

Roundup on Fort Leonard Wood

by Dorma and Bob Morgan

Bob and Dormalee Morgan came to Pulaski County in 1948. Bob, a veteran of WWII, had worked cattle in Oklahoma since his youth. When the grazing contract was terminated, the Morgans stayed in Pulaski County. They operated the Palace Store, just outside the south gate, for 16 years. Bob retired from the Fort Leonard Wood Fire Department after 25 years of service. Dorma and Bob still live in southwestern Pulaski County, running cattle on their farm. All photographs courtesy of the authors.

During the years of what the Fort Leonard Wood authorities called the stand-by period of Ft. Wood, between the end of World War II and the Korean War, the land was leased to a cattle company for grazing of cattle. The name of the company was Jarboe Commission Company out of Tulsa, Oklahoma. They leased it from May 1948 until August 1950.

Joe Jarboe managed the operation on Fort Leonard Wood. Joe's brother, Walter, ran the operations in Parson, Kansas, which was mainly a huge feed lot and stockyards. Joe and Walter's sister, Christine, lived in Tulsa and worked at the Commission Company most of her life. She never married.

Joe's ancestors were cattle ranchers. Grandfather John and another early cattleman named W. F. Halsell had grazing rights in Oklahoma on all the land between the Neosho and Verdigris rivers from the Kansas border south to Bird Creek. This consisted of several thousand acres. Later, Joe's father, also named John, ran cattle on this same land but moved to southern Kansas to operate a ranch. During the years the Jarboes had Fort Leonard Wood leased, John was about 80 years old and drove up several times to be with the cattle and their operations here. You could always tell if he was around. He drove a



Joe Jarboe, second from right, and his father, John, to his right.

white New Yorker Chrysler and to many it looked a mile long. It stood out among the other vehicles. He was a very friendly man and like to be where the action was when it came to cattle.

When the Jarboes leased Fort Leonard Wood, he had some large ranches in western Kansas leased to run cattle on and one of his hands there was William "Bill" Reddell. He transferred Bill to Fort Leonard Wood to oversee the operation. Bill worked for the Jarboes for many years in Oklahoma and Kansas. Before that, Bill worked on some big ranches in Oklahoma near the towns of Ramona in Washington County. Bill's first wife died young and left him with four small children. When the youngest of the four was two years old, he married Sally Morgan [Bob Morgan's sister] and she became mother to his children. When Bill came to Fort Leonard Wood, his four children were Bobby, age 17, Ruby, age 15, Billy, age 13, and Rosa Lou, age 11. They were all hard working kids and the boys worked with the cattle operations in all of their spare time. The girls helped with the cooking for the hands. The first house the Reddells moved into was one the Army left standing down on Roubidoux Creek not far from the Laughlin Cemetery. It was a big two story house. A boy named Bill Miller from Ramona came with the Reddells.

They used the Old Bloodland schoolhouse for the unloading of the many head of cattle that came in. They built a hug lot and corrals there. The cattle trucks would back up to what was the gym, unload the cattle, then the hired hands would vaccinate, castrate, de-horn, and brand the cattle before turning them out of the lot. Jarboe's brand was Bar O Bar, the same brand of the famous 101 Ranch in northeastern Oklahoma, but the brand was put on a different way. The 101 Ranch has not been in existence for many years [1879-1932].



The Jarboe Commission Company's brand

One of the first things the hands did was to start fencing the outside of the fort, mainly on the north, west, and south sides. It took many rolls of barbed wire and many wooden fence posts.

They put cattle guards on all the roads they could that ran into the fort.

Joe Jarboe's immediate family was his wife, Mildred, two daughters, one of which was Joan, and his youngest boy named John. During the summers in Oklahoma, the two girls would spend some of their summers on the Ellingwood Ranch near Skiatook. Joe leased this ranch for many years and Bill Reddell worked for him there also. Joan always rode a Shetland pony and it was Bob Morgan's job to tag along behind and watch over her while the main riders would usually go off and leave them. Bob worked on this ranch during his high school days in the summer. Several years after Joe lost his lease on Fort Leonard Wood, his two daughters were taking flying lessons and they and their instructor died in the crash of their airplane near Tulsa. His son, John, is now a lawyer in Tulsa.

