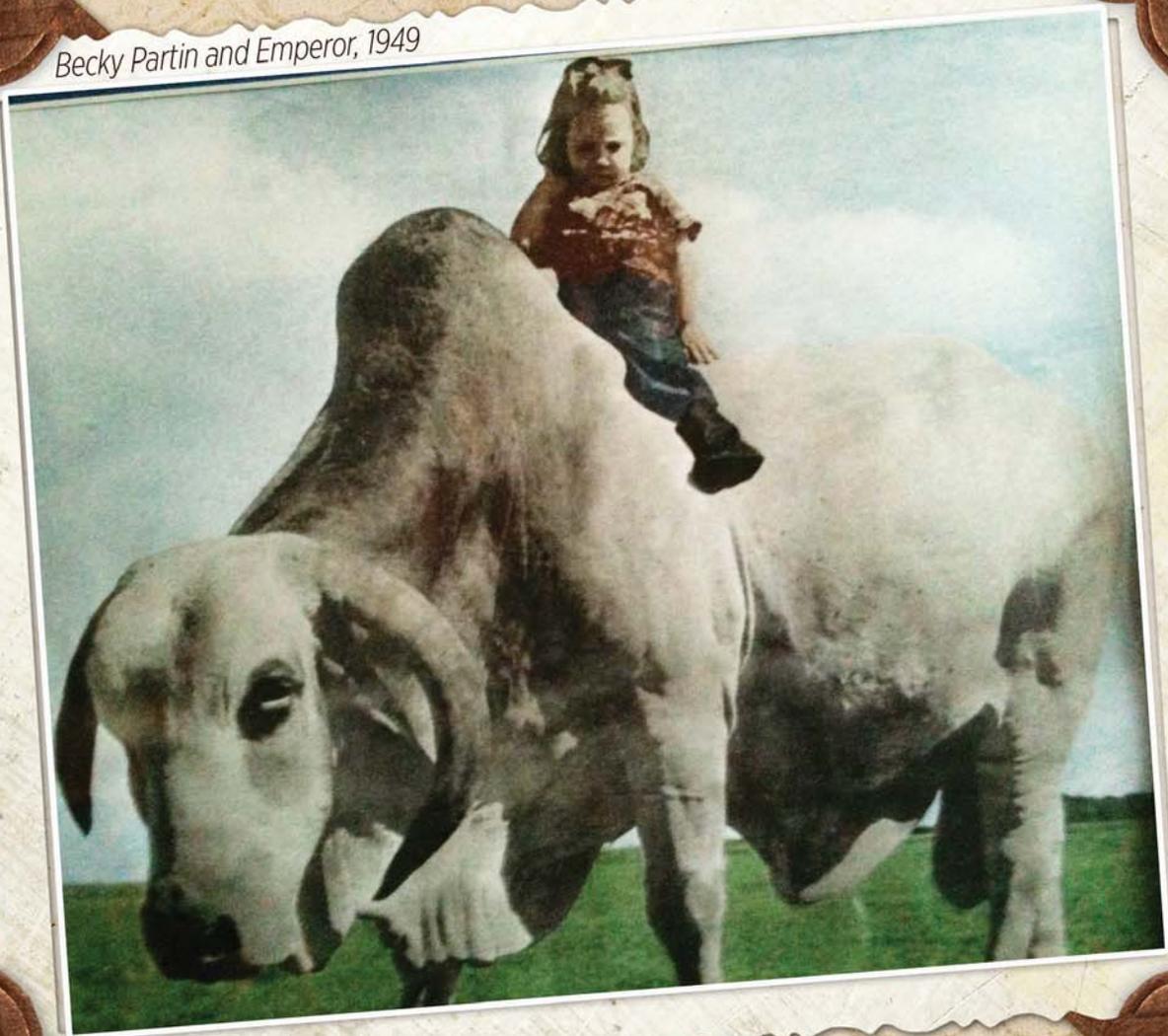


Becky Partin and Emperor, 1949



In 1949, little Becky Partin loved riding her grandfather Henry Partin's favorite bull, Emperor.

