

WOMEN OF THE LAND

By Susan L. Ebert ~ Photography by Wyman Meinzer



Miss Anne and Little Anne, the mother and daughter duo who have owned the 6666 Ranch for nearly a century, epitomize the beauty, strength, intelligence and steely resolve of the American cowgirl.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Anne Burnett Windfohr Marion

Life changes a lot when you move from the city to the country at the tender age of six.

In 1906, it certainly did for only-child Anne Valliant Burnett, when her parents, Ollie and Thomas Lloyd Burnett, moved with their young daughter from the bustling sophistication of Fort Worth to the family's isolated Triangle Ranches headquarters near Iowa Park, just west of Wichita Falls, Texas.

Playmates, naturally, will change; but rarely as dramatically as they did for young Anne. Her new companions were the ranch cowboys as well as Comanche youth. Learning from these two expert groups of horsemen, she would hone her skills to become a top hand herself.

Although it might seem unusual on the surface, both her father and her grandfather, Captain Samuel "Burk" Burnett, held the Comanche people in high regard, not only for their supreme horsemanship but also for their love of the land and of family. Burk, who had launched his cattle business at the age of 19 by acquiring the 6666

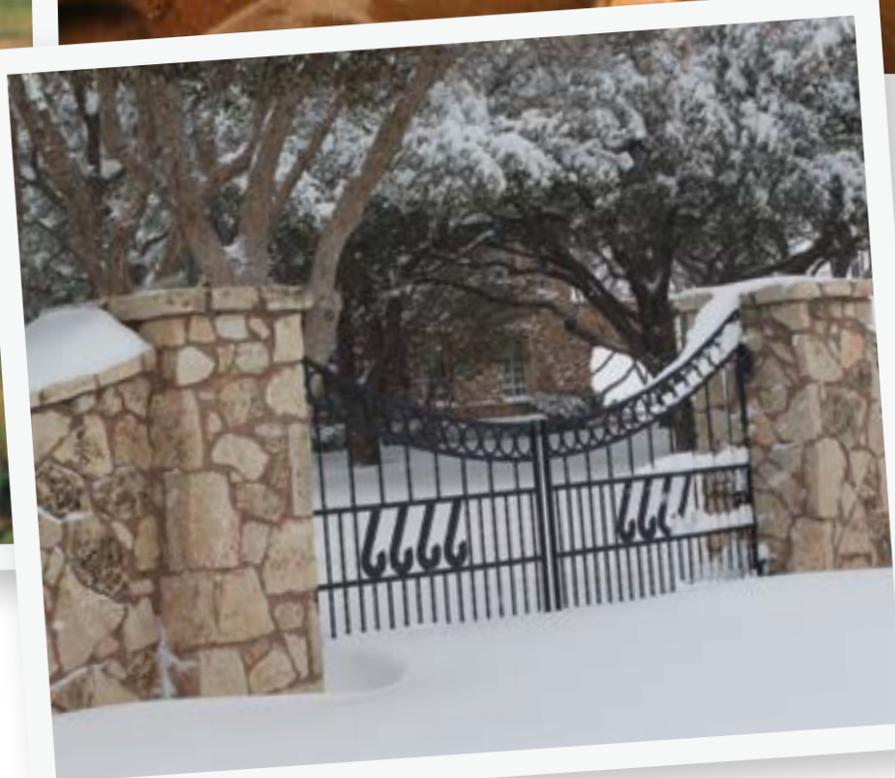
brand and 100 head of cattle, enjoyed a close personal friendship with Comanche chieftain Quanah Parker and negotiated with him to lease 300,000 acres, at 6 1/2 cents per acre, of the legendary Big Pasture—a nearly half-million-acre grasslands in present-day Oklahoma counties of Comanche, Cotton, and Tillman, just across the Red River from his Texas operation.

Under Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, the Jerome Agreement which conveyed the Big Pasture grasslands to the Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa tribes faced its final expiration. Burk journeyed to Washington to implore Roosevelt to grant a two-year extension so that ranchers had enough time to remove their cattle. When the President assented, Burk and his son Tom thanked "the Old Roughrider" by taking him on a bare-handed wolf hunt on the Big Pasture in 1905.

