and Brad.

Bill was active in the Yavapai Cattle Growers and was elected their President at the age of 29. Since his high school days, Bill had a dream of developing a town in Lonesome Valley. Norman and Bill sold pieces of the Rafter Eleven and

worked with developers in what is now Prescott Valley. One of Norman's principle interests was the Rafter Eleven Mobile Home and RV Park near the ranch headquarters. 1965 saw the Fains establish the Shamrock Water Company which the family owned for more than thirty years. Norman and Bill were approached in 1969 by developers to join a project to build a golf course on Fain Land and Cattle Company Property in Dewey and the Prescott County Club was built. The golf course was later sold to Southwest Pacific Company.

Bill put his land use planning to good use in founding Fain Signature Group. He works closely today with sons Ron and Brad and son-in-law Jeff Wasowicz. The Fain Signature Group is active in developing industrial and commercial real estate. The group believes in orderly transition and they do not sell land for speculation. Bill advises there is a need to maintain an economic unit. It is a challenge to keep the beef industry alive – forage, gathering and marketing. He endorses the multiple use concept with diversification to make the whole operation sustainable. There were many years when real estate bought hay for the cows. Today cattle prices are high.

In the early days of Prescott Valley, the Fain Family made gifts of land to bring major industrial firms to the town in addition to donating land to churches and schools. A park was established for the people of Yavapai County and named Fain Park in honor of the donors. Bill has been active in a wide variety of civic and cultural organizations. He is proud of his role in the development of Prescott Valley. Bill notes that Prescott Valley has about the same population as Prescott and has been successful in attracting jobs. He feels the two cities are complimentary to each other. Bill was recognized in 2003 as the Partners for Active Leadership Man of the Year.



All the men.

The next generation of Fain's in the cattle business continues as Bill's son Ron serves on the board of the Yavapai Cattle Growers. During my interview with Bill, he gave me Dean Smith's book *The Fains of Lonesome Valley* from which I found much of the ranching history of the family.

Bill believes that ranching will remain a vital part of Arizona's economic base in the foreseeable future although the state has evolved to a large spectrum of jobs. He looks forward to a future in which his grandchildren will carry on the Fain family tradition of good stewardship to the land and citizens of Prescott Valley, Yavapai County and Arizona.

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