Today, in 2011, Partin's influence has carried on to the Kempfer, Booth, and Barthle families, plus countless more.

The American Brahman Review takes a look at the Florida Brahman family tree.

This Is

My Story

By Joelynn Donough

The subtropical climate of Florida attracts many vacationers, tourists and adventure seekers. But something people may not think of when the subject of the sunshine state arises is cattle. However, deep in the heart of the southeastern part of our country are some of the most respected and historic ranches known to cattlemen and, more specifically, to Brahman cattle. Since this heat-tolerant breed is able to thrive and succeed in the environment brought forth in Florida, it is no wonder most of the cattle found there have a large “eared” influence. Just as important, when it comes to the historic book of breeders, those with pastures full of Brahman cattle have truly made quite the mark.

Something even more interesting than the location of these producers is what lies before them. If asked what their family tree looked like, most people would be able to go generation to generation and would be able to pull other family lines into their own. The history of Brahman cattle in Florida all go back to one family, and for this family, the honor and lineage in the breeders are just as impressive as the beef cattle they produce.

IT ALL STARTED WITH...

THE PARTINS

Henry O. Partin is the undisputed champion of bringing the much-needed eared influence to the sunshine state. In 1936, Partin purchased 131 purebred Brahman cattle from a Texas breeder, including an imported Imperator son named Impariste. Henry



MEMBERS OF THE PARTIN FAMILY, 1989

O. mated this bull to his cows, resulting in the famed Emperor bull, who was born in 1940. According to Mr. Henry, Emperor was “the man who put me in the Brahman business” and ultimately shaped Florida into one of the leading states for Brahman cattle.

“In effort to improve his herd, Henry O. Partin imported the first group of Brahman cattle into Florida from Texas in the early 1930s,” said Richard S. “Ricky” Booth, one of Partin’s great grandsons. “Henry’s foresight had a profound effect on the Florida Cattle industry, moving it toward legitimacy as a beef-producing state.”

Henry O.’s Heart Bar Ranch quickly became world-renown for producing Brahman cattle that were built for beef production. He and three of his sons were charter members of the American Brahman Breeders Association (ABBA), one of which was Henry H. “Doc” Partin, who is Booth’s grandfather. Four generations later, the Doc Partin family is still producing commercial and purebred Brahman cattle on the Doc Partin Ranch in St. Cloud, Florida. Mike Partin, another one of Henry O.’s grandsons, operates Heart Bar Ranch in Montalba, Texas.

THE BARTHLES

The Barthle family name also began appearing in Florida’s cattle records in the 1930s and 1940s.

“At that time our cattle, like most, were open-ranged in the eastern part of our county. Cattle intermingled with neighbors,” said Larry Barthle, a member of the third generation of the ranch. Though this may have fostered a lack of incentive to breed up to improve genetics, it did run straight into a barbed-wire fence and the importance of the Barthle family’s need for the Brahman breed. “Once the fence laws came into effect, upgrading started, and the first breed we used on the Florida scrub cattle were Brahmans.”

At this point, Barthle needed to improve his genetic base and did so by implementing bulls bought from — you guessed it — Henry O. Partin. Barthle’s originally operated under the name of J.A. (Joseph Albert) Barthle & Sons. In later years it would shorten to Barthle Brothers Ranch, which is the name the operation still carries today. The ranch was divided in the 1970’s between J.A.’s two sons families: Albert (Al-Bar Ranch) and Joe (Barthle Bros). Joe’s son, Larry Barthle, is one of several family members involved in the operation. “Our families original ranch

is in one tract and all intact,” Larry proudly states. “Though the ranch may be split between brothers and uncles and other family members, it is still one unit with all the property connected.”

The Barthle family began showing their Brahman cattle in the 1960s, but later took some time away from the ring to dedicate to the herd itself. In 1989, the junior show circuit attracted the Barthle and Dillard children, and thus the family began competing once again.

“Since 1989, there have been 13 grandkids showing in the junior Brahman circuit,” says Barthle. “All were Barthles or Dillards, from four different families. At one time, we had 7 grandkids on the circuit at one time.”

