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Maverick Ranch Notes

Bull tales and Texas art

By Bebe and Sissy Fenstermaker

These days we are operating with a new bull. Titian has returned to his breeders, Debbie and Don Davis of DWD Longhorns, Hondo. (Visit their website at www.dwdlonghorns.com for some of the best available information and examples of the true Texas Longhorn.) Titian grew into a beautiful red bull from the yearling Debbie delivered here almost two years ago. He is a gentle fellow, happy to eat cow cake from the hand and stand to be patted. He left behind some of the finest calves we've ever had here, and we will have one more calf crop before embarking on new trails with the new bull. Debbie says Titian will be available for lease but she will not sell him since she wants to keep those genes for future use. We named him Titian for the Renaissance painter famous for a particular red he often used in his paintings. Actually, Titian is a Renaissance kind of bull.



Titian

The new bull's working name is E.W. Erstwhile is his whole name. The look he often has on his young face seems as if he is searching through old memories. He certainly has it while I'm getting supper together. While none of the cattle think I'm fast enough, E.W. seems hard pressed to understand my inability to produce cake and hay at flash speed. In the herd, he works at memorizing the ways and whims of the other cattle. He will lose that look as he grows older, more sure of himself, and begins to run the herd. But being only 14 months old, he has the respect younger animals have for their elders. Right now he has to tiptoe around a couple of cranky old cows and Sully the steer, but this will reverse pretty soon. He already buffaloes Sissy's horse Langtry by diving on his feed bucket and eating as much as he can before the startled horse flattens his ears and snarls. Then E.W. eases back and out of kicking range, carefully staying perpendicular to Langtry's side.



E W (3 years)

E.W. came with a grudge against dogs which makes me keep mine in sight and in the pickup until they all make peace. There has been good progress but we slid back a little last week. Sissy's dogs were here for a visit and neither she nor I were thinking clearly as they came down to the house. E.W. suddenly appeared around a clump of cactus and headed right for Flecka. We yelled at him to move out, which made the dog turn, and she roared at him, quickly joined by Sienna. Together they tore off after the bull as he disappeared around the corner of the yard and down the hill.

E. W. is a brindle, with vertical stripes of dark brown-black on a red ground. He has some white on his dewlap and two sprayed spots on his hindquarters. His cream-colored muzzle glowed out of the dark depths of "The Lair" of the hay barn during his get-acquainted confinement in the corral. Best of all is the mound of curls on the top of his head which looks

very much like buffalo wool. Debbie just e-mailed us with the results of his blood test confirming his sire as Mr. Sand Man Yates 3/0, of whom she had been pretty sure because of those curls. Then she related the remarkable story of how she and Don saved that grand old bull's life. With her permission, I'll let her finish out Year 2004 by quoting her email of 12-1-04:



Mr. Sand Man Yates 3/0

"I finally got the blood report back on your new bull. His sire is Mr. Sand Man Yates 3/0. That is not surprising looking at his curly forehead. We used to call his sire 'the buffalo' . . . I've attached a photo of Sand Man. He has an interesting story. Fayette Yates gave the bull to the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge [Oklahoma] to add some diversification to the WR genetic base back in 1991. The Refuge used him until 1999. We knew he was coming up for auction and past experience prepared us not to have to pay very much. For some reason, buyers at the WR sale prefer to pay upwards of \$800 for bull calves but shy away from mature, proven

herd sires because they are afraid the bulls will be wild. We had a little insider information. All the animals Fayette Yates raises are gentle. We went up intent on buying Mr. Paisano Yates 01/1 and our friend Sonny Detmer sent us up with a \$500 budget to bring home Sand Man. We got in a bidding war with someone and had to pay \$1,000 for our bull. We bid against a killer buyer on the Detmer's bull that got the \$500 bid. We did not know how much higher the other buyer was willing to go and we didn't know how much higher Sonny would agree to pay, so we let the bull go. We drove home that night from Oklahoma and informed Sonny we did not buy his bull. His reply was he would have paid \$1,000 for the bull and he was disappointed. Don and I felt terribly, particularly knowing such good genetics were going to burger. I called the Refuge first thing the next morning and got the name and telephone number of the fellow that bought the bull. By luck I reached the man right then. He had bought several bulls and old steers and taken them all straight to the packer the day before. He said he would be willing to sell me the bull for \$550 if he was still alive and gave me the number to the packinghouse. By a small miracle, the packinghouse had slaughtered every one of the animals the man brought in the day before except one. It was getting late and they decided to leave him for the following day. I described the bull to the man at the packinghouse as a red bull branded 3/0 with a cloudy eye. The man called me back in a few minutes to inform me that was the description of the bull in his pen. I explained the situation to him and he told me he would leave the bull in a loading area for us to pick up. Don and I jumped back into the truck and made the 9-hour haul back to Oklahoma to rescue the bull. We arrived just as the sun was setting. The bull had been standing in a small pen not much larger than his own body without water for two days. He was most appreciative to load into our spacious trailer and leave the death-smelling house behind. We got home sometime after midnight and tucked the old fellow in for a long night's sleep. We called the Detmers the next morning and told them what we had done. They couldn't believe it, but were ecstatic. . . . He was a good-natured fellow that always seemed to carry a bit of a smile on his face as he cocked his head to look at you with his one good eye."

Bebe Fenstermaker

A bright sunny day herald Thanksgiving this year. Though cool, no one seemed to notice, we were so delighted to see the sun. Several families of us met at friends' house. The hostess had rearranged two rooms. The living room became the dining room and last year's dining room was turned into the living room. We were told that arrangement would be final. Yeah right! Anyway, everyone brought a special dish or two and we proceeded to enjoy good company and good food. On our way home, we passed several houses being decorated for Christmas. That is definitely one way to work off Thanksgiving dinner.

Since then, the weather has been sunny some days and overcast others. One foggy Sunday Bebe and I drove to San Antonio. Visibility was about a quarter of a mile all day. Bebe and I visited Thrift Town last week looking for blue jeans for me. I was in luck, as they had a vast quantity and in all sizes. I ended up with six pairs, some brand new, and paid what one new pair from a department store would have cost. I felt very rich. The job ahead, now, will be getting all my old ones together to send on.

Boerne is in the midst of its Hill Country Christmas. It runs from the last weekend in November through two or three weekends in December. The Boerne Merchants Association organizes the event. The stores and restaurants stay open late giving shoppers some extra time and to promote Boerne and bring additional business to the downtown merchants. The first weekend is called Dickens on Main (oh where oh where did they copy that from?), which we have always snorted about. Dickens did visit Galveston, but not Boerne. Anyway, the downtown is quite festive with all its Christmas lights and decorations. The merchants are usually dressed in their festive Christmas outfits, and snow is even flying through the air and gathering into snow banks, even though five miles down the road we might have the windows and doors

wide open!

We drove to Dripping Springs last Saturday to view a show of "Art in the Barn." An old friend, artist Kathleen Claps, hung her work in her beautiful goat barn and had some of her Nigerian Dwarf goats on display. Kathy's work has been a favorite of mine ever since I met her many years ago when we were at Texas Tech. She puts together intimate collages, many based on the farm and her animals, colors and interesting images. The artwork and the landscape on the drive over were at their best that day.

Another show, of our friend Bob Tiemann's work, will be up through December at the Mexican Cultural Institute, Hemisfair Plaza. I cannot remember a better show of Bob's work. He is internationally renowned, and this is an excellent opportunity to see the best art produced in Texas.

Sissy Fenstermaker

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