

# Borden Citizen.

Published by the Borden County Historical Survey Committee - June 1969  
Vol. IV No. 4

## JUMBO RANCH



Sunday Afternoon recreation on the Jumbo Ranch  
about 1890.

In this picture are Jim Mitchell, the manager of the Square & Compass ranch, and the uncle of Mrs. Sterling (Gladys) Williams, Mary Beal, Tom Mitchell, Lena Newman, Sid Beal, Jim (Dogie) Patterson, John Henry (Boss) Beal, Cliff Robertson, Stella Newman, Roy Beal, Maude Nevils, Fred Sheighenhalter (with the straw hat - a tenderfoot from New York), and F. G. Oxsheer, Jr. Mary, Sid & Boss are children of John T. Beal, manager of the Jumbo ranch. Lena & Stella Newman are sisters of Mrs. H. D. (Nick) Beal who lived on the Jumbo. Lena became the wife of Estlin Wofforth, uncle of Mrs. J. H. (Nook) Beal. After Lena's death Mr. Wofforth married her sister, Stella. F. G. Oxsheer, Jr., was the son of Mary Beal, sister of John T. and Nick Beal.

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was a herd of 1500 stock cattle belonging to John T. Beal of Milam County and H.G. Carter of Marlin, Texas. They were driven to Borden County in the fall of 1879 by H. D. (Nick) Beal, (brother of John T.), and a nephew "Dink" Logan. These cattle were wintered on the head of Bull Creek, where the men camped through that winter in a "pour-off" with a tarpaulin stretched over it. In the spring the herd was driven to Kansas and sold for \$25 a head. In 1880, another herd of Beal cattle wintered on this range and was sold in Kansas in the Spring. Mr. Beal had been driving herds to Kansas since 1871 and continued this practice until 1883 when the Jumbo Cattle Co. was formed. In the accompanying interview with Mr. Nick Beal, he states that the company was composed of J. T. Davis of Marlin, J. T. Beal, and J. H. Drennan of Calvert. Borden County records show that in 1884, J. T. Beal, J. T. Davis and K. Aycock of Sweetwater purchased some 50 alternate sections from Phillip Trammell of Nolan County. Land in Garza and Borden Counties was leased from the State for 4 cents an acre. In 1892 some land was purchased from the Magnolia Cattle and Land Co. (MKS). Other members of the Beal family held interest in the Jumbo. F. G. Oxsheer, whose wife Mary was a sister of J. T. and Nick Beal, evidently owned some stock in the company. Mr. Oxsheer spent a year at the head of Moor's Draw, in a lonely camp, which consisted of a wagon bed. "They just set the wagon bed off on the ground", he told Clyde Miller, "and left me there with a batching outfit. I didn't see a soul all summer".

After the passage of almost 100 years, it is extremely difficult to sort out stories and documents and to know exactly what was taking place in Borden County in the 1870's and 1880's. If we could only go back in time and sit around the campfires of some of those "old timers" and hear their stories of what really happened -- well, even then there are probably those who would say "It wasn't like that at all!"

All evidence seems to prove that Col. C. C. Slaughter brought the first cattle to Borden County in 1887. Brooks Davis drove 500 cows and calves to be turned loose on the "headwaters of the Colorado" and the calves were branded in a rock corral at the head of Tobacco Creek. The chuck wagon on the drive was pulled by oxen and Indians stole the saddle horses, which had been left behind, before the cowboys got back to Palo Pinto. This was the beginning of Colonel Slaughter's vast West Texas cattle empire which eventually spread over 1,500,000 acres. But this is not the story of Col. Slaughter and his famous ranch. It is the story of the Jumbo, which branded O B (Buckle B) and had its headquarters near what is called the old Hood Place, about 15 miles NE of Gail.

