

CHAPTER 1

*Lessons from the King Ranch*

At a ceremony in the East Room of the White House, on September 20, 1988, Vice President George H. W. Bush swore me in as U.S. secretary of education. I was the first Hispanic appointed to the Cabinet in the history of the United States. A few weeks before, President Ronald Reagan had asked me to join his Cabinet, and I was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. My wife Peggy and I were very pleased that our ten children, most of their spouses, and one grandson—none of whom had visited the White House before—could be there. Their presence made the ceremony a family affair. They were so proud and pleased that I had been appointed to the Cabinet. Also present were many friends whom we had invited.

Also present were a number of Hispanics, including leaders of national Hispanic organizations, educators, and several of our friends. They must have been pleased there was a Hispanic in the president's Cabinet after more than two hundred years.

President Reagan looked on while Vice President Bush read the oath of office. Peggy held our family Bible, on which I rested my left hand while I raised my right one to repeat the oath. I felt great pride, not because of any personal accomplishment or achievement but because this event marked a new beginning for Hispanics in our nation.

During the swearing-in ceremony I remembered my parents. They would have been so proud to see their son at the White House on a

beautiful day in September. I remember thinking how my parents spoke Spanish to each other and how I had started my education in a two-room schoolhouse. I tried to recall what events, circumstances, and good fortune had shaped my life in such a way as to result in my appointment as secretary of education.

I decided that the many excellent lessons I learned while growing up on the King Ranch had played a big part. It was on the ranch where I was taught the value of hard work, the importance of learning, the significance of commitment and dedication to worthy causes, how to make decisions, and the great value of family. Honesty, loyalty, integrity, and love of country were instilled in me. In other words, on the King Ranch I learned how to live. During my childhood years it was mostly my parents who fashioned my life, but the men and women working and living on the ranch were also my teachers. The wisdom about living I received on the King Ranch enormously shaped my being. This, in turn, impacted decisions I made and actions I took in my adult life, throughout my academic career, and during my service as secretary of education.

So my journey to the White House began on a ranch in Texas.

LOS KINEÑOS

I was born on January 4, 1927, on the 825,000-acre King Ranch in South Texas. The ranch is about the size of the state of Rhode Island, and at one time it comprised approximately 1,250,000 acres. The King Ranch has always been home to me, even though I have been away from it for many years. Just the thought of the King Ranch stirs grand memories in my mind. When I think about growing up there, I recall my childhood days, my parents, brothers and sister, relatives, and many of the fine people who worked on the ranch. It was a remarkable place, so it is not surprising that the lessons I learned there about life are still deeply ingrained in me.

In the late 1920s, '30s and '40s, my childhood years, the King Ranch was fertile ground for the growth and development of children. Parents and those who lived on the ranch stressed education. The Great De-

pression had slowed the nation's economy to a crawl. Money was short everywhere, and across the nation people were out of work. But on the ranch, in the face of these economic difficulties, the emphasis was on people. It was a caring place.

In those days, people who worked for the King Ranch and did their jobs well had work for life. They could expect the King Ranch to educate their children and provide health care, housing, money, and food for the entire family. They knew that when they died, the ranch would bury them.

One worked long hours helping to improve the ranch. People were born on it, worked there all of their lives, and died on it. Their children followed in their footsteps, and some families on the ranch, including mine, had been there for several generations. They were *Kineños*, King's People. I am a fourth-generation *Kineño*.

Running the ranch were members of the Kleberg family, the driving forces who eventually developed it into the greatest cattle ranch in the world. They instilled the tradition of caring and looking after those who worked there. This tradition of caring was in the spirit and commitment of the founder of the ranch, Capt. Richard King.

As a child, I remember seeing the Klebergs working side-by-side with the men on the ranch. All of the Klebergs were fluent in Spanish, had superior equestrian skills, and knew the cattle business. They cared so much about the people working there that to them the ranch was a family with many skills and talents. Some stayed on the ranch to help enhance its excellence in cattle and horses. Others left but carried with them the values and the teachings of the *Kineños*. No other ranch in this nation has produced a four-star general and a Cabinet secretary—my brother Richard and I, respectively.

My father was Lauro F. Cavazos and my mother, Tomasa Álvarez Quintanilla. Like my sister Sarita and my brothers Richard, Robert, and Joseph, I was born at home on the King Ranch. No one back then saw any reason for Mother to go to a hospital; she was not sick, just giving birth to a child. The local country doctor attended her. Also there were several members of Mother's family. My maternal grandmother (Mama

Grande Rita) and aunts helped out. They lived in the *barrio* in Kingsville, three miles away, and as was the custom, they came to the ranch to help Mother and Dad on the day I was born.

I have the letter Dad wrote on January 4, 1927, to my uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Edward C. Raymond, of Raymondville, Texas. Mrs. Raymond was my Aunt Leonor, my father's oldest sister. Dad wrote (and I quote exactly as he wrote), "We had a boy to call on us today he claims his name is Lauro Fred and he wants work, ar at 7:40 P.M. Lauro and Tomey." The letter was postmarked in Kingsville, Texas, the next morning, and required a two-cent stamp. I treasure it because it connects me with my parents from the day I was born. And as my father sensed, to this day I continue to work, and to want to work.

Growing, learning, and working characterized my early days on the King Ranch. Neighbors were few, and all of our friends and many of our relatives lived on the ranch. We were, for the most part, self-sufficient. We had a school, and the commissary and the ranch garage met most of our needs. Reasons to travel the three miles to Kingsville were few. For the most part we were isolated, but Mother did frequently drive us to Kingsville to see our grandmother and some of our aunts, uncles, and cousins. Sometimes, but not on a regular basis, we attended mass at San Martín's Catholic Church. If mother needed something special for her cooking not available at the commissary, we went to Martinez's Grocery Store on East Richard Street at the corner of East Fifth Street, in the Hispanic commercial district. This neighborhood was a vibrant part of Kingsville, with many stores and businesses.

About the middle of the block, on the same side of the street as Martinez's, was a bakery. Handing us a quarter, Mama Grande Rita sent us to buy *pan dulce* at the bakery. We children readily volunteered to go after Mexican sweet breads. If we bought six or eight pieces, the baker gave us a *pilón*, a free cookie. Generally, the *pilón* was a *marranito*, a gingerbread pig. Two other grocery stores, a barbershop, a beauty shop, and a tailor shop completed the Hispanic business district. Around the corner stood a building with a bar on the first floor and outside stairs leading to the second-floor dance hall where Oscar Cabrera and his band

played on Saturday nights. Salazar's Dry Goods Store was at the corner of Sixth and East Richard Streets. Everyone knew each other, and news and information spread rapidly through the commercial district.

Every Saturday morning, we children begged Mother to take us to the movie. We tried to convince her it was a great movie and we should go because we had been good all week. Mother often said she would like to take us to the show, but there was no money to spare.

One of her best initiatives for earning additional money was to send us to catch four or five chickens and gather all the eggs we could find. Mother would then take us to Martinez's Grocery Store; he bought each chicken for twenty-five cents and the eggs at ten cents a dozen. At Martinez's Grocery Store there was a coop on the sidewalk to house chickens. When customers wanted a chicken, they pointed out which one they wanted and one of the helpers pulled the chicken out of the coop. With our chicken and egg money we could then go to the movies.

On Saturdays there was always a Western film, with actors such as Buck Jones, Hopalong Cassidy, Tom Mix, Gene Autry, and Roy Rogers. They were our heroes, and we considered them the best actors in the world. A movie with the dog Rin-Tin-Tin was a "must see."

Serial adventure films ran for twelve Saturdays. Each Saturday, the serial film ended with the hero or heroine about to be killed by a train, or pushed over a cliff, or trapped in a burning building. The next Saturday the serial film started with how they escaped from certain death. We never went to the movies twelve Saturdays in a row, so we often missed the rescue or escape.

