SEMKIN LONGHORNS

Having been a month since our last road trip, the Road Crew was starting to get a little stir crazy. Fortunately, that's now been resolved. Living here on the plains, surrounded by agriculture, it was inevitable that we'd eventually put on our boots and jeans and go chew the fat with some country folks. Matt and Melanie McGuire, owners and operators of Semkin Longhorns, were more than willing to pull up a log and share their campfire with us, figuratively speaking, of course.

While our local area can boast of many different candidates that would have been



equally qualified to host the Road Crew's first foray into agriculture, we chose Semkin Longhorns due to its long history of combining a traditional ranching occupation with nontraditional, modern business practices. But to appreciate the business today, we need to first explore its unlikely

beginning.

In 1975, Charlene Semkin was living with her three kids in Lewisville, Texas. She had already decided that owning horses was fun, but at least in her case, not profitable. She also had no desire to spend the rest of her career sitting in an office. Turning to Texas Longhorns, the future was bright, but there would be

many obstacles to overcome. Big obstacles. First of all, Charlene knew nothing about cattle. Secondly, she had no money to get started and was confident that no banker would loan her the money to start a cow herd that she knew nothing about. Did we mention that she had

Alpha

no place to keep the cattle that she knew nothing about and planned to buy with money she didn't have?

With nothing more than a big dream and a strong desire to be successful, Charlene used her car to borrow \$450 from a local bank (because that's what local community banks do) and bought her first heifer, which she properly named Alpha. Since she had nowhere else to keep cattle, Alpha lived in Charlene's front yard. With the help of a famous bull named Texas Ranger, Charlene sold Alpha's first calf for \$900, paid off the original loan, and quickly borrowed the money to buy six more cows. A nearby pasture was rented, and the dream was alive.

Over the past 37 years, the original herd of one animal has grown to over 450 animals, including approximately 200 breeding cows and ten very happy sire bulls. Semkin Longhorn cattle have been named Grand Champion in ten different states, including such shows as The National Western Livestock Show in Denver, the Texas and New Mexico State Fairs, and the TLBAA World Show in Fort Worth. Charlene, who has helped start herds and breeder associations in Australia and New Zealand, was awarded the 1998 TLJ Breeder of the Year Award and the 2001 Lifetime Achievement Award, the youngest and only female to ever receive the latter distinction. And to date, Semkin Longhorns have sold "the first longhorn" to over 500 people.

So you're probably trying to connect the dots and figure out how Semkin Longhorns found its way to Perry, Oklahoma. Back in the mid 1990s, Charlene and her herd were suffering through a terrible drought. Charlene's lifelong friend and Matt's mother, Elizabeth Jo McGuire, invited Charlene to bring her cattle to the McGuire's Centennial Farm west of town, where water and grass were abundant at the time. Needless to say, the cattle liked Perry so well that they decided to stay. Smart cattle.







Matt and Melanie McGuire became partners with Charlene in July of 2010, and acquired control of the business in January 2011. Charlene retained ownership in several of her "favorites", and they still live at Semkin Longhorn Ranch. She remains active with the business and shares her many decades of experience with the McGuires. She stated that, "After all these years, I love these cattle now as much as when I first bought Alpha".

Matt and Melanie recognize the need to continue the program that was developed over the many years by Charlene and also recognize the need to continue to evolve the business. To keep their pure bred business independent of livestock markets, Semkin Longhorns are sold exclusively by private treaty. The business now markets live animals, embryos, semen, skulls and meat that is already processed and ready for consumption. Purchases can be made on the internet, by phone, at one of several farmers' markets frequented by Matt and Melanie, or in person at the ranch.

The McGuires are proactive in promoting not only their product, but the Longhorn industry in general. Their website emphasizes the nutritional qualities of Longhorn beef, specifically the low fat and caloric content in relation to other meats, and beef in particular.

And since we've already mentioned that Charlene continues to board her favorites with Semkin Longhorns, it's worth noting that about half of the cattle now cared for are boarded for other owners. In fact, present owners are scattered from Colorado to New York, and as far away as Argentina. Many of the owners know nothing to very little about raising cattle, but find it much more interesting than investing in traditional monetary instruments. And they are in charge of all decisions that are made dealing with their cattle.

The McGuires boast of an open-door policy and are willing to show you around anytime you'd like a tour. Once a year, they invite all potential and present owners and the public as well, to join them on a ranch tour. They're committed to the belief that once you learn enough about Texas Longhorn cattle, you'll want to own them. And with their boarding program, you won't even have to put them in your front yard.



If you'd like to know more about Semkin Longhorns, you can visit them at www.semkin-texaslonghorns.com or by dropping by the ranch. Like we said, they have an open-door policy.

Since naming that first heifer Alpha back in 1975, Charlene has said there have never been any plans to name one of the animals Omega. While that may be Greek to some, it sounds to us like Semkin Longhorns will be around for a long time to come.

If you'd like for the Road Crew to visit your business, contact Yvette Dow at 580-336-5562 or by email at y.dow@bankfbt.com.