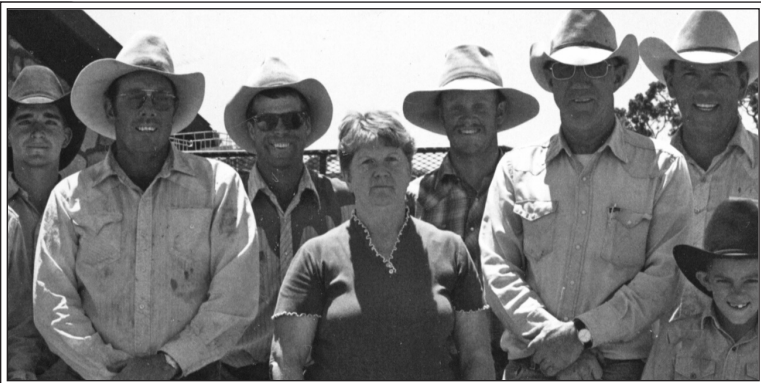


Betty Rodgers Blends Cooking with Cowboy Camp for Deliciously Rewarding Life



Betty Rodgers, shown here with Babbitt Ranches cowboys, came to northern Arizona from Fort Stockton, Texas, where her husband worked as a cowboy on the Burns and Lindsay Ranch. In the early '70s, they lived near the Grand Canyon when Murray Rodgers worked for the Globe Ranch.

Betty Rodgers cooked almost everything from scratch and when she cooked for others, she treated them like family. She could make good coffee over a small fire and beat egg whites into tantalizingly creamy pies and custards. She was known for her creativity, but what she didn't whip up was a recipe for years as a Babbitt Ranches camp cook. That concoction came from ranch manager Bill Howell.

After her husband, Murray, died in 1985, a cowboy at the Well Camp on the Cataract Ranch for two years, Betty faced one of the toughest times of her life. As she tried to imagine how to go on without him, Howell asked her to consider cooking. Suddenly a new family emerged, one with sometimes as many as 19 hungry cowboys.

At Spider Web and Redlands camps, Betty adapted her recipes to feed a stable full of ranch hands and sometimes the Babbitt Ranches office crew. All of this she accomplished out of a small kitchen, sometimes in a one-room shack, or from a Dutch oven outside.

Her days as camp cook started

with baking biscuits at 3 a.m. After breakfast she started on her dinner for the day, a day that would not end until after 7 p.m.

"There was always a new dessert and sometimes cinnamon rolls," said daughter-in-law Lori Rodgers. "In those days she would sometimes have to cut the meat she was going to use from a hanging quarter."

Betty had acquired her meat-cutting skills before coming to Babbitt Ranches while working in the IGA Market meat department in Pryor, Okla. She knew all the cuts and how best to prepare them.

Keeping cowboys well fed often required meat, a fresh pot of beans, potatoes, a vegetable, sometimes macaroni and cheese, fresh bread and dessert. Some days she would take a lunch

out, carefully packing the chuck wagon and bringing it to wherever the cowboys were working.

"Betty always said the cowboys were like family and she cooked for them that way, always with a smile even when she was tired. She loved the cowboy life."

Betty's chicken fried steak was *Rodgers continued on page 11*

Article III Cowboy Essence Section 12. Ranch Spirit

A genuine consideration for others fosters an eagerness to sacrifice personal interests and glory for the betterment of others. It is not about I but We.

Cowboy Shares Life with Babbitt Ranches

Dick Tillman has a corral full of cowboy wisdom.

His story began May 11, 1928. Tillman was born in Kendrick Park. He remembers growing up in a wetter Arizona. Everybody had a horse, there were more antelope then and there was much to learn from Native Americans.

"The Indians didn't need a leveler, they did it all by eye. They could level a water trough and you could check it afterward. It was as level as it could be."

Tillman's history with the Babbitts began when he joined the CO Bar in 1941 as a ranch hand and soon started working for Frank Banks. "Frank could pick out the cows and their calves. If they got separated, he could bring them back together. It takes a genius to be able to do that."