The Barthles and Dillards transferred the majority of the ranch cattle into the grandchildren’s names to be used for 4-H and FFA projects. Then, at the completion of their show careers, we would put the cattle back into the herd.

“The best part of showing throughout Florida for them was meeting and developing friendships with other kids their age that continues today,” says Barthle. “They were able to develop leadership and marketing skills that are being used today.”

Those show cattle are now a part of the large group herd in Pasco County in Central Florida that holds about 70 head of registered Brahman. For now, all of the showmen are graduated from school, almost all involved with agriculture in some way, so the next generation of the “Barthle” and “Dillard” name is in the makings., but that is not to say times are slow at the ranch.

“Our main operation is commercial crossbred cattle. We utilize our own Brahman bulls in our three-way cross,” said Barthle. He has seen firsthand how this three-way cross has proven to be the most common and efficient way to succeed in the Florida commercial cattle arena. “We need the Brahman blood for our cattle to be productive.”

Continuing, he said, “We breed and develop our cattle for the commercial cattle industry. We push and select traits that are important to the beef industry. We select cattle for production but still try to be competitive in the showing. I think if the breed as a whole would breed more for the beef industry — take off some of the frame, breed stronger structured cattle — we would be better off as a whole in the long run.”

The Barthle’s try to keep their Brahman cows in the mid 5 to low 6 frame score with mature cows in the 1,250 to 1,300 pound range. Barthle adds, “We want cows to look like cows and not bulls.”

The Barthle’s use this same philosophy in their Brahman influenced commercial herd as well.

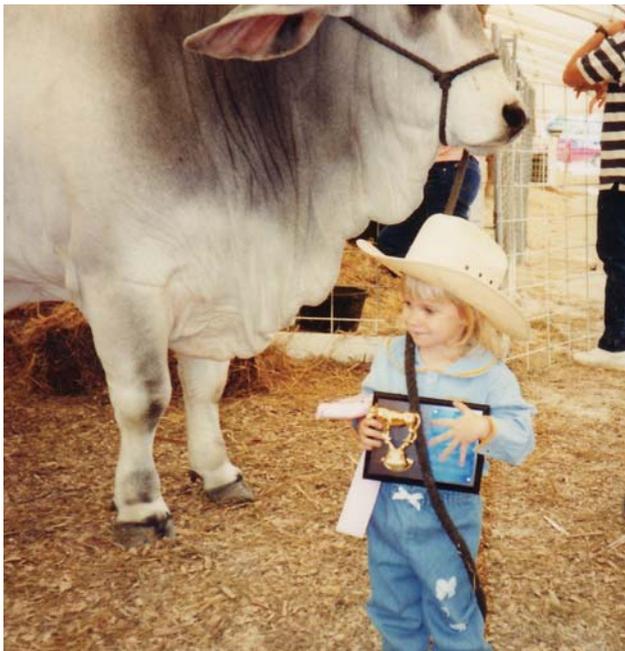
“Our commercial cattle are in the 1,000 to 1,050 pound range,” says Barthle. “We try to keep them in the mid 5 frame to be productive. We select Angus, Charolais and Hereford bulls for the commercial herds that have positive carcass traits as well as birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and milk.”

By retaining ownership on their steers each year, the Barthles are able to learn more about the carcass merit of their cattle.

“We retain ownership on one load of steers each fall and collect the data from them,” he says. “We usually include a hand full of purebred Brahman steers in the group and collect this data for EPD information.”

This philosophy has no doubt helped the Barthle family receive success. With two ABBA Vanguard winners, numerous Florida champions, two register-of-renown bull winners, multiple maternal merit cows, as well as a grand champion bull at the All American, there is no question the days of neighborhood intermingling with scrub cattle are over.

Since 1989, there have been 13 Barthle grandchildren showing in the junior Brahman circuit as members of the American Junior Brahman Association.



Showing Brahman have been part of the Barthle and Dillard’s lives since 1989. Kayla Barthle is pictured here winning her first pee wee showmanship award and with the last show bull of her junior career.