With the open range gasping its last breath, Burk quickly grasped that his only recourse to continued success was through private land ownership. He sprang into action, purchasing the 8 Ranch near Guthrie, Texas, and the Dixon Creek Ranch near Panhandle, Texas. These holdings, along with some later additions, would comprise nearly a third of a million acres and become the legendary Four Sixes Ranch.

BELOW: Cowpunchers on the 6666.
OPPOSITE: The 6666 barn in winter.





TOP TO BOTTOM: 6666 cattle; Windmill work on the ranch; Gates at the main house.

Tom would divorce Ollie in 1918, drawing his father's ire. Burk rewrote his will prior to his death in 1922 so as to bypass Tom, willing the bulk of his estate to Tom's daughter Anne—including the grand Four Sixes—to be held in a trusteeship for her yet-unborn child. Burk also established a life estate for Anne's mother Ollie, reserving a meager annual stipend of \$25,000 for his son. Anne, however, maintained a close relationship with her father, and upon Tom's death in 1938, she inherited his Triangle Ranch holdings as well, making her one of the wealthiest ranchers in Texas. From this platform—with a childhood spent horseback with Comanche and cowboys and the best East Coast education money could buy—Miss Anne would focus not only on her grandfather's and father's oil and cattle-ranching operations, but on preserving and improving the bloodlines of the stocky, alert, good-natured horses so cherished by ranchers and cowboys.

MISS ANNE'S LEGACY

Anne's father Tom Burnett, who had built the Triangle Ranches, died in 1938, with his nearly half-million acres also passing to her. Combined with her grandfather's land holdings, this made Miss Anne one of the single largest landowners in the world. Statuesque, strikingly beautiful, regal of bearing, quick of wit, and hard-working as any of her ranch hands, she could have been content just to manage her vast holdings, but that was not her style. An excellent horsewoman with a passion for preserving and improving bloodlines, she worried that characteristics of the ranch horses she so loved were becoming increasingly diluted as more and more Thoroughbred blood was being introduced into the developing Quarter Horse breed. She determined to create a breed registry.

On March 14, 1940, she convened a massive dinner party at her regal Fort Worth home of more than 70 influential like-minded ranchers who shared her concerns that the Quarter Horse type they so cherished was facing extinction. They established the Steel Dust Covenant, which would guide the nascent AQHA well beyond its first decade.

Steel Dust was arguably the most renowned of the breed's foundation sires. Foaled in Kentucky in 1843 and brought to Texas by Jones Greene and Middleton Perry, the compact, muscular blood

bay stallion stood at barely 16 hands. His blistering speed brought him much racing success, to be sure, but what set him apart from other racehorses was that he approached any task—whether pulling a plow, cutting cattle, or even driving herds on long, arduous trails—with the same zeal and determination he brought to the track. That, and the fact that he'd proven as a sire that he could stamp his progeny with his traits, made "Steel Dust horses" highly prized among Texas cattle ranchers. Steel Dust, along with six other 18th-century sires that shared his type and ability to pass on their traits, would be named as the foundation sires of the American Quarter Horse.

The charter, developed that evening, was affirmed at an open meeting the following morning, and the American Quarter Horse Association was born, with Miss Anne as a co-founder. James Goodwin Hall, Anne's second husband—flamboyant horse breeder, aviator, and vice-president of the now-defunct Graham-Paige automobile company—would serve as AQHA's first treasurer.

With the groundwork now laid, Hall achieved official breed recognition of the American Quarter Horse in 1942. Anne set about to develop championship quarter horse bloodlines with her foundation sires Grey Badger II, a sizzling speed horse with legs of iron, and Hollywood Gold, a palomino dun with luminous eyes, tremendous "cow sense" and great stamina. Later, she would

bring Dash for Cash, AQHA's No. 2 all-time leading sire by earnings; Streakin Six, one of the top 12 all-time leading sires; and Special Effort, AQHA's only Triple Crown winner, to stand at stud at the Four Sixes.