Dad came to work as a cowboy for Mrs. Henrietta King on the King Ranch in July 1912, when he was eighteen years old. Capt. Richard King, founder of the ranch, had married Henrietta Chamberlain in 1854. After Captain King died in 1885, she asked Robert Justus Kleberg Sr. to take over as manager of the King Ranch properties. In 1886, he married Alice Gertrudis King, the daughter of Captain and Mrs. King. Kleberg was the ranch manager, but it was really Mrs. King who ran it, almost until the day of her death in 1925. Dad worked for Mrs. King, Robert J.

Kleberg Sr., Robert J. Kleberg Jr., Richard M. Kleberg Sr., and Richard M. Kleberg Jr.—the leaders who truly shaped and built the King Ranch in the twentieth century.

On the Santa Gertrudis Division of the King Ranch, Dad's work was typical for young cowboys: riding fences, breaking horses, and herding and working cattle. In 1913, Caesar Kleberg, the foreman of the Norias Division of the ranch, had Dad transferred from the Santa Gertrudis to the Norias Division. There, he worked as a member of the *corrida*, or cow camp. Dad brought his many skills as a cowman to Norias. Many believed that when Dad rode a horse, he and it were as one. Dad and Robert J. Kleberg Jr., the manager of the ranch, were considered two of the best horsemen in Texas.

In 1939 Dad won the National Cutting Horse Contest riding a mare named Catarina. The event took place at the Fort Worth Stock Show. When he brought home the cup signifying first place, I asked him about the contest. He told me he had trained Catarina from the time she was a filly. She was out of the great line of King Ranch quarter horses. Dad told me that at the cutting horse contest one of the judges, a retired army cavalryman, asked to ride Catarina. Dad warned him she was quick on the turns following a calf. The judge mounted Catarina, started to herd a calf, and barely managed to stay in the saddle when the mare made a quick turn to follow the calf. Still, Dad was awarded first prize.

Dad was a man of considerable personal bravery. In France during World War I he had fought in three major campaigns. Time and time again, when his courage was tested working on the King Ranch, he remained calm, focused, and determined. Still, his coolness under fire and his ability to deal with life-threatening adversity was probably best demonstrated at Norias. Dad's bravery and discipline have always been an inspiration to me, especially after he told me about a gunfight at Norias in 1915. From the story he told, I learned a lesson about fighting for what is right and having a commitment to justice.

Dad said that from 1914 to 1917, when bandit raids had increased the tension and turmoil along the Texas-Mexico border, ranchers had to

be vigilant. From Brownsville to El Paso, rustlers were striking hard, driving cattle and horses across the border into Mexico. To make matters worse, Germany was financing the Mexican border raiders in order to keep the United States distracted and out of the war in Europe. The King Ranch was not immune from the violence of the Mexican bandits.

In early August 1915 Caesar Kleberg learned that a large band of Mexican raiders was heading north to Norias from the Sauz Ranch, which was then part of the King Ranch. (Norias is about sixty miles south of Kingsville and seventy miles north of Brownsville.) In addition to its ranching activity, Norias was a place where Missouri-Pacific Railroad trains running between Kingsville and Brownsville stopped to take on water for their steam boilers. A small railroad section house stood along the tracks. Caesar Kleberg's two-story frame headquarters house was near the railroad tracks. While he was in Kingsville for the weekend, he learned that the bandits might hit Norias. By telephone, Kleberg notified the Fort Brown commandant in Brownsville of the movement of the raiders toward Norias and asked for assistance. The commandant assured Kleberg of his help.

On the afternoon of August 7, 1915, a Sunday, the commandant at Fort Brown sent a special train to Norias. It carried seven troopers and their commander, Cpl. Watson Adams, several Texas Rangers, and a group of peace officers. When they arrived at Norias, horses were penned and ready for saddles. Tom Tate, a King Ranch foreman, headed up a group of men, and they rode out toward the Sauz pastures, looking for the raiders. The eight troopers stayed behind and joined the eight ranch people. The ranch people included two cowboys (Dad and Frank Martin), a cook and his wife, a ranch carpenter and his wife, and two Mexican servant women.

After the departure of the special train and the men led by Tom Tate, the regular afternoon northbound train from Brownsville arrived at Norias at 5:30 P.M. to take on water. Three customs inspectors and a deputy sheriff of Cameron County, each carrying a rifle and a pistol, were aboard.

In Norias, the customs inspectors and the deputy sheriff got off.

They watched the train as it took on water and then pulled out, going north to Kingsville. The four men walked to Caesar Kleberg's house near the tracks and joined the troopers and the ranch people.

Late in the afternoon after dinner, the cowhands, soldiers, the customs inspectors, and the deputy sheriff sat on the porch or stood in the yard. Dad told me that Marcus Hinds, one of the customs inspectors, pointed to the east and said the rangers were returning to Norias. Then they heard the whine of bullets over their heads. Into view came thirty horsemen flying the red flag of their revolutionary band and firing Mauser rifles.

The men on the porch realized the bandits had circled behind the rangers and the peace officers hunting them and now were attacking Norias. The men on the porch jumped to their feet, grabbed their rifles and pistols, and ran for cover behind the railroad embankment. When the bandits were about 250 yards away they again opened fire with their rifles. The defenders returned fire, and they soon figured out the attack was coming not only frontally but also from the side. About fifteen bandits slipping to within 90 yards east of the defenders were also firing at them. Attacks were thus coming from the east and the south from forty-five raiders.

From horseback the Mexican bandits fired a steady stream of bullets at the men. In the exchange of fire, two of the troopers and Frank Martin, the other King Ranch cowboy, were wounded. The others returned continuous fire at the raiders. Dad killed the bandit leader's horse, stopping the advance. At this point, the bandits dismounted, regrouped, and continued firing. The defenders, still firing, managed to carry their wounded into the house as bullets raked its thin walls. Inside the house, George Forbes, a King Ranch carpenter, was shot in the lung.

Dad told me he quickly recognized that they would be killed if they continued fighting from the house. The walls were thin, and the defenders needed to draw fire from the women and wounded. They covered the women and the wounded with mattresses, and seeing that they had done all they could Dad urged the others to move outside and take cover behind the rolls of fencing wire and a steel trough in the yard. The men agreed. It was time to get out of the house.

One of the men pushed the door open, and with bullets kicking up dust around them and whizzing over their heads, they ran for safety as they fired. Once behind the barriers, they kept firing a steady stream of bullets at the bandits.

The bandits firing from the south dismounted and took cover in the nearby section house along the railroad tracks, another small building nearby, and from behind a stack of cross ties. The bandits fired continuously, but the Norias defenders were hesitant to shoot toward the section house, knowing that some of the railroad hands and their families were inside the small building.

On a sidetrack was a boxcar. In it huddled a Saint Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway foreman, his wife, and their two-year-old baby. The foreman had seen the raiders galloping across the prairie toward them. Unarmed and apprehensive, he climbed into the boxcar, joined his family, and closed the door. Bullets punctuated the air, some pinging into the metal wheels of the car or splintering the wooden door. To the good fortune of the rail foreman and his family, the raiders thought the boxcar was empty so they concentrated their fire on the ranch house headquarters.

The cook, a black man named Albert Edmonds, crawled to the telephone on the outside wall of the house, reached it, and managed to get Caesar Kleberg on the line. Asking for help, he told him of the raid by the bandits.

Kleberg assured him that a train with armed men, supplies, and medical people was ready and would be on its way as soon as they found someone who knew how to operate it. That train from Kingsville did not arrive until long after the gunfight at Norias was over.

Knowing they needed more ammunition, Dad moved out from behind the wire rolls and ran for the house. Once there, he checked on the women and the wounded. He told them to keep down on the floor and remain covered with mattresses. He located the ammunition and again dashed across the yard. Dad jumped behind the bales of wire where the Norias defenders were firing rapidly at the bandits. He passed out the desperately needed ammunition.

