

# La Muñeca Cattle Co.



BY JO DEXTER, MANAGING EDITOR

Grace, uniqueness and benevolence are words that best describe La Muñeca Cattle Company. A family operation in the southern tip of Texas, La Muñeca Cattle Company's roots go back to a proud and courageous woman, Antonia, who brought her family from Mier, Mexico to Linn, Texas, in search of a better life after she became widowed.



## GREAT GREAT People Cattle GREAT Marketing

**Top:** Carlos & Sister Guerra family: (l to r back row) Rene, Cristina, Victor, Sister, Carlos, Carlos Jr. (l to r front row) Laura, holding Gabriela, Grandma Carmen and Stephanie, holding "Tres". **Above:** A herd scene with La Muñeca's POLLED Brahman Matriarch "707" and the Cleopatra cow and calf that Victoria Zulim and family donated to kick off the Braunvieh Scholarship Endowment Fund that was purchased by La Muñeca Cattle Co.

“The family brand, which is known as a paper doll and translates to *La Muñeca* in Spanish, was registered in Texas in 1873 by my great grandmother Antonia,” says Carlos Guerra, owner of La Muñeca Cattle Company. “We are proud to still be branding our cattle with that brand 135 years later.”

La Muñeca Cattle Company (LMC) is owned by Carlos and Sister Guerra, along with their four children. They founded the company in 1989 when they bought out the Guerra Brothers' registered cattle herd. La Muñeca leases over 6,000 acres from Guerra Brothers, who invested, built and improved what is now 20,000 acres of ranchland. Located 30 miles north of the Rio Grande River and 70 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the ranch, under a rotational grazing system, supports wildlife and cattle – one cow per 10 acres – with the available Coastal bermudagrass and shallow water.

### GREAT PEOPLE

Sister and Carlos are proud of their children and grandchildren. Laura, the oldest, is an attorney married to Rene Ramirez. They are parents of Gabriela Cristina. Carlitos, or Carlos Jr., is ranch manager and is married to Stephanie. They are the parents of Carlos X. III “Tres.” Victor is in charge of ranch public relations and is currently in law school. Cristina, the youngest, will be the fourth Guerra Texas A&M Aggie. She will graduate in May and plans to be a gemologist.

According to Carlos, the ranch has been successful because of his parents who taught him the goodness of life and hard work; his wife of 33 years who is a great mother, grandmother, best friend and partner; his kids who are supportive and have been fun to raise; his son Carlos Jr., for his super job managing the ranch; his son Victor for his creativity in public relations and marketing; their cowherd manager, Pete Garcia, who is like a son and works harder than anyone; and the customers and friends of La Muñeca for their support. In addition to their ranch, Carlos, Sister and family are very involved with volunteer organizations and foundations where they help raise thousands of dollars annually for charities and scholarships.

Over the years, La Muñeca has worked with several different breeds. Now the company owns over 500 registered Simbrah (Simmental-Brahman cross) and 40 elite polled Braunvieh cows. Additionally, in 2005 they started a Braunvieh herd that now consists of 50 females. They're partnering with friend Louie Flores in a joint venture called La Muñeca-Flores Cattle Company. Their first Braunvieh cattle were four full siblings of WTR Laredo purchased from Kent Cattle Company.

### SIMBRAVIEH – A NEW BREED WITH PURPOSE

In addition to the other three herds, La Muñeca is working to establish a new breed called Simbravieh (Simbrah-Braunvieh cross). "Both of these breeds complement each other well, and with more emphasis being placed on carcass merit and feed efficiency, we feel these cattle have a bright future," Guerra says. "The Braunvieh Association, Larry Struthoff and Mark Nelson have our gratitude for allowing us to develop this new breed under the BAA herd book."

Simbravieh cattle must be at least one-fourth Braunvieh, one-eighth Simmental and one-eighth Brahman and no more than one-fourth of other breeds. These criteria allow for cattle that are anywhere from one-quarter to three-quarter Braunvieh, one-eighth to five-eighths Simmental; one-eighth to five-eighths Brahman; and zero to one-quarter of other breeds.

Simbravieh cattle to our registry," says BAA executive vice president Mark Nelson. "The development of this herd and program by La Muñeca Cattle Company will add dimension and income to our association."

### GREAT CATTLE

La Muñeca is using their best Braunvieh bulls with their award winning cows to develop the Simbravieh breed. "I believe that great cowherds are built around great cow families," Guerra says.

Their Braunvieh and Simbravieh herds are being built around WTR Baylee, mother of WTR Hip Check and WTR Laredo, both Show Bull and Show Sires of the Year. Baylee is homozygous for the rare and valuable calpain tenderness gene. She goes back to Vernon and FG Bess, two great individuals with proven genetics.

Additionally, the Phenomenon cow family is part of La Muñeca's herd foundation. "We are proud to own one of Phenomenon's best daughters, BOR Focus by Polled Vision," Guerra says. "The ET calves out of Focus are awesome."

In addition to these two great foundation cows, La Muñeca has a Braunvieh bull battery to match. "We are excited to have Polled Lightning, BOR Encino, LMC LF Blacksmith, Vista 'Foresight,' WTR Jolt and FLY Tomcat as the prominent sires in our program," Guerra says.



**Left:** LMC Shania is the pick of 10 full-sib Simbravieh sisters out of WTR Hip Check and LMC 5H - 144 – the most fertile embryo producer in the Simbrah breed. Shania's first multiple generation Simbravieh ET babies by BOR Payday are impressive. **Right:** Carlos and Sister were honored with golf balls and flowers by the MAS exhibitors for their dedication to youth development.