Joe was mainly the overseer of the Fort Wood cattle. He would come often to check on things and look the cattle over. He would usually board a train in Tulsa at night and sleep on the train and get off at Newburg. He would call the Reddells and they would meet him. He was involved in many operations but his main thing was his commission company at the stockyards at Tulsa. However, he set on several boards in the Tulsa area. One was an orphanage home at Sand Springs, a suburb of Tulsa. He was also on the Turnpike



The lone building from Bloodland left standing. Herb and Leora Chambers lived in this house when Herb worked the cows.

Board when they built the turnpikes in Oklahoma. When Oklahoma became a wet state involving liquor, he was also on that board.

The Reddells live in the house that the Roy Laughlin family lived in when the for was bought for the Army. They later moved into one of the housing area family units so they could have a telephone. Dale Gan and his family lived in the white house at old Bloodland during this time. He was a full time employee for the cattle company. After Dale resigned, Herb and Leora Chambers and their two children, Myrna and Ronnie, moved into that house. Smokey and Mary Ragain and their three children, George, Judy, and Danny moved into the house the Reddells left [Roy and Jaretta Laughlin's old house]. Later, Bob Morgan became an employee and he and his wife Dorma (Tinker) and daughter Darlene moved



Standing (l-r): Herb Chambers, Roy McComber, Bob Morgan, Bobby Reddell, and Bill Reddell. Children in front (l-r): Myrna and Ronnie Chambers, and George Ragain. Bill Reddell was the foreman of the operation. Herb and Bob, along with Smokey Ragain (not pictured) were the full time employees. The roundup was a family affair with children in attendance and wives providing the vittles.

from Kansas City into the John Wagner house at Palace. Someone was needed to keep the steers from leaving the fort and going down Highway 17. The cattle company wasn't allowed to put a gate or cattle guard on this highway. [At time, Highway 17 ran through the fort and became State Route AW outside the South Gate.] The three full time hands [Smokey Ragain, Herb Chambers, and Bob Morgan] received \$150.00 a month, plus a house to live in and their beef was furnished. The company had two Jeep four-wheel drive pickups to use and they were driven over many miles and acres to check on the cattle and put feed, salt, and hay out for the steers.

The steers would be brought in by cattle trucks. Most came from Texarkana, Texas area. They would be unloaded at the Bloodland schoolhouse. The men would work them for the next day or two. There were many meals of mountain oysters [*beef testicles, battered and fried*] consumed after these workings, mostly at the Reddell home. Sally Reddell was the main cook. She fed the hands most of the time. The cooking was done at her home and taken to the area where most of the men were working, which was usually at the Bloodland area. They made permanent tables there. Cloths were spread and



Sally Reddell, wife of Foreman Bill Reddell, was in charge of feeding the cowhands at roundup time. Meals were served in the Bloodland area. The well-dressed lady in the foreground is Mildred Tarbue at the 1949 roundup.

plenty of food was put out and consumed by many.

Every year for two weeks, the National Guard would train at Fort Wood. The hands had to round up the cattle and fix a big pasture, called a trap, for them this time. It was in August or September. They usually had the steers in the pasture that was in the Big Piney River bottom. The fence they built for this trap had to be ridden every day and checked. One of hands rode it one day and lost his billfold. It was commonly known that a steer would chew on a piece of leather very easily but he rode the fence the next day and found

his billfold. Lucky there.

They used a building the Army had built for a line camp. Usually, Bobby and Bill would get the job of staying there during this time. Sally and her help would keep them in feed. One hand stayed there a lot and he liked to have something to do. Another man had a young horse there that hadn't been broke. During the day, the hand would put him in the pen there and mess with him and ride him some or just get on him and ride round in the pen. He did this during his stay at the line camp. When the man that owned him went to break him, he really

bragged on how easy he was to ride and rein. He was never told who actually worked with the horse.