The besieged men fired steadily at the bandits, killing several. As

darkness approached, the bandits, urged on by their leader, charged the house and yard in the face of heavy fire from the defenders. During the charge, one of the customs inspectors, Joe Taylor, shot and killed the bandit leader. As a result the bandits became disorganized and lost their will to fight. They had come within forty yards of their goal of reaching the defenders, but accurate and steady shooting turned them back. By then, it was dark. They tied most of their wounded to their saddles and galloped away into the surrounding brush.

When the firing ceased, ten bandits were dead or dying. The defenders of Norias learned that the bandits had killed one of the women hiding in the section house—Manuela Flores, the wife of a railroad laborer.

The family in the boxcar survived without injury. While four of the defenders were wounded on the initial charge of the bandits, none of the men firing from behind barriers in the yard was killed or wounded. Dad estimated that the siege had lasted about two and one-half hours.

An hour after the bandits rode away, Dad and the others saw horsemen approaching. They thought it was the bandits returning, and the men became edgy and prepared to start firing again. Then, Dad recognized Tom Tate's voice calling out, and he shouted to the defenders not to shoot. It was the rangers riding back from their search for the bandits, unaware the bandits had struck Norias.

Greatly relieved, they welcomed Tate, the rangers, and the other peace officers. Although the fighting was over for the time being, they knew the bandits might strike again. Now, with additional men, they were confident they could hold off further attack.

The next morning, the job of burying ten bandits fell to Dad and one of the other ranch hands. Dad told me that digging ten graves did not appeal to them. The ranch hand proposed how to get the job done quickly. He suggested Dad slip a rope over the bandit's boots; the other ranch hand would stay on his horse and drag the bandit out to the sand dunes. There, they would kick sand over the body.

Dad agreed to the plan because it was too hot to dig graves. The two young cowboys started their grisly task.

Meanwhile, trains bringing relief for the beleaguered people at No-

rias finally departed Kingsville and Brownsville. On board were a doctor, several soldiers, and armed ranch hands. There were also press people eager to cover the story of the gunfight at Norias.

Dad and his partner were burying the bandits as one of the relief trains pulled in. It came to a stop; a photographer leaned out the open window and shot a photo of a man on horseback as he was wrapping a rope around the pommel of his saddle. In the photo, it was apparent there was a body on the ground with a rope slipped over the man's boots. Dad told me it did not take a genius to figure out they were dragging bandits out to be buried. He was not in the photograph because he was below the level of the train window.

Dad told me that when the picture was published, all hell broke loose. He said the people "up east" thought they were disrespectful and terrible in the way they treated the bodies of the bandits. According to Dad, some people did not understand the bandits had tried to kill them only a few hours before. Mexican officials were also angry, and Dad told me it was years after the border war with the bandits before he had enough nerve to cross the river into Mexico.

Dad said that in the end they got the best of the bandits. Five of the wounded, who had been tied to their horses by the raiders as they fled, died during the night. They were buried in the sand. Ranch hands later found their graves in the brush. About a dozen of those who raided Norias were killed by the rangers and soldiers at Los Cavazos, a small crossing on the Rio Grande, before they could make it to Mexico. A few got away, but not many.

As a result of the gunfight at Norias, there was a price on Dad's head. He explained that one afternoon he and another man were riding through a brushy pasture, looking for stray cattle. Seeing tracks, they checked them and decided it was someone leading a horse. It was obvious to them the person did not want to be seen. They followed the tracks and found a man asleep under a mesquite tree. He was sitting up with a rifle across his lap. Dad and his partner pulled out their pistols and hollered in Spanish for him to get up. Immediately, he awakened, jumped up, and, seeing the two cowboys with pistols, dropped his rifle, raising his hands.

He was told to pull out his pistol and drop it, as well as the big knife he had in his belt. The man did as he was ordered, saying nothing, but his anger was obvious. He was short and thin, wore a big hat, and was dusty and unshaven. It was apparent he had been traveling a long way.

Dad and his partner went through the man's saddlebags and found cartridges for the rifle and pistol, beef jerky, a few hard tortillas, and grounds for coffee. When Dad searched the man he found a pocketknife, tobacco and cigarette paper, some Mexican coins and paper money, some U.S. dollars, and chewing tobacco. He also had a folded piece of paper in the pocket of his brush jacket. Dad pulled it out of the man's pocket, opened it, and was surprised by what he saw. It had the names of several of the men who had taken part in the Norias gunfight. Also on the list were the names of Bob Kleberg Sr. and Caesar Kleberg. There was a reward for the killing of each man on the list. The man they had captured was a bounty hunter who had crossed the river, planning to collect some reward money.

Dad explained to me that seeing his name on the list did not concern him, but it bothered him that the reward for Mr. Bob and Mr. Caesar was one hundred dollars each, and his was for only twenty-five.

Dad did not finish the story of the bounty hunter. I never learned what happened to him, and I knew it was not polite to ask.

The Quintanillas, my mother's family, came to Texas in an event now known to history as *la entrada*. It happened in 1854, when Capt. Richard King went to Mexico to buy cattle.

The original King Ranch acreage was once part of the Santa Gertrudis Spanish land grant, which was south of present-day Corpus Christi, Texas. In 1854, Capt. Richard King was stocking his Santa Gertrudis Ranch with cattle. He bought cattle in the towns of Camargo and Mier in Mexico and sent them across the Rio Grande to his ranch. On one of his cattle-buying trips, Captain King went to a drought-stricken village, Cruillas, in the hills of Tamaulipas, Mexico. He looked the cattle over and bought the entire herd.

The next morning Captain King noted that the villagers were subdued and somewhat unhappy. He inquired why they were dejected and

was told that, with the cattle gone, the villagers had little left to sustain them. Their goats, pigs, and sheep were few in number, they worried about their families and how to sustain them, and they had been in a terrible drought for more than a year.

Knowing how difficult life was in northern Mexico, Captain King proposed a way to solve the villagers' problems and one of his own. He asked for help driving the cattle to the Santa Gertrudis and offered work on his ranch. Captain King promised to pay the villagers fair wages and to build them homes and a school for their children. He hoped that one day their children would work on the Santa Gertrudis.

Although he had no way of knowing it at the time, there on the remote desert in Tamaulipas Captain King struck a contract with the people of Cruillas lasting for generations. The villagers of Cruillas talked among themselves. It was difficult to leave their homes, but with the drought and harsh conditions of the land it was worth the gamble, especially with steady wages offered.

The village leader told Captain King he had discussed the move with the elders and families, and they had made a decision to go north with him to the Santa Gertrudis. A few of the old and sick decided to stay, but most were willing to go. Each family took their few possessions.

Captain King told the crowd gathered around him he was grateful for their help and support. He assured them that if they worked together, a great ranch would be built. Captain King said they would be as a family and help and provide for each other as best they could. He ordered that barrels be filled with as much water as they could hold because he knew that once they left the river and the valley on the other side, the long journey across the Wild Horse Desert (known to the Mexicans as *el desierto de los muertos*) to the Santa Gertrudis would be a hot and dry one.

More than a hundred men, women, and children—most of the people of the village of Cruillas—piled their meager possessions on *carretas* (high-wheeled wagons). Dogs, goats, sheep, and pack burros joined the exodus, and the villagers left Tamaulipas, never to return.

Immigration laws were not a problem in the 1850s. The villagers knew where the river was low and could be forded. Driving the cattle

north and moving with their wagons and burros, they crossed the Rio Grande. Then, they traveled north through the Wild Horse Desert to the Santa Gertrudis Ranch. From those who participated in this journey—*la entrada*—came a special group of people dedicated to building a great ranch in a difficult and sometimes harsh land. They became known as *los Kineños*, King's people. They were the *vaqueros* and the men and women who laid the foundation for the King Ranch. My mother's family, the Quintanillas, participants in *la entrada*, became *Kineños*.