The first cattle brought into the north eastern part of Borden

In an article on Colorado City titled "Texas Cow-Towns" by John M. Hendrix of

Sweetwater, published in "The Cattleman" in April, 1941, Mr. Hendrix lists "Gulf" and Will Beal (Geoff & Nick) as owners of "the Jumbo in Scurry County". He also tells an interesting story of the Beals and Dick Ware who at one time owned the Cross C (Cannon) Ranch west of Gail, Ware, an ex-Texas Ranger who is credited with the killing of the outlaw Sam Bass at Round Rock, Texas in 1878, was the first sheriff of Mitchell County and many colorful tales, some of them related to Borden Co., are told of the fourteen years he held office there. Ware was elected in 1881 by a margin of one vote and defeated in 1895 by one vote. Mr. Hendrix says:

"Will and Gulf Beal always felt that they were responsible for his defeat even though they were his closest friends. They were riding in from the Jumbo Ranch on election day for the express purpose of supporting Ware. The way was long and the day warm, so they unsaddled on Deep Creek for a short nap and to let their horses rest. When they awakened several hours later, they were unable to reach Colorado City before the polls closed and always felt that one of their votes would have tied the race and the other have won it. Ware was afterward made United States Marshall."

Well, how many of us would even start out on a hot day to ride horse back some 75 miles just to vote?

The year 1880, when the Beals were establishing the Jumbo range, was a seasonable one in West Texas with stirrup high grass and brimming water holes -- a true cowman's paradise. 1882 brought a great boom in the cattle business with foreign and eastern capital pouring into the cattle country and the price of cattle going from \$7 to \$35 per head. Many herds were driven into the area where so recently Indians and buffalo had occupied the range. 1883 to 1887 were years of severe drought and terrible blizzards. Mr. Hendrix says "Late in the fall of 1884 and before much fencing had been done, a blizzard sent cattle cascading over the Cap Rock like a living Niagara many landed on the Pecos River and some few drifted to the Devil's River and to the Rio Grande -- no man knew where his cattle were. Thousands died. Practically the entire calf crop of two years was lost --."

Don Biggers in A Biggers Chronicle says that there was no rain from June 5, 1885 until August of 1886 and that from early December, 1885, the ground was covered with 3 to 8 inches of snow. This was one of the longest severe spells ever known.

By 1886, much fencing had been done and in the blizzards of that winter the cattle drifted against the fences and died in piles. Rollie Burns of the Square and Compass Ranch adjoining the Jumbo estimated that their outfit lost 1,500 head in one blizzard in January, 1886. Others died later with frozen feet and other after effects of the cold. By the end of 1886 the cattle boom had collapsed, and cattle were selling in some instances as low as \$1.50 a head. The droughts, blizzards, bl drifts, and resulting die-ups had brought financial ruin to most of the West Texas ranches. Some of those financed by foreign and eastern capital were not well managed and this contributed to their failures. There was also the expense of fencing and providing water by windmills, with supplies having to be hauled many miles from the railroad. There were prairie fires and trouble with "nesters" who came in to settle on the range that the cowmen had considered theirs. Don Biggers says, "The roads were lined with caravans of covered wagons going west to take up school land. Since the ranchers usually bought or leased only alternate sections of "Railroad land" (the land granted to the railroads as a subsidy) the alternate sections of school land were open for settlement by the farmers. The story is still told around Fluvanna of the four water wells drilled on the Jumbo ranch and how settlers camped around them until the Jumbo cattle could not water. These are the well referred to by "Aunt Gula" Jones which her father filled with rocks and posts. This story reflects to some degree the two sides of the issue which caused much animosity between the cowmen and settlers.

Gus I. Ford, in his book Texas Cattle Brands, says that the Jumbo Cattle Co. failed in 1886 and the St. Louis Cattle Co. brought the cattle. However the biography of John T. Beal in "Cattle Industry and Cattlemen of Texas" published in 1895, states that in 1891 Mr. Beal bought an interest in the St. Louis Cattle Co. in Cochran and Crosby Counties and became its manager. In 1894, the St. Louis Co. purchased from the Jumbo Cattle Co. 6800 head of stock cattle at \$10 per head. The nineteen years that Mr. Nick Beal spent on the Jumbo ranch spans one of the most historic and colorful eras of West Texas history - two decades which saw the final days of the buffalo and Indians, the coming of the cattle and the fencing of the open range, the making and breaking of great cattle fortunes and the land "taken up by homesteaders. In 1879 the country was a sea of grass with an abundance of wild game. There were antelope, wild turkey, quail, plover, and prairie chicken in abundance. There were also panthers, lobo wolves, coyotes, bobcats and even bear in the breaks along the caprock. Don Biggers says a most of the deer died with the black tongue plague in 1879. Prairie dog holes and rattle snakes were ever present threats to horse and rider. Through good times and bad, in droughts and in storms, through sorrow and joys, life on the Jumbo probably went on in the same routine way that **people** live, for people rarely realize that they are living history.