"The majority of beef producing regions in the world require cattle with 'ear' in order to function and perform well," Guerra explains. "We feel Simbravieh have tremendous potential and are a natural fit for such regions." Last year, La Muñeca sold 24 of 25 bull calves for an average of over \$2,500 at 12 months of age. This year, they will have over 100 Simbravieh in their program.

In spring 2007, the BAA Board of Directors passed guidelines allowing members to develop programs/composites of percentage Braunvieh cattle to be registered by the BAA under different classes within the Certified BeefBuilder registry. The Simbravieh cattle were the pilot project for this change in guidelines. "We appreciate the addition of

### JUNIOR SUPPORT PROGRAM

"We have been involved in every type of Junior cattle activity imaginable and we are most proud to be involved with those having to do with education and scholarships," Guerra says. The Guerra family awards over \$30,000 each year in scholarships to youth. Additionally each year, Juniors involved with La Muñeca events have the opportunity to compete for over \$70,000 in premiums. On average, they sell 50-80 calves to Juniors, who are exposed to valuable experiences and benefits through their participation in the La Muñeca Junior program.

Program benefits include a selection of top quality show calves at affordable prices; the La Muñeca raffle where



a Junior can earn money for themselves, keeping 50 percent of their ticket sales with the balance going into the LMC Futurity winnings; the Junior who sells the most raffle tickets wins a \$1,000 credit for their next calf; the LMC Jr. Round-Up & Futurity teaches Juniors how to judge, evaluate, feed, fit and show their Simbrah and Simbravieh, plus compete for an average of \$8,000 in prize money and buckles; the LMC Jackpot (\$7,500 average) held at La Muñeca in conjunction with the Annual MAS Sale; the Simmental-Simbrah Super Bowl held in conjunction with the San Antonio Jr. Show, which awards an average of \$15,000 in premiums and awards; the \$5,000 MAS Simbrah steer show for Hidalgo County Juniors; the \$15,000 MAS SHOWDOWN held at the MAS Sale; the \$15,000 Simbrah Synergy Show; and the right to two units of semen from any La Muñeca bulls each year until the Junior graduates from high school.

## GREAT MARKETING

“Not only is our Junior program important to the development of kids and a facilitator for creating family memories, but it is a major part of our marketing program,” Guerra says. “If your child gets involved with our program, the benefits speak for themselves. You will tell your friends about our Junior program and they will tell their friends. Each year it grows and we get more families involved. Those families and ultimately those kids will often become La Muñeca customers through the relationship we have built,” Guerra explains. Additionally, La Muñeca Junior participants will show their cattle in 50-100 shows each year – that’s industry visibility for their genetics.

“Throughout the history of agriculture, our industry has always put emphasis on production, but not always enough on marketing,” Guerra says. “I think in today’s cattle industry, it’s impossible to succeed unless you’re a good marketer.”

Guerra’s marketing motto is NO SEE, NO TELL = NO SELL. “You have to be visible, available and supportive.

If you attend events, support your breed publication and use advertising in your immediate marketing area, it will help tremendously.” He notes that two-thirds of the word *promotion* is *motion*. In other words, don’t stand still or stay at home waiting for customers to come to you. Go see them, call them, consistently communicate with your customers and fellow producers, and the relationships you build will benefit your marketing.

## MANAGING LA MUÑECA CATTLE

La Muñeca develops and performance tests their cattle on grass and Purina Accu-Rations at the ranch. Most of their bulls and heifers are sold before they are 16 months old. About half of La Muñeca cattle are sold private treaty and the rest are sold through sales.

When asked why they sought out Braunvieh cattle when they had a successful Simbrah program, Guerra replies, “We have admired Braunvieh cattle for years and wanted to expand our horizons and our bull market.”

He credits his long-time friend Rex Ruckert, Braunvieh breeder and owner of Oregon Braunvieh LLC, for encouraging him to try Braunvieh cattle, as well as Roger McDowall for always sharing his wisdom and knowledge of the Braunvieh breed. “Additionally, I am grateful for all Larry Struthoff has done for the breed, and for his enthusiasm and appreciation for Simbravieh,” Guerra says.

## OPTIMISTIC FUTURE

La Muñeca and partner Louie Flores are excited about their Braunvieh and Simbravieh programs. They look forward to sharing the fruits of their labor with others by marketing embryos, semen, daughters and sons of their program. Ultimately, Guerra hopes to have Simbravieh classes and shows in all of the major livestock expos in Texas. Guerra’s advice for those considering Braunvieh is simple. Do your homework before investing any money, and deal with reputable and progressive breeders who believe in and promote their product. “Quality costs but quality pays,” Guerra em-



BOR Encino is a champion, double polled herd sire co-owned by L&B’s Broken Oak Ranch and La Muñeca whose first calves are very exciting. He is a Coal Miner son out of Phenomenon.



BOR Focus is one of the leading donors in the La Muñeca Flores herd. She is a Polled Vision daughter out of Phenomenon. Her first Braunvieh ET calves by Pappa Gene and first Simbravieh calves by Red Bullet are enjoying tremendous consumer demand selling as babies.



LMC Smokem is La Muñeca’s senior Simbravieh herd sire that is a full sib to LMC Shania. His first multiple generation calves are here and are good.

phasizes. “Quantity is what you count, and quality is what you can count on.”

When you combine the uniqueness of their cattle program with the grace they extend to their customers and the benevolence that they provide for youth and the community, you get La Muñeca Cattle Company.

“At La Muñeca, we are in the people business. We treat folks like we like to be treated – with honesty, respect and are happy in the process. Visitors are always welcome and you can call us any time,” Guerra says. ✪