AN ANGEL AND TWO LANGUAGES

My mother, Tomasa Quintanilla, was also an Álvarez on her mother's side of the family. Mother was probably a descendant of Francisca (sometimes spelled Francita) Alavez, known in Texas history as the "Angel of Goliad." Her surname is variously given as Alavez, Álvarez, or Alevesco. She was the companion of Telesforo Alavez, a captain in the Mexican army who was married to Maria Augustina de Pozo, a bride chosen by his parents. Captain Alavez left his wife in 1834 but could not get Church approval for an annulment. Francisca, his beloved, simply went with him when the army sent him to the frontier. They traveled by ship from Matamoros to what is now known as Copano Bay, Texas. From Copano Bay, she and Alavez continued on to Goliad by land. The Texas war for independence from Mexico had started, and there were many Texas prisoners from the battles around Copano Bay and Coleto Creek being held at Goliad. Col. James W. Fannin Jr. was the commander of the captured men. Soon after Francisca and Alavez arrived in Goliad, they learned that Santa Anna, the Mexican general and president, had ordered the execution of all prisoners held there. He considered them rebels, not prisoners of war.

Francisca persuaded the officer in charge at Goliad not to execute some eighty Tennessee volunteers captured at Copano and brought to Goliad. Colonel Fannin's 342 soldiers, however, as well as Fannin himself, were executed on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1836, at Goliad. He was the last to die at the Goliad massacre.

Only twenty-eight of Fannin's men escaped the firing squads, and

twenty-five more were spared to serve as physicians, interpreters, mechanics, or orderlies largely because of the intervention of Francisca. The Texas prisoners called her the “Angel of Goliad.” After General Santa Anna’s defeat by Gen. Sam Houston on April 21, 1836, at San Jacinto, the Mexicans retreated to Mexico. Francisca and Captain Alavez traveled to Matamoros, and she aided the Texans held prisoner there.

Some accounts of Francisca’s life report that Alavez took her from Matamoros to Mexico City and subsequently abandoned her. She returned to Matamoros penniless but was helped by Texans who knew of her humanitarian work on behalf of Goliad prisoners.

Although tradition holds that Francisca died in poverty in Matamoros, there is an intriguing tale suggesting that she lived and died on the King Ranch. This story is happier, and one I tend to believe.

In 1902–1903, Mrs. Elena Zamora O’Shea was a teacher in the school on the Santa Gertrudis Division of the King Ranch. In 1936, she wrote an account now in the Texas State Archives about an incident that happened in 1902. (I have given my photocopy of her letter to the Southwest Collection, the archives of Texas Tech University.) According to O’Shea, during her years as a teacher she would often read to the retired ranch hands. Reading materials included Spanish-language newspapers and stories from her students’ textbooks, which she would translate. Among those who listened to her stories was Matías Álvarez. When she read them the story of the massacre at Goliad, he asked why there was no mention of the person who saved so many soldiers.

Matías Álvarez related another side of the history of the “Angel of Goliad.” After the Texas Revolution, Telesforo Alavez, by this time a colonel, and Francisca settled in Matamoros, Mexico. Two sons, Matías and Guadalupe, were born to them. After Colonel Alavez died, Matías and members of his family worked on the ranches and farms north of the border.

Captain King had known Colonel Alavez and was aware of the merciful work of Señora Alavez at Goliad. In 1884, he offered Don Matías work on the Santa Gertrudis, telling him to bring his family and mother to the King Ranch.

So Matías, his wife and family, and his mother moved to the King

Ranch. Among the eleven children of Matías were Gerardo and Rita. According to Elena Zamora O'Shea, Francisca lived into her late nineties. When the "Angel of Goliad" died, to prevent her gravesite from being disturbed Mrs. King ordered Francisca buried on the King Ranch in an unmarked grave.

By the time of Francisca's death, "Alavez" was spelled "Álvarez." Matías's son Gerardo eventually became foreman of the Santa Gertrudis. After his death, my father became foreman in 1926.

Rita Álvarez, a sister of Gerardo, married Francisco Quintanilla, a *vaquero* and *caporal* on the King Ranch who ran the Rancho Santa Cruz. Rita and Francisco Quintanilla, my grandparents, had a daughter, Tomasa Álvarez Quintanilla, my mother. In 1923, she married Dad. I believe through Mother's side of the family, I am a fifth-generation descendant of the "Angel of Goliad."

Still, because there were conflicting reports on the life of Francisca, I had some doubt about my relation to her. I needed confirmation that Matías was my great-grandfather. Seeking it, in 2003 I telephoned my cousin, Lupe Camacho, in Kingsville. Despite being in her late eighties, she clearly remembered growing up in Kingsville and visiting Rancho Santa Cruz, where my mother's family lived. Lupe is the daughter of Rita Quintanilla Rodriguez, my mother's oldest sister.

I asked Lupe if she knew the name of Mama Grande Rita's father, our great-grandfather. Lupe told me to let her think about my question. There was a brief pause, and then she said, without further hesitation, that his name was Matías. I thanked Lupe and told her that confirmation of our great-grandfather's name was important to me.

With Lupe Camacho's response, I was quite certain that Doña Francisca Álvarez, the "Angel of Goliad," was my great-great-grandmother.

The arrival of the Quintanillas in 1854 with *la entrada*, of the "Angel of Goliad" and her son Matías and his family in 1884, and of my father, after he crossed the Wild Horse Desert to work for Mrs. King and Mr. Kleberg Sr. in 1912, brought three families together. As a result of those three shifts, the Quintanilla, Álvarez, and Cavazos roots became intertwined with those of the King Ranch.

The King Ranch has been a special part of my life, and I continue to identify with it to this day, although I left many years ago. It was my birthplace, and as it had been for my parents, the ranch was my teacher and nurturer. I greatly value my education there and the positive impact it had on me for the rest of my life.

On the ranch I grew up speaking two languages, English and Spanish. I also learned the language of the ranch. A nod of the head or a handshake on a deal meant an unbreakable contract. A wave of a hat or an arm pointing was communication between cowboys as they worked a herd of cattle in noise and choking dust. When we said, “the ranch” in conversation, we knew it meant the King Ranch. When referring to “the river,” it was always the Rio Grande, and “the Church” meant the Catholic Church.

My parents were remarkable people. They had great love for their children and worked to ensure that we would be nurtured and educated. They taught us ethics and values, not from a book, but by their example of day-to-day living. Their formal education was limited. Mother’s education was perhaps limited to the second-grade level, so she was functionally illiterate. Dad attended high school. Still, they were very intelligent people who knew the value of education and the difference it could make in the lives of their children.

Our roots were Hispanic, and we were raised in the Hispanic traditions and language but taught always to have deep loyalty to the United States. Dad and Mother spoke Spanish to each other. However, from the time we were very young there was a rule that we children speak English to Dad and Spanish to Mother. And so we followed their directions, all of their lives. We children usually spoke English to each other, but the working language of the ranch was Spanish. When out in the cow camps or moving or riding about the ranch, or visiting with my grandmother, aunts and uncles, and cousins in Kingsville, I spoke Spanish. If, in speaking, I mixed Spanish and English, Dad reminded me to speak one language or the other and not to mix them. He considered each language beautiful and insisted I speak one or the other.

I still speak both languages. Most important, when I started to school on the ranch I was one of the few in my class who spoke English. Still, on the school playground we spoke Spanish.

The first bilingual press conference held by a Cabinet officer occurred because I spoke two languages. At my first press interview after I became secretary of education, most of the questions were in English, but the Latino networks were there and asked their questions in Spanish. I responded in Spanish and translated for the rest of the press corps.

One of the journalists from the Hispanic media asked what message I might have for Hispanics. I replied, "*Niños, por favor, no dejen la escuela*" (Children, please stay in school).

A few days later, Mary Futrell, then president of the National Education Association, quoted me and wrote of the eloquence, importance, and sensibility of my words. The NEA often was at odds with President Reagan's administration and especially with the previous secretary of education, William Bennett. I considered Futrell's article in the *Washington Post* a positive sign of her willingness to work with me. Subsequently, I invited her to my office, and we developed a working relationship and friendship.