During the big roundup when the cattle were shipped out, it took a lot of food. One time, the cooks and helpers cleaned 14 fryers that they bought locally and fried chicken for the gang. Fourteen cherry pies were bakes plus other stuff. The big granite coffee pots were always in use and tin cups and dishes needed to be washed. Paper plates were hardly ever used.

When the outside of the fort was being fence, several local men helped, including Curt Spitler and Simon Gilbert. Some of the local truckers that helped with the hauling now and then were John Wagoner, Frankie Farris, Orville Laughlin, and the Powers from Richland.

Joe Jarboe had an understanding with several men that lived next to the fort that they could run their steers on the fort and he would buy them. He would buy them in the spring at a certain price. Then, in the fall during the roundups, if the price had fallen some didn't keep their word and for some reason their cattle wouldn't show up. But there was some that kept their word and showed up with all the cattle they were supposed to have. One of the hands turned out a few small thin

Gerald Wyatt Excavating

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steers one day and was proud of them. Later, another hand grabbed up a feed sack and started out to the pasture. Someone asked where he was going. He said he was going to round up Herb's steers; they would all go in this sack. A lot went on between the three hands. A lot of teasing each other and someone would want revenge. Some can't be printed, but are still funny to think about.

In September of 1949, Jarboe contracted his steers to the Chapman-Barnard Ranch in Osage County, Oklahoma. Joe sold approximately 3,000 steers at this time. The Chapman-Barnard Ranch at that time consisted of 70,000 acres northwest of Pawhuska, Oklahoma. In the late 40s and 50s, this ranch had a vast feeder operation in which as many as 175,000 steers would be shipped onto the Osage spread in late April and early May for fattening before being sent to market. This ranch was in the flint hills and bluestem grass and it was considered some of the finest razing land in the world. The Midland Railroad served this ranch and at one time shipped more cattle than any point in the Southwest. Mr. Barnard was considered by his partner James Chapman to be the finest cowboy he ever met. Mr. Barnard rode a cutting horse until he was 80 years old. [A cutting horse is trained to instinctively keep a cow from returning to the herd.] He died at the age of 87 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1970.

Mr. Barnard was at Fort Wood to oversee the buying and shipping of the cattle. The foreman of the Chapman-Barnard Ranch was Ben Johnson, Sr. Father of the movie star Ben Johnson, Jr. His nickname in Oklahoma was "Son" Johnson. Ben, Sr. had been a foreman for 17 years on this huge ranch so he was also at Fort Wood to