MEMBERS OF THE KEMPFER FAMILY, 2011

THE KEMPFRERS

Another family that has made its mark in the history books for Florida Brahman are the Kempfers. What started in the late 1800s with commercial cattle has become one of the deepest-quality herds of Brahman cattle to date.

“We used Brahman bulls quite heavily over the years,” George Kempfer explained. “But we really began focusing on Brahmans in the early 70s, which was soon after my dad, Billy Kempfer, married my mom, Becky Partin, who is the granddaughter of Henry O. Partin.” After their wedding, Becky’s Brahman herd was brought over from Kissimmee to her new home on the Kempfer ranch in St. Cloud.

And so another Florida Brahman family legacy — the Kempfers — began. George and his twin brother, Henry, are great grandsons of Henry O. Partin. With this said, it’s no wonder the cattle in on the Kempfer ranch are so high in quality and efficiency. With family history so deep, the Kempfers are proud to operate their herd solely by the family itself. All cattle are managed by Kempfer Cattle Company, even though every family member has their own personal cows. The entire family is a part of the production of commercial cattle both in Florida and Mississippi.

“The cattle that perform well in our environment will tend to be smaller-framed,” said George Kempfer. “Our cattle are bred for performance in the pasture and the feedlot.”

This breeding philosophy has sustained the Kempfer family through the years. Their cattle have survived and earned a profit in one of the toughest environments in the United States.

“Brahmans have found a place here as we feel they are the backbone of our commercial herd,” Kempfer explained. “They give us the longevity, production and efficiencies in this climate which cannot be duplicated by any other breed.”

The Kempfers have made it to the top by realizing what works and where, and they’re betting on this success to continue their operation into the future.

*“We’re in the Brahman business for the long haul. The sixth generation is now getting involved and they love the Brahman cattle.”
-Kempfer, 2011*

FLORIDA FAMILIES FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

There is no doubt amongst the Partin, Barthle and Kempfer families that Brahmans are a part of their future.

“We are in this for the long haul,” said Kempfer. “The sixth generation is now getting involved, and they too love the Brahman cattle. It is our goal to continue growing our Brahman herd. Quality Brahman cattle are a big reason why we’ve been able to survive in this industry for over 110 years.”

“Just as my cousins, brother and sister grew up on a ranch where Brahman cattle were an important part of the operation — my children and cousins’ children now get to experience that as well,” Booth said. “Getting to saddle up their horses and ride off with dad to gather a bunch of cows brings excitement. At a young age they will learn how to handle Brahman and Brahman-cross cows, and they will discover the importance of the Brahman mama cow to our operation. Gaining this knowledge will create respect and admiration for the breed.”

One of the most pronounced ways to see how deep the heritage and admiration goes for the breed within the Partin relation is by hearing a certain story told by Booth himself:

“In high school I did a video project about the Brahman breed. Part of the project included an interview with my grandfather, Doc Partin. I don’t remember the specific question, but we were discussing what Brahman cattle meant to his father, himself and his brothers. There was a moment during the interview when he spoke specifically about his father. His voice began to crack, and pushing the words out became a struggle, and then he simply said, ‘He loved a Brahman cow.’ I wouldn’t realize until later in life how much of an impact that moment would have on me. Brahman cattle have meant so much to our family though the years — ever since the first cows were unloaded off a rail car in downtown Kissimmee, Florida, in the early 1930s. The ranch we run today was built on their productivity. I love Brahman cows, too, and so do many members of my family.”

It is incredible to see how the state cattlemen have grown and survived off of this very one breed. But what is even better is to see the possibilities to come.

As Ricky Booth said, “I do not foresee a time where Brahmans — in some way, shape or form — will not be a vital part of the Florida cattle ranching industry. The qualities they possess reflect the qualities of a successful and profitable cow herd in our state. Brahman producers everywhere cannot lose sight of the fact that strong demand in the domestic commercial market is the key to increased and continuous success. Producing genetics to fit that market is, I hope, the goal of all Brahman breeder.” ©TABR

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‘He loved a Brahman cow.’

-Ricky Booth



Booth and his daughters working cattle together on Doc Partin Ranch