At our first meeting, I suggested to Futrell that I had the same objective as she did. Both of us sought improvement of education and the professional lives of teachers; we wanted the best for children *and* for teachers. I told her that most of the time we would agree on the issues but that sometimes we would disagree. I asked that before we criticized each other in the media, we discuss our differences and resolve them face to face.

During my tenure as secretary of education, the NEA invited me to speak at their national convention. My talk was well received by the members. I felt I had opened a working relationship that would benefit my efforts to improve education. While in Washington, I enjoyed an excellent dialogue and good relations with Futrell and the NEA. As a consequence, when Keith Geiger followed her as president of the association, we continued a productive working relationship.

I also worked with the head of the American Federation of Teach-

ers, the union ably led by Al Shanker. He and I had many discussions on how to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education. I soon counted Shanker as a friend and advisor.

These relationships with the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers were important to me, much to the dismay of the *Washington Times* and the Heritage Foundation, as well as some of the education conservatives in the Republican Party.

A few weeks after Peggy and I arrived in Washington, I told her I wondered how long it was going to take people to realize I did not have an educational ideology to the right, left, or center. I sought ideas and activities to improve education. My conservative friends did not acknowledge in public that I had met with Phyllis Schlafly, then president of the conservative Eagle Forum.

My first major press conference was held in the Horace Mann Auditorium in Washington in mid-October 1988. Afterward, I told Peggy I believed the press conference had gone well and that I had answered the questions in a sensible and articulate manner. I was pleased there were some questions in Spanish and that I could respond to them in Spanish. Many of the reporters groaned when I spoke in Spanish, but they must have been relieved when I translated my remarks for them. Peggy told me it was grand that I answered in Spanish, and that I should thank my parents for insisting I learn both languages.

One evening a couple of weeks after the press conference, I arrived at our apartment and told Peggy not everyone had appreciated my first bilingual press conference. The White House had sent me a copy of a letter President Reagan received, which protested my use of Spanish at the press conference. The writer thought it was disgraceful that a Cabinet officer had spoken in a foreign language at a press meeting.

The attitude and expressions of the letter writer did not disturb me, and I resolved to continue to respond in Spanish, when appropriate. I was determined not to be distracted by some peoples' attitudes about language, and I wanted to keep my focus on improving education for all people.

President Reagan never mentioned the letter to me.

While in Washington, I thought of simpler days on the ranch and my parents' insistence I use both English and Spanish in my daily life. As secretary of education, I was repeatedly asked my thoughts and attitudes about bilingual education. I should have known bilingual education would be a hot topic in Washington. I cannot think of many educational issues that ignite so much debate and passion. Bilingual education was introduced into the school systems in 1968 as the result of Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed by Congress. If a student could not speak English on the first day of school, he or she underwent immersion in English. Today, some people, espousing a political viewpoint, maintain that English immersion is far better than years of bilingual education. I was troubled by this attitude because it meant we had forgotten the purpose of bilingual education. To me, bilingual education is a method used to teach children English and it has nothing to do with race, politics, or political dogma.

I am a supporter of bilingual education and an opponent of the "English-only" movement flourishing in the 1980s and 1990s.

I do not believe there is one English-learning style for all children. Some may learn English faster with the immersion system, while others advance rapidly with transitional or developmental bilingual programs. Teachers must analyze and determine the best English-learning method for each child. Then they need to communicate with parents about the child's needs in bilingual education and the learning style the teacher recommends. Bringing parents into the decision about their child's bilingual education is important.

Regardless of the bilingual learning technique utilized, a child must move into English proficiency as quickly as possible. To me, it is important for students to retain competency in their native language. I tell students in bilingual classes to learn their culture, to treasure it, and, in time, to make it a part of the American culture. After all, this nation is an amalgam of the best from many cultures and races.

I made these points about foreign language retention and culture to a bilingual class for Latinos while on a school visit in California. The students seemed amazed and pleased when, after being introduced as

the secretary of education and making some opening remarks in English, I spoke to them in Spanish. Afterward, one of the teachers observing my visit to the bilingual class remarked that I did more there in the classroom in fifteen minutes to advance bilingual education than Bill Bennett did in almost four years. Although his remark was not accurate and I did not accept his observation, the statement demonstrated the intense emotions bilingual education can generate.

One of the most striking aspects of teaching in the twenty-first century is the diversity of students in America's classrooms. Minorities are now the majority in more than 50 percent of public schools in a dozen states. This situation results in some special challenges and problems for teachers and teacher education. Many of these minority students speak a language other than English at home. Teachers need to be aware of these social and cultural differences among their students. Encouraging feedback from students with learning difficulties, communicating effectively with parents, and closing the gaps in student preparation enhance learning for non-English-speaking children.

I believe that teacher education must begin to emphasize language proficiency and an awareness of different cultures. Only 10 percent of baccalaureate degree recipients are proficient in a language other than English. I believe colleges of education should make proficiency in a second language mandatory for all students. The effort involved in learning another language and culture would help teachers not only communicate effectively with students who share specific languages but also help them empathize with any student who has had to adopt a new language and culture in order to flourish.

Although bilingual education can be taught in many different languages, I would like to address the language education of Hispanics. I am concerned about the quality of education all students receive, but as a Hispanic, I am dismayed by the lack of educational achievements of so many Hispanics. Part of this problem, I maintain, is rooted in inadequate development of English-language proficiency in the early childhood years. Without English skills, children will struggle to reach their full educational potential. We must help poor, undereducated Hispanic

children whose language facility lags far behind that of their peers to learn English as soon as possible. This goal has to be a priority in our schools with diverse populations.

GRANDPARENTS

My father, Lauro F. Cavazos, a fifth-generation Texan, was born on February 15, 1894, in Cameron County (in an area later split off to create Willacy County) at the Laurel Ranch near San Perlita. This is a small ranching and farming community about forty miles north of Brownsville. The Laurel Ranch had been part of the original Spanish land grant to the Cavazos family. Dad was a descendant of Capt. Juan Cavazos, the first Cavazos in northern Mexico and what is now Texas. Captain Cavazos came to the New World in the service of his country from the village of Santa Maria, from the province of Old Castile in Spain. As a young adult, he entered New Spain (now Mexico) in 1628 during the conquest of *el nuevo reino de León* (New Lion Kingdom) or what is now known as the state of Nuevo León. There he married Doña Elena de la Garza in 1630.

For more than a century after the Spanish explorers landed in the New World, the Indians kept them on the south side of the Rio Grande. If the Spaniards moved across it, they faced fierce warriors who would not give up their lands to the invaders from the south. In the 1700s, Spain decided to divide the land north of the Rio Grande into large royal land grants and give them to settlers, expecting them to move there to farm and ranch. There was no risk to the Spanish Crown, but it was certainly a highly hazardous proposition for the ranchers and farmers north of the Rio Grande.

In 1781, José Narciso Cavazos, an ancestor of my father, received a land grant from the Spanish Crown. According to Tom Lea, in his book *The King Ranch* (1957), "José Narciso Cavazos was granted the largest single tract in the region, the vast acreage known as the San Juan de Carricitos." During the years that followed, the Cavazos family lived under the flags of Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the United States, the Confederacy, and again the United States. José Narciso Cava-

zos may have received the largest tract in the region, but it was situated in the most arid parts of the valley. The San Juan de Carricitos grant was more than half a million acres and included most of what is now Willacy and parts of Hidalgo and Kenedy Counties in South Texas.

Over the years, the San Juan de Carricitos grant was divided many times. The Cavazos family was large, and with each generation the number of inherited parcels further whittled away at the original grant. Some parcels of land were traded off, and other parts were sold. Land was cheap, but money was short. Between 1873 and 1889, most of the San Juan de Carricitos grant was sold to the King Ranch. It eventually formed much of the Norias Division of the ranch.