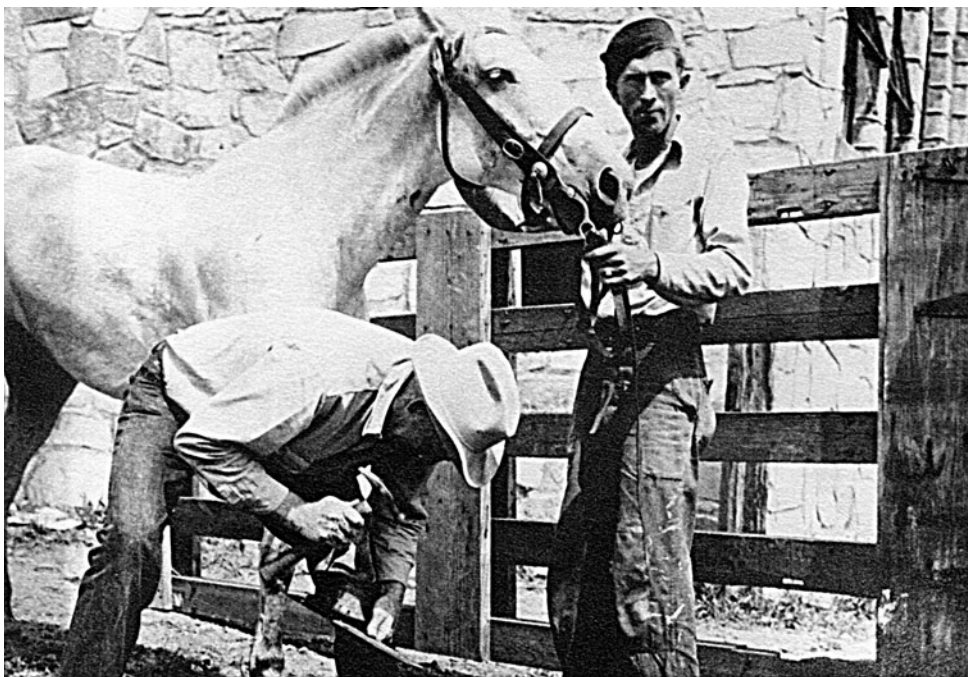
oversee the cattle buying. They were allowed a four percent cut on the steers and he was the one that Barnard brought to do the cutting. Ben was a striking figure on his horse during the cutting of the cattle. He set tall and straight in his saddle and it was very exciting to watch him. Ben was considered a second Will Rogers in his part of the country. He always smiled, had a very friendly personality, and had a homespun philosophy about him. He loved the life of cowboy. He loved the activity of the annual roundups and took pride in the grass fat, uniform steers that left the great spread under his supervision to top markets at St. Louis and Kansas City. It was said he never had an enemy but everyone was his friend. A story is told of the one time he left the country. Some Hollywood movie officials had heard of his dexterity as a cowboy and induced him to come to California for a western film test. He got there about dark, took one look around, and caught the midnight train back to Pawhuska. He was a famous steer roper, winning the world championship at the Cheyenne Frontier Days in 1922 and 1926. His record times are still among the top. He never regretted leaving the arena to use his skills as a working cowboy. He was known far and wide as the best judge of cattle and horseflesh in the country. He died of cancer September 27, 1952. More than 400 of his friends gathered to pay a last tribute to him. He was buried in his working clothes down to his boots and spurs and his rope in his hand. A steer roping memorial was held for many years after his death in Pawhuska to benefit the Cancer Fund. His son, Ben, always promoted it and took part in it for many years, always placing among the top winners. Ben, Sr. also had a daughter, Mary Ann Miller.

She lived in Pawhuska for many years before she died.

The steers were shipped by railroad so many pens had to be built on the railroad track. The cattle pens and corrals built to pen the steers for shipping were built next to the railroad tracks, on the east side of the tracks.

The pens that were made to hold the cattle at the railroad tracks were made with materials from the fort dump mostly. They used railroad ties for a lot of the posts scrap lumber, and a lot of metal and some matting that was used for steel in concrete. Three pens were located where the DEH boiler plant, Building 2369, now sits right off of Minnesota Avenue. When they started rounding up the cattle, different men would start from where they lived closest to. They would get the ones on the west and south side and hold them in a big field between Cookville and Dundas areas. Then when all the men would bring theirs in, or most of them, they would drive them to Bloodland and put them in the big horse pasture they had fenced there. Then for the next two days the same thing would be done again. Finally, they got about 3,000 head there. They would eat their dinner there every day. Then when they got ready to move them to the pens, they started out at Bloodland, headed them up Highway 17 to the airport, then turned them on Iowa Avenue to Artillery Circle, then to Nebraska, then to South Dakota, then down Oklahoma and Minnesota Avenues. They had to put several water tanks in the pens and someone would have to be there to keep them from crowding around the tanks too much at a time. A big steer that was part Brahma got wild and started jumping the six foot wire fence. He landed on his face a couple of times and made his