On the Four Sixes, Anne relied heavily on the expertise of George Humphreys, who became ranch manager in 1932, and would remain in that role for the next 38 years (to date, the Four Sixes has had just six ranch managers since 1883). Humphreys, who believed that the Four Sixes could produce the best ranch horses in the country, dedicated himself to achieving that goal: Beginning with just 20 good broodmares in the '30s, he lived to see the Four Sixes establish a formal equine breeding program in the '60s. Today, the ranch stands from 15 to 20 of the top racing, performance, and ranching AQHA stallions in the world.



Anne Valliant Burnett Tandy

In 1990, Anne founded the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center and Museum in Amarillo, also contributing two beautiful outdoor bronzes—one of Dash for Cash and the other named "The Finalist" to the museum. In between running her oil, horse-breeding and cattle-ranching operations, she made time to serve as trustee of the Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum, of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, among other civic endeavors.



TOP TO BOTTOM: Dousing the sun; Halter breaking a young horse; Bring in the brood mares on 6666; Taking brood mares to the horse barn.

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he and Hall would be blessed with a daughter, also named Anne, before divorcing, and she would marry twice again. Her third husband, Robert Windfohr—who formally adopted her daughter—died in 1964 and she married Charles David Tandy, founder of the Tandy Corporation in 1969. Steadfast throughout her marriages was her devotion to her daughter, “Little Anne,” who grew up roping and riding as did her mother before her.

LITTLE ANNE

“My great-grandfather really left the Four Sixes to me before I was even born,” Anne Windfohr Marion said in a 1993 interview. From an early age, she learned to take charge and just “git ‘er done.” Such as the time in the early 1950s when the cook quit—simply walked off—and the foreman’s wife refused to help. The then fourteen-year-old heiress tied on an apron and cooked “three squares” all summer long for the Four Sixes cowhands. “Well, they had to eat,” she said.

“Little Anne,” her affectionate childhood nickname, grew into a statuesque blonde as was her mother. As with her mother before her, the vast Four Sixes became her playground, her church, and her school—although she departed to attend Miss Porter’s School in Connecticut, New York’s Briarcliff Junior College, and the

University of Texas at Austin and the University of Geneva in Switzerland, where she studied art history. And like her mother before her, she stumbled through three marriages before forging a lasting bond with the fourth, Sotheby’s North America chairman and chief auctioneer John Marion.

As oil remained a major revenue stream to the Four Sixes along with their horse-breeding and black Angus cattle-ranching operations, Anne also helmed the Fort Worth-based Burnett Oil Company, but her focus on the ranch itself never wavered. One of her early moves after taking the reins of the Four Sixes upon her mother’s death in 1980 was to hire veterinarian Glenn Blodgett to oversee the ranch’s breeding program, which she and Dr. Blodgett continue to do today.

Her former longtime ranch manager, the late J.J. Gibson believed that no one since her great-grandfather more than a century ago takes running the ranch as seriously as does she. “The love of the land is in her blood,” he said.

Author Henry Chappell concurs. “What struck me about spending time on the Four Sixes was how close to pristine prairie this land is,” he tells me. “They spend nearly as much time clearing pastures and fighting back mesquite to enhance the land as they do tending their horses and cattle. Even in the present day, the rolling



Anne Burnett Windfohr Marion

plains, the canyons, the abundance of wildlife all unite to make you feel you have stepped into the past, where buffalo hunters or Comanche warriors could appear at any moment over the next rise.” His book, 6666: Portrait of a Texas Ranch (Texas Tech, 2004), with photographs by Texas state photographer Wynman Meinzer and a foreword by cowboy poet Red Steagall, remains the No. 1 best-selling book published by Texas Tech Press.

For the past seven years, the Four Sixes has provided the dozen or so registered Quarter horses for *The Road to the Horse* remuda. “Women make great stewards of the land,” says Tootie Bland, the event’s producer/owner, who lives in the teensy town of Noodle, Texas, about 75 miles south of the Four Sixes. “They are in touch with and tuned into nature, and live by the cowgirl code of ‘Never give up; never give in.’”

And nowhere does that river of true cowgirl spirit flow more deeply and more true than through the veins of the mother-and-daughter matriarchs of the legendary Four Sixes—one that the heavens seemingly smile upon: For Anne Windfohr Marion has a daughter, Anne “Windi” Phillips Grimes, who also has a daughter—yep, you guessed it—Anne “Hallie” Grimes.

May it always be so. ♣