Dad's parents were Nicolas and Francisca García Cavazos. They spent most of their married life at the Laurel Ranch but maintained a home on East Jefferson Street in Brownsville, Texas. They had ten children. Their oldest son, Nicolas Cavazos Jr. (Uncle Nick), never married and lived with them. Dad went to school in Brownsville. I recall many visits to Laurel to see our grandparents, Papa Nick and Grandma Panchita.

Once when I was nine years old I watched Mother packing and sensed she was getting things together for a trip. I did not want to be left behind, so I stayed close to her. When I asked where we were going, she told me we were going to Laurel to see Papa Nick and Grandma Panchita. I was delighted because I always enjoyed visiting with them. Mother told me to get out of her way while she finished packing and go out in the yard and play. She told me Dad would be back soon from checking on the men working at the Rancho Plomo, and he wanted to leave as early as possible.

The trip to Laurel was a long one that would take most of the rest of the day. Upon departing our house, we drove to Raymondville and then went south to Lyford. From there, Dad turned east toward Laurel. The roads were unpaved, and after a rain cars frequently became mired in the mud. If this happened, there was usually a friendly farmer with a tractor to pull the car out of the mud.

Our trip took us across several small farms and ranches, so there were a number of gates to open and close before we reached Laurel. My

younger brother Dick and I took turns with the gates. At one, however, I remember there was a boy who operated a small business. He sat on the gatepost. As a car pulled up, he jumped down and opened the gate. When the car went through, the driver usually gave him a nickel, or a few pennies.

Reaching Laurel, we pulled into the gravel drive, and several dogs of mixed breeds announced our arrival by barking enthusiastically. My grandparents' home was a wood-frame, one-story house with a shingled roof. A pipe ran from one corner of the roof to carry rainwater into a cistern. Water was always a problem at Laurel and the small ranches and farms in the vicinity.

As soon as she saw our car pull into the drive, Grandma Panchita hurried out of the house, quieting the dogs and calling for Papa Nick to come out of the house and see their grandchildren, Dad, and Mother.

My grandmother always hugged each of us as we stepped out of the car. We greeted one another, and she asked each of us about our health. Papa Nick stood by, nodding his head in approval of his son's children. Hugs were not part of his greeting; his was a handshake. The compliments and the conversation followed were always in Spanish. I never said a word of English to my grandparents, and they, in turn, spoke only Spanish to me. I asked Dad if they knew English because I had never heard them speak it.

He said they could understand English, but they just preferred Spanish. He reminded me they had grown up speaking Spanish and that I must respect their preference to speak Spanish. I told Dad I understood and would speak to my grandparents in Spanish. And so it was, always.

A trip to Laurel meant Grandma Panchita would have a great meal for us. She must have cooked all day in expectation of our arrival. Usually, the meal was enormous, with *carne asada* (grilled steak) and *cabrito* (kid goat). In addition to the meats, Grandma Panchita had *arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken). Pinto beans were also standard at every meal, and my grandmother's flour tortillas were truly grand.

Papa Nick was tall and thin, with a head full of white hair. His skin was leathered by years of exposure to the sun. I remember the wonderful big white mustache, curled upward at the ends. He was a handsome

man, but after a lifetime of hard work on a farm and ranch he appeared tired and a bit frail. Papa Nick was soft-spoken, a kindly man whom I never heard raise his voice. I remember him as patient and understanding. Many ranchers regarded him as the finest horseman in South Texas, with skills that he had passed on to my father.

Grandma Panchita was the dominant one in the marriage of my grandparents. She was thin, not tall, with white hair pulled back in a bun, piercing blue eyes, and a wrinkled but white complexion. She wore silver wire-frame glasses. As a young woman, she must have been beautiful, and she retained her beauty and grace as she aged. She was extremely bright, determined, tough-minded, rather impatient, and outspoken. We always knew where she stood on an issue. If she were not pleased with the conduct or actions of one of her children, or grandchildren, she let them know without hesitation.

In Brownsville, my grandparents' home faced East Jefferson Street. It was a busy street, and, when not doing chores, they sat in the front room and looked out the window. At least once a day, usually after breakfast, they sat in rocking chairs on the front porch of their home watching friends and neighbors pass by. Greetings were exchanged and news related. Everyone seemed to know everyone's business, as well as his or her coming and goings. There were few secrets on East Jefferson Street.

On our visits to my grandparents' home in Brownsville, I usually sat quietly and listened to them recount neighborhood news to my parents. I was amazed at the considerable amount of information my grandparents gathered while sitting in the front room or on the porch of their house.

As the matriarch of the Cavazos family, Grandma Panchita was a primary source of advice for her sons and daughters. She suggested solutions to their problems or a course of action they should follow. In turn, she expected to be informed about how the problem or the matter was resolved or turned out.

If one of our cousins planned to marry, someone always asked if the intended had met Grandma Panchita. We knew Grandma Panchita's blessing was vital if a person expected to marry into the Cavazos family. In 1954, soon after Peggy agreed to marry me, I took her to Brownsville

to meet Grandma Panchita. Papa Nick and my Uncle Nick had died by this time, and my grandmother lived by herself in the small house on East Jefferson Street. I told Peggy she did not speak English, but she could understand it.

Peggy told me not to worry. The two of them would get along fine because although she could not speak Spanish, Peggy understood a little. My bride-to-be was certain she and Grandma Panchita would manage to communicate.

On a Sunday afternoon, Mother and Dad traveled with Peggy and me to Brownsville. We gathered in the front room of the house on East Jefferson Street. After the usual sharing of news and inquiring about the health of the family, it was clear my grandmother wanted to know about this young woman with me. I told her I had known Peggy for almost six years and that we had met at Texas Tech as students. I explained that she had a degree in nursing and worked at a hospital in Lubbock. Grandmother asked several questions in Spanish, and I translated for Peggy and gave the reply in Spanish. This routine continued for what seemed like an interminable time to me, but it was probably no more than twenty minutes.

Grandmother looked at Peggy and then at me. Her eyes sparkled, and she told me she was so pleased I had found such a fine woman. Grandmother said she was sure Peggy would be an excellent and loving wife and that we would have many children, to whom she would be a wonderful mother. According to Grandmother, I was fortunate to have found Peggy. Then Grandmother gave us her blessings and wished us all happiness.

As usual, Grandma Panchita was right in her assessment and in her prediction.

Grandma Panchita was determined and ethical, set high standards for herself and her family, and stood by her convictions. And in the tradition of many Hispanic families, she and Papa Nick were raised Roman Catholic. Their home in Brownsville was three blocks from their parish church, Immaculate Conception. In the early 1900s, Grandma Panchita's mother died after a long illness. My great-grandmother lived on

a small ranch near Laurel, but as her illness progressed my grandparents moved her to Brownsville to live with them. Soon after the move, she died in their home. My grandparents expected to bury her in the graveyard behind the nearby Immaculate Conception Church. Grandma Panchita went to the church to make arrangements for the funeral and burial services. She talked to a priest at the church about a funeral Mass and where she wanted her mother buried.

The priest slowly shook his head and refused Grandmother's request to bury her mother in the nearby church cemetery. He told her it was absolutely impossible. It was against the rules and could not be done. Grandmother bristled at his response and made it clear she was a longtime member of the parish and thus expected her mother to be buried at Immaculate Conception.

No doubt the priest felt my grandmother's cold blue eyes focused on him, and it was obvious he was dealing with a determined woman, but the priest was firm in his decision about the funeral. He offered to give grandmother the names of nearby funeral homes. Grandma Panchita insisted she would take this matter up with the pastor and, if need be, with the bishop.

When Grandma Panchita returned home, she told Papa Nick of the outcome of her visit to the church. Both were upset by the turn of events. They discussed their options and next steps.

Shortly afterward, the priest my grandmother had talked to at the church knocked on their door. They invited him in and offered a seat in the front room. No doubt they thought he had changed his mind about the burial. Dad, then a young boy of fourteen, was in the nearby bedroom and overheard the conversation between his parents and the priest. Years later he told of the discussion and the outcome.

