

MEMBER FEATURE: MINERAL PARK/GOLDEN VALLEY RANCHER MIKE GROSS

Mike Gross is the fourth generation of his family to live and ranch in the Mineral Park/Golden Valley area of Mohave County. The valley was named for the rare blooms of wild poppies and other wild flowers that carpet the desert after an exceptionally wet year.

The first family member to arrive in Arizona Territory was the family patriarch Charles G. Gross. He emigrated from Prussia in 1849, making his way through Mexico to the Colorado River town of La Paz. Gold had been discovered in the vicinity by Pauline Weaver and La Paz was a thriving mining town of around 5,000 inhabitants. In 1862, Charles married Concepcion Ferra, a young Mexican woman from the state of Sonora. The couple opened a general store in La Paz; the largest and best built on mercantile row. The Colorado River changed course in 1866 leaving the town landlocked. Shipping was taken over by Ehrenburg, six miles south. By 1870, the gold mines had been exhausted and La Paz declined into a ghost town.

Charles and Concepcion left La Paz and came up the Colorado River by steamboat seeking a new life for themselves. They moved to Mineral Park in 1872, a supply point for mines in the area, and a growing number of cattle ranches. The couple built a ranch in the area which Concepcion managed while Charles concentrated on mining interests in the Cerbat Mountains.

Charles Gross had four sons and five daughters. John Gross Sr. the second to the youngest child was born in Mineral Park in 1883. John Sr. was raised on the ranch and took over the ranch after the death of his parents. In 1935 John Sr. married Bertha Mayberry Bacon. She was the daughter of Henry Bacon which owned one of the largest ranches in the Hackberry area in the eastern part of Mohave County. John and Bertha had two children

John Jr. and Mary Lou. John Jr. was raised and attended school in Mineral Park and Chloride. During this time John Sr. increased the ranching operation by buying the Curtain Ranch in the early 1930's from James Curtain in the Sacramento/Golden Valley area. When other ranchers sold and bought cattle they were shipped



to McConnico on a train then drove to the only stock tank in the area which was located on the Gross Ranch. Cattle would be watered out and rested for the night before being moved to other ranches in the area.

When World War II started, John Jr. quit school and joined the Army. After the war John Jr. returned to the Gross Ranch and married Norma Faye Jacoby a daughter of a Chloride miner. They were married in 1950. John Jr. briefly left the ranch and moved to Show Low to work in the Forestry Industry. During that time John and Norma started a family with five boys and one daughter. When John Sr. became ill John Jr. returned to the ranch to take over the ranching operation in 1957. John and Norma's children were raised on the ranch helping with daily operations while attending school in the Kingman area. Throughout the Gross kids school years they were involved in 4-H along with other ranch kids. They showed many animals and were on the livestock judging team. The family won numerous awards throughout their 4-H careers. Mike raised eight steers with two winning the Grand Champion Market class. Mike also raised a steer that he showed at the Arizona National Livestock Show in Phoenix. Mike met his wife Becky Lawrence through 4-H. In 1974 Mike married Becky and they were blessed with one daughter Carrie Gross-Bias and two sons Shawn and Charles Gross. The ranching operation was a big part of his children's life.

After a brief college and rodeo career Mike returned to Mineral Park/Golden Valley ranch to partner with his father and mother running the Gross Ranch. Mike still having the desire to compete from his rodeo days took up team roping. He built an arena out of the holding trap at the headquarters. This arena became an everyday meeting place for his kids and some of the best cowboys in Northwest Arizona. Mike made sure everyone was welcome at the arena whether they wanted to practice or just tell stories.

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After branding. (L-R): Shawn, Mike and Becky Gross, Carrie Gross-Bias, Bryan Bias. Horseback: Lainey Gross (left), Noelle Gross (right).

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In 1988 when Mike's father, John Jr., passed away Mike took over the everyday ranching operation alongside his mother. Mike remembers a time when there were no homes in the Golden Valley area and every road was dirt. The small two bedroom home that started off as a tin house with no electricity and no phone still stands at the headquarters. Now framed with stucco and facing an orchard of 70 year old apricot trees it stands as a memory of a time when life was much simpler and ranching much easier.

The ranching industry has seen many changes in this area mainly with the encroachment of people. The ranch consists of mostly BLM land and the Mineral Park Mine which sits in the middle of the ranching operation.



Mike's son Shawn and daughter Carrie in the branding pen.



Mike, Shawn, Bryan and Lainey horseback.

Article made possible by a grant from the Arizona Cattle Industry Foundation

Mike has been very involved in the political side of the ranching industry as a member of the Arizona Cattle Growers', Arizona Farm Bureau, Mohave Livestock Association, Mohave County Farm Bureau, National Cattlemen's Beef Association and a long time member of Arizona Cowpuncher's Reunion Association. Mike is currently finishing his term as an Arizona Farm Bureau State Board Member and will serve on the Arizona Cattle Growers' Board of Directors next year.

Mike's oldest son Shawn has recently leased a cow/calf ranch on the north side of the Cerbat Mountains from the Gross Ranch. Mike also helps Shawn with the operation of this ranch. Shawn is currently raising his two daughters Lainey and Noelle the same way he was raised as a ranch kid. Mike's daughter Carrie along with his youngest son Charlie hopes to carry on the family name while preserving the legacy. One day Carrie hopes the sixth generation, her son Bodie Bias or her nieces will be able to say "I am from the Gross Ranch and my family homesteaded this ranch in the late 1870's."

Written by Janice Bryson and Carrie Gross.

UA COLLEGIATE CATTLE GROWERS UPDATE

BY CALINE GOTTWALD, CCGA PRESIDENT

We have a busy year ahead. The officer team is excited to build our membership and get more members of the club involved. The list for what we will be doing this coming month will be short, I will have more to report on after our officer training.

- Officer Training: On August 20th, the officers are meeting for a few hours to prepare for the upcoming year. We are going to discuss the constitution and activities and projects the club should do this year. We will also discuss what we can do to build membership and plan how when and how we will have our meetings.
- Animal Science Department Welcome Back BBQ: This is something that the club did last year. We help cook and serve dinner and talk to new freshmen and recruit them.
- Annual Jackpot Show: We will be having our annual Jackpot Show this year sometime in February. As soon as the dates are confirmed we will let ACGA know!

This year we have a very enthusiastic and hard working officer team.

President: Caline Gottwald

Sophomore - studying Animal Sciences in hopes to get into

Veterinary School. From Parker, Arizona.

Vice President: Victoria Lowe
Junior - studying Veterinary Sciences. She recently returned from an internship up at the V Bar V ranch in Camp Verde, Arizona. From Texas.

Secretary: Cheyenne Robinson
Senior - studying Animal Sciences. This past summer she interned with the Arizona Beef Council. From Cottonwood, Arizona.

Reporter: Kelli Rovey
Junior - studying Agricultural Education. Kelli grew up on her family's farm in Buckeye, Arizona.

Treasurer: Eric Banuelos
Pursuing Masters Degree in Agricultural Education. He will be moving to Safford, Arizona to student teach in January and will begin teaching in the Fall of 2013. From Cottonwood, Arizona.