A lot of the other ranch hands came from Texas and New Mexico, but Tillman learned early on that you don't ask too many questions. "They could be wanted some place and it wasn't your business."

Because of the language barrier, Tillman didn't have a lot of conversation with the native workers. He recalls one particular Navajo ranch hand, Calvin Little-sing. "We were on the Arizona Strip and had gotten a bunch of horses to Spider Web. We were sitting on the fence lookin' at 'em and he looked at me and said, 'Aw, them pretty good looking horses aren't they, Dick?' I worked with him for five years. I didn't know he could speak English!"

The cowboy life was a good fit for Tillman. The day started before the sun came up and often ended after the sun went down. Everybody ate well, as there was always plenty of beans and beef. And as long as there was wood to chop,

there were fires to keep you warm.

"I didn't like to be around people. Cows and horses couldn't talk back. They'd hook you or run over you, but they wouldn't talk back!"

Working on a ranch meant breaking horses. A lot of them came from the Navajo Reservation where there were too many for the land. Shoeing horses was an important and time-consuming task. "The cinders ate up their feet. We'd shoe the whole remuda, which could be 20 to 120 horses."

Besides the cinders, quicksand along the Colorado River and fog were hazards for horses and cows on the range. "One or two of those horses would start out in that river and the horses would feel that boggin' down. They'd slow down, start struggling, back up and walk out. They knew how to get out, but

the rider better be gettin' off!"

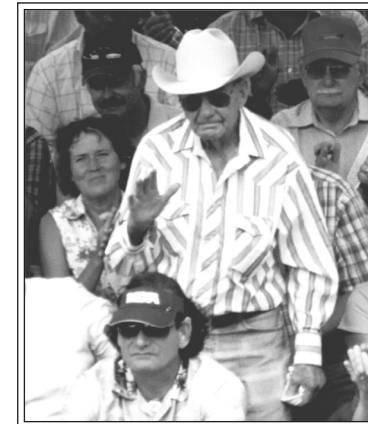
Tillman built a number of water tanks and once in a while helped with calving.

He met his wife, Bonnie Evans, in Flagstaff. She was 17 years old and working in a diner next to the Greyhound Bus station. He was 21. After knowing each other for six weeks,

they got married. They had five children, all girls, Rene, Darla, Shile, Debbie and Vaughn.

The hazards of raising girls included warning them about rattlesnakes and mountain lions. "You had to watch for buffalo on the Hart. They weren't supposed to be roaming free and you'd better have a good enough horse to get away. They will charge and run into you. If they throw their head up and tail up over their back, you'd better leave pretty quick."

Tillman raised his family at Spider Web Camp. Banks would leave "green" horses there and



Dick Tillman waves to the crowd while being honored at the 2009 Colt Sale.

Tillman's daughter, Rene, recalls how her dad would work them.

"Mama wanted a watermelon. Daddy got on a green horse to go to Grey Mountain six miles away to get her one. It took half a day to get that watermelon."

Much of the time, Tillman and his family were at the ranch by themselves. Frank and Helen Banks would live there in the winter, but move to Cedar Ranch in the summertime. During the school year, the girls took buses to Flagstaff. During the summer, they'd play with Native American children who didn't speak their language.

Tillman learned how to spot a good cow by size and shape. He became such a valuable part of Babbitt Ranches that John Babbitt took him to Montana to find good cattle and raise them there.

"Mr. Babbitt was a real good, honest man. It didn't matter who you was or how you was dressed, he treated everybody the same," said Tillman. "I'd always heard that a person only has one or two friends that stay friends for a lifetime. I always considered Mr. Babbitt a friend."

Tillman worked on Babbitt Ranches for 42 years all together. He left briefly to join the army during the Vietnam War. He retired in the late '80s. Today this 82-year-old cowboy lives in St. Johns, tells cowboy stories and makes his own divinity.