According to Dad, the priest said he was sorry he could not bury Grandmother's mother from the church. Church rules had to be obeyed. Claiming he had my grandparents' best interests at heart, however, he informed them that if they gave him one hundred dollars, he was sure he could successfully plead their case.

My grandparents were appalled. Dad said Grandma Panchita stood up, drew herself to her full five feet, two inches of height, and told the

priest to leave her home; she was not giving him a cent. She called him despicable and a disgrace to the Church. Somehow, my grandparents prevailed, and my great-grandmother was buried in Brownsville, at the Immaculate Conception Church's cemetery. I am sure Grandmother came down hard on the priests and gave them no peace until her desires were met. My grandparents did not pay any money. It turned out the priest seeking the money was a visiting priest. The regular priests at the parish church knew nothing about the request for money. Soon, the visiting priest left Brownsville.

Even though her mother had been buried in the nearby church cemetery, my grandmother remained angry and upset by the request for money. She had no tolerance for a corrupt priest and told Dad if there was one bad and dishonest priest at Immaculate Conception, there must be others.

Grandma Panchita left the Catholic Church because of the corrupt priest and became a Methodist. Some of her children stayed in the Catholic Church, but others became Methodists or Baptists. Dad, too, left the Church and became a Protestant.

Dad died in 1958, and we held the wake at a funeral home in Kingsville. The next day, a funeral Mass was to be said for him at San Martín Catholic Church, followed by burial at a cemetery along Santa Gertrudis Creek. The evening of the wake, the room was packed with relatives and friends. Grandma Panchita sat silently near Dad's coffin, slowly rocking back and forth.

I looked at her and thought of our conversation earlier at our home in Kingsville. It was early afternoon, and she had been driven from Brownsville for Dad's funeral. To me, she looked listless, sad, and tired. The two of us sat alone on the front porch of our house. She told me I could not know how distressed and sad she was that Dad was dead. Grandma Panchita recalled what a good and loving husband and wonderful father he had been. She said Dad's death was tearing her apart, and she had cried and cried; she had no more tears. Grandmother reminded me that many of her loved ones were gone. Papa Nick and several of her children had died, but she kept living, even though she was an old woman. Grandmother said she felt like an old tree, with limbs ripped from her; each of those limbs was one of her loved ones.

I put an arm around her shoulder and told her to cry no more. I said we all loved Dad; he had led a fine life and accomplished much, and we had to accept death when it came. I reminded her that the wake was at 7:00 P.M. and suggested she lie down for a while. I promised to wake her up in plenty of time to get ready.

At the wake, I sat close to Grandma Panchita, both of us near Dad's coffin. At Mother's request, the pastor of San Martín Catholic Church started the rosary for the repose of Dad's soul. We followed the priest's lead and gave the responses. I looked at Grandma Panchita. She sat in a chair, her shoulders slumped, eyes closed and brimming with tears.

Although she had left the Catholic Church for the Methodist Church more than fifty years before, I saw she clutched a rosary in her hand. Her lips moved silently in prayer.

"COW BOSS"

Dad had remained at Norias until May 1917, when he decided to enlist in the army. World War I had started, and he wanted to do his part in defense of his country. Dad left Norias and traveled to Brownsville, where he tried to enlist. He was told to come back later because they did not have enough guns and uniforms at that time. Dad was tall and slender and hoped to join the light artillery, but he was told he was "too light." In September 1917, Dad finally was accepted into the army, sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and assigned to B Battery of the 345th Field Artillery, 90th Infantry Division. He stayed with this unit until after the end of World War I. After training his unit sailed for France, and by this time he was a first sergeant. Dad had never been on a ship, and he became dreadfully seasick. He told me he was below on his bunk when one of the men dashed in, shouting for him to get topside because they were under attack by a German submarine.

Terribly seasick, Dad moaned that he hoped the son of a bitch would sink them and put him out of his misery. Fortunately, they crossed the Atlantic safely, and after additional training in France his unit went to the front lines. Dad received three battle stars for three major campaigns in France.

The armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, ending World

War I. Dad became part of the Army of Occupation and remained in Germany for eight months before being sent back to the United States and given an honorable discharge in 1919. He was very proud of his honorable discharge paper, showing it to me and saying it was one of the finest pieces of paper he owned. Dad told me someday I might have to serve, and he was confident I would do my duty. I did serve in the army, and when I was discharged I, too, received an honorable discharge, which I treasure as much as Dad did his.

I was about ten years old when Dad showed me his honorable discharge, but I still remember the pride on his face as he held that document.

In January 1945, Dad and Mother drove me to Fort Sam Houston, where I was to report for duty in the army during World War II. As we drove onto the post, Dad pointed to the parade ground and said a haystack had stood there in 1917 when he arrived at Fort Sam. He soon learned why, when he and the other new soldiers had been ordered to take their mattress covers and fill them with hay. That was their bedding. He doubted that I would have to do the same chore he had done on his first day in the army.

Dad was proud that I had enlisted in the army and not waited to be drafted. He told me there were three things he expected me to do in life: one, serve my country; two, educate myself; and three, never disgrace the Cavazos name. Sound advice, and I hope I have lived up to it.

After he left the army in 1919, Dad returned to South Texas. He was twenty-three years old and, like many young men his age, uncertain about his future. Dad said he went to Norias and talked to his old boss, Caesar Kleberg, who had also served in the army during World War I. Dad told Kleberg he needed a job and was ready to settle down and stay in one place for the rest of his life. Kleberg invited Dad to come back to work at Norias.

He thanked Mr. Caesar for the job offer but said that before he made a decision he wanted to go to Santa Gertrudis and talk to Robert J. Kleberg Jr. He then traveled to Santa Gertrudis and stopped by the office in the commissary to talk to Mr. Bob. Dad told me of that discussion; it had a tremendous impact on his life.

Dad asked Mr. Bob about going to Arizona. He had heard there was money in sheep. Dad's real preference, though, was to stay at the Santa Gertrudis. Kleberg told Dad he could go to work for him the next day, or the next week, and to forget Arizona; it was too dry and isolated, and Dad did not know anything about sheep. Kleberg told Dad he was a cattleman and one of the best horsemen he had ever seen.

Kleberg said he wanted to develop a beef animal for the tough country the ranch was on, and he talked of his interest in quarter horses. He believed they were the best for working cattle on the King Ranch. Kleberg thought he could improve their herd and develop a breed of great cutting horses for the ranching industry. He asked for Dad's help with these projects.

For the second time in a few short days, Dad thanked a Kleberg for offering him a job. Intrigued by the prospect of developing new breeds, Dad left Santa Gertrudis that day and caught the train to Brownsville. He had not seen his parents since he enlisted in the army in 1917, but even as he left Santa Gertrudis he was anxious to return to the King Ranch and to work.

After Dad's visit to the Valley and Brownsville, he came back to Santa Gertrudis, ready to work. He became part of the *corrida* working cattle and horses. Dad told me he stayed busy, working every day of the week, but did not think he was being kept busy enough. He was tireless, disliking leisure time and preferring a definite, progressive work program to follow, day by day. He always looked ahead, but the work he was doing in those days did not satisfy him or give him a sense of direction.

Dad told me he started looking around and thinking about other jobs. He heard of an exciting job opportunity in South America from Maj. Tom Armstrong, who had commanded an army battalion during the war. He was from the nearby Armstrong Ranch, and Dad respected his judgment. Dad thought it over and decided to discuss his career options with Bob Kleberg Jr.

He told Kleberg that the job in South America sounded interesting, but his first choice was to stay on the ranch. He enjoyed his work and appreciated his job, but he did not think Kleberg was working him hard enough. Most of all, he could not see where this job at Santa Gertrudis

was taking him. He told his boss he wanted more work or he was going to quit.

Dad told me that Kleberg believed he had done a great job since coming back, but he could tell Dad was getting restless and he had been thinking about what he could do to keep Dad on the ranch and busy. Kleberg told Dad he was beyond being just a regular cowhand; he was a natural leader with the ability to direct men. So Kleberg made Dad a proposition: if he stayed at the Santa Gertrudis, he could train for the job of "cow boss." Kleberg said it would take some time, perhaps several years, before Dad would be ready to be "cow boss," but he would work with him.