nose bleed and that made him more wild. Finally, some of the men got a rope on him and they got him loaded in a truck and hauled him to the stockyards in St. Louis the next day, but kept him tied so he wouldn't try to jump out of the truck. There were so many bystanders around the pens that the men were afraid he would finally jump an outside fence and maybe chase somebody down. So after sorting all the cattle, they loaded the boxcars and the train hauled them out. The engineer was a man named Eads. He was in the National Guard that had a railroad unit at the fort. He took them to Arlington where the train took them from there to Oklahoma to the bluestem country of the Chapman-Barnard Ranch. When a load of feed came in for the cattle, it was put on a siding at Arlington and the regular hands hauled it from there with the two Jeeps. It was an all night job. One time the feed came in, it had to be unloaded right away. One of the Jeeps was loaded to the hilt and it was coming down the Big Piney hill at a fast pace near Hooker and had a blowout. The two men in the Jeep wondered where they were going to land but no wreck. However, a lot of feed had to be unloaded to get to the spare tire and tire tools.

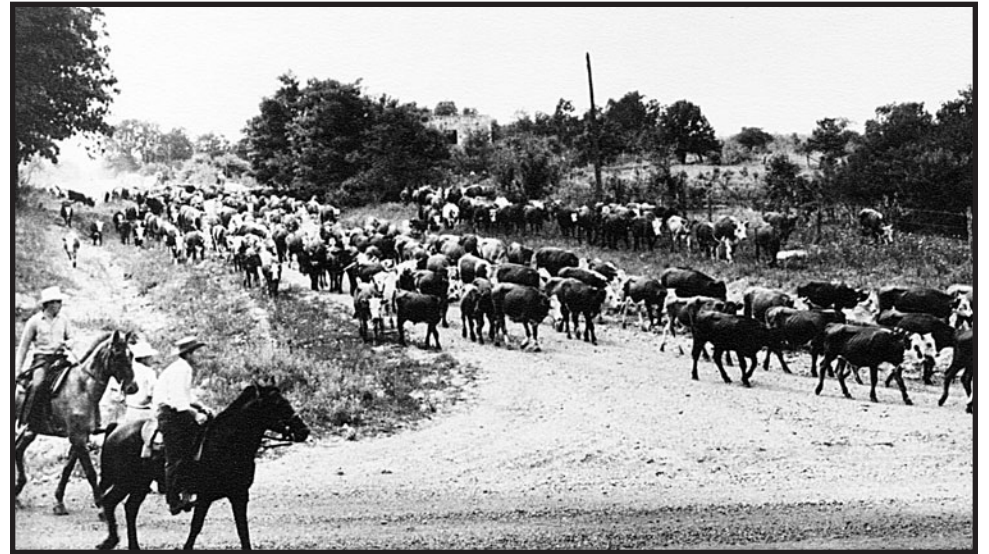


Cowboys kept the working stock in good repair. Holding the reins is Herb Chambers. Beginning in the early 60s, Herb and his wife Leora operated a resort ("Herb and Lea's") on the Big Piney River, which became "Rich's Last Resort" in 1973.



Above, Herb Chambers pulls a branding iron from the open fire, wrapping the handle in a burlap bag. Below, two cowboys apply hot branding irons, smoke rising from the hide of the steer.

Round 'em up, head 'em out!



The picture sequence above was the cattle drive. The cattle were rounded up from the grazing land and put in corrals that were built behind the vacant Bloodland School (upper left). The herd was then driven on the route described in the text

(upper right and lower left) and penned up near the railroad tracks (lower left). It took three days to round up and pen the 3,000 head. They were graded and then shipped by railroad to Oklahoma.



Although the reduced size of this picture does not allow for feature identification of the individuals, it does show us that it took two dozen men and three dogs to run the roundup. For the record, the men are, from left: Ed Manes, Ruben Lancaster, Raymond Myers, Dale Gan, Bobby Reddell, Herb Chambers, Jim Laughlin, Claudie Laughlin, Bill Miller, Curtis Spitler, Bob Morgan, Billy Reddell, Art Burdette, Leo Winkle, Frankie Farris, Joe Jarboe, Oscar McWilliams, Darrell Bryant, Roy Laughlin, Bill Reddell, Snowden Quesenberry, Homer Quesenberry, and on pickup Orville Laughlin and John Wagner. Also Queenie, Shep, and Dog. Bloodland School High School is the background.