The idea of someday being the "cow boss" or general foreman of the Santa Gertrudis Division of the King Ranch appealed to Dad. He told me he thought about the idea for a minute, told Mr. Bob he greatly appreciated the offer, and asked him to lay out his training plan. Dad promised he would follow the plan and do his best; he was confident that with Kleberg's help and teaching he could become foreman. The two men shook hands.

Dad's "cow boss" training under Bob Kleberg Jr. began in 1920. Six years later, Dad became foreman of the Santa Gertrudis Division, a job he held until his death in 1958.

Dad's training as future foreman of the Santa Gertrudis began at a crucial and important time on the ranch. Until the late 1800s, the King Ranch was stocked with hardy and prolific but not especially productive longhorns or "Mexican cattle." They were not large cattle, were often inclined to wildness, and were not especially desirable beef animals.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the ranch brought in Hereford and Shorthorn cattle. These cattle were a step up from the longhorns but did not thrive in the severe environmental conditions on the ranch. The Klebergs decided to develop a breed of cattle capable of withstanding the harsh, dry summers and the disease and insects of South Texas. At the same time, the new breed had to be profitable; beef production per acre of grassland was important. In the early 1920s, the ranch started

crossbreeding Brahman and Shorthorn cattle to produce calves with many of the desired characteristics.

The odds against breeding a new class of cattle having the characteristics the Klebergs sought were enormous. At that time a new breed had never been developed in the United States; specialized cattle raised in the United States at that time had all originated in eighteenth-century Europe. Eventually, through wise selection of cattle for inbreeding and crossbreeding, the Santa Gertrudis breed was developed and officially recognized as a distinct breed in 1940.

Each breed of cattle originates from a foundation sire, so the ranch sought to develop the desirable qualities and characteristics in one bull. The foundation sire would have exceptional transmitting qualities—color, confirmation, resistance to disease, and superior beef production. Calves of this sire would have all of the characteristics sought by the Klebergs. These calves, in turn, would produce offspring similar to those of the foundation bull.

The enormous amount of work that went into developing the new breed of beef cattle was undertaken without modern computers and massive databases that track efforts and results. The cattlemen on the King Ranch had only their knowledge of breeding line characteristics of cattle and common sense to help them decide which animals should remain in the breeding program. Most of them kept cattle breeding lines in their head and on small notebooks carried in a shirt pocket.

I remember watching Dad and Mr. Bob discussing a herd of cattle one time. It was during a roundup, and they were making decisions about which animals to keep for future breeding. They had to determine which heifers to keep and which bull calves to castrate. The final selection of animals to go into the breeding program was up to Mr. Bob.

On horseback, the two men looked over the cattle gathered into a holding area. Mr. Bob and Dad wore battered and stained Stetson hats pulled low. Each had a red bandanna around his neck. The cattle stirred huge clouds of dust, and the bandanna was an essential item. As the men worked the cattle, each adjusted his bandanna over his nose and mouth, hoping to block some of the dust and ease his breathing. From

horseback, I saw Dad and Mr. Bob pull from their shirt pockets the small notebooks containing the breeding history of the cattle before them. The noise from the herd was deafening, and the air was filled with the loud voices and shouts of the cowboys as they worked the cattle.

Dad and his boss seemed oblivious to the dust, heat, and noise of cattle and men. Silently they studied the entries in their notebooks. Dad asked Mr. Bob what he wanted to do with three bull calves the men were holding.

Mr. Bob pointed to two bull calves and said that because they came from good cows and bulls, they had a good chance of being good breeding stock. He told Dad to castrate the other one, because he did not like its confirmation and thought the calf's bloodlines would not produce the cattle desired.

Mr. Bob and Dad used the information in their shirt-pocket notebooks to make solid judgments about the cattle. I doubt the experience, intelligence, and "cow sense" the two men developed over decades of working cattle could ever be recorded in a computer database.

In developing a hardy new breed of cattle, the King Ranch sought guidance from some of the best animal geneticists in the country. Dr. J. Lawrence Lush, a distinguished animal geneticist from Iowa State University, was one consultant who visited the ranch. Dad told me of Lush's reservations about the ranch developing a new breed of cattle.

Lush told them the odds were against establishing a breed of cattle with the hardiness to withstand the heat and insects of South Texas. He insisted the challenge was too great; it had never been done in this country, so how could the King Ranch expect to do it?

Dr. Lush believed it would be almost impossible not only to develop but also to identify the foundation sire bull.

Before the 1970s the King Ranch conducted two roundups a year, one in the summer, the other in the winter. Usually the summer roundup was in July and August and the winter one took place in January and February. Branding, castrating, vaccinating, and marking were done during the summer roundup, when it is hot and dry in South Texas and infection of cattle by insects is minimal. During those roundups, as many as six hundred head of cattle would be worked on

one day. This pace produced enormous strain on the men and their horses.

During the summer roundup, *vaqueros* used four horses or more a day to maintain the pace required to work so many cattle. The day began at about 4:00 A.M. Each man knew his job and was expected to carry it out efficiently and quickly. The day ended at dusk. By this time, the men and horses were exhausted. After a quick dinner at the camp house, the men opened their bedrolls and quickly fell asleep.

Dad once told me about the summer roundup in 1921. He said they had been working hard, keeping up a fast pace to get them through the large herd. Late in the afternoon it was hot, the branding iron fires were adding to the heat, bugs were crawling on them, and the air was filled with choking dust. Mr. Bob Sr. and Bob Jr. worked alongside the men and stayed with the roundup until work finished for the day. Dad told me their shirts stuck to their backs with sweat, and dust covered them. Still, they kept pushing to get the cattle worked.

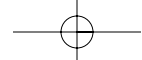
Mr. Bob Sr. usually made the decisions on which bull calves to keep and which ones to castrate. Dad dismounted and stood near the branding iron fire. His job was to castrate the bull calves after Bob Sr. made a decision.

Bob Sr., on horseback, pointed to a red bull calf and told him to castrate it. Dad nodded and told the men to throw the calf. He was stepping toward it when he heard Mr. Bob Jr. tell him not to cut the calf on the ground, saying to his father he knew its bloodline, from Vinotero, the Brahman bull. He insisted it would be the kind of breeder bull they wanted.

Dad told me that Mr. Bob Sr. again ordered him to cut the calf on the ground and to get on with it. He reminded the men they had a lot of work to do and there was no time for talking; they would not get through the herd if they didn't stay with it. Again, he urged them to move on and castrate the calf.

Mr. Bob Jr. repeated his belief in the breeding potential of the bull calf about to be castrated. Again, he insisted that the calf would be a good sire because he came from good bloodlines.

Both Kleberg men were wise, knew the cattle business, and were



strong willed and determined. Eventually, they would build the greatest ranch in the world, but they were in the midst of a hot, dusty roundup, with many cattle to work and many decisions to make about the future of the cattle-breeding program.

Dad told me that Mr. Bob Sr. repeated his order for him to “cut that calf.” Dad said he had his knife in his hand and was bending down to castrate the animal when he heard Bob Jr. tell him to stop. Then Mr. Bob Jr. told his father he would give him a hundred dollars for the calf on the ground. According to Dad, he saw just a twinkle in Bob Sr.’s eyes, a faint smile of approval, and a nod of his head. He heard him say to his son he had just bought himself a bull calf.

Dad told me that the calf he was about to castrate that day grew into a fine bull named “Monkey,” eventually identified as the foundation sire for the Santa Gertrudis breed. In 1923, they bred him with selected cows, and Monkey was an active sire until he died in 1932.

With a shake of his head, Dad said they had almost lost years of cattle breeding that one summer day. He was certain if it had not been for Mr. Bob Jr. stopping him from castrating the calf, they might never have been successful in developing the Santa Gertrudis breed.