In the early 1880's, mail was received from Colorado City, usually about once a month, when someone rode in after it or on other business. Mail for all the surrounding ranches would be brought out and the cowboys would come for it. Mr. Hed-drix tells of the "queer mixture of frontier and cosmopolitan" which characterized early day Colorado City. A similar paradox existed on the ranches. For instance, Mrs. Beal - even though their home was a frontier dug-out - sent her laundry, including long hand made linen baby dresses - to Colorado City. They were sent and returned by mail which was picked up at a stage stop between Gail and Lubbock. In the book Rollie Burns by W. C. Holden, Mr. Burns says that his wife was the only woman in Garza Co. until Nick Beal brought out his wife, in 1888. Tragedy was part of the pattern. In 1893, Mrs. Beal's mother who was living at the Jumbo, died and was taken to Colorado City for burial. The trip, in a hack, took two days and the family "camped out" over night on the road.

Mr. Burns also tells of a Jumbo "puncher" and a mulatto horse wrangler who were struck by lightning during a terrifying thunder storm in 1886 while on roundup in "the Colorado River Country." The cowboy and his horse were killed. The wrangler's horse was killed and the crown of his hat was torn away but he lived. Such violent storms, with lightning playing on the cattle's horns and the cowboys leaving their spurs and guns at the wagon so as not to attract the electricity, seem to have been as common as the blizzards in the 1880's. Following the blizzards and the resulting "die-ups" the cowmen attempted to salvage some of the losses by skinning and selling the hides. It is said that following the drought of 1886 and 1887 the Jumbo skinned only bulls and 4 year old steers. The hides brought \$3, one-half of which was given to the cowboys who did the skinning. They skinned all winter and spent the summer hauling hides to the railroad. There were also affluent times. On one of his trips to Kansas City when the cattle evidently brought a good price, Mr. John Beal bought three grand pianos. In 1915, when some of the Beal family visited near Tatum, N. Mexico, in a frontier home which consisted of a half dug-out and a front room -- there in a corner sat one of those grand pianos, and while they talked a hen came through the unscreened door and laid an egg under the piano.

Another story of the Jumbo concerns Jim Weatherford, later county clerk of Borden Co., who worked for the Beals and "took up" land in the Jumbo pasture. He was 19 years old when the first election was held in Borden Co. and was pressed into service helping with the voting at the Jumbo box. When someone asked him if he voted, he answered "Well, I thought I was Supposed To." After all, they say that sometimes the horses voted too!

While living at the Jumbo the Beal Family probably had other entertainment besides the Sunday afternoon horse back rides. There were occasional dances at the ranches. After 1890 there were trips to Gail for shopping and to attend church. And as some of the family lived in Colorado City there were no doubt trips there with social affairs to attend. Mr. Nick Beal's salary was a munificent \$25 a month on which he supported a family and accumulated enough savings to acquire the improvements of the Jumbo ranch when they sold out. He plowed the first furrow in Borden Co. in 1890. He planted 50 acres in sorghum for horse feed. The crop was harvested with a butcher knife - and they had plenty of feed for the winter. Some corn was planted and they had roasting ears in Sept. 1890.

Uncle Bud Hood, who bought what was left of the Jumbo from Mr. Nick Beal, was a colorful character. He and his pardner, Caufield, ranched in Old Mexico and as times there became turbulent they were forced to leave and so came to Borden Co. One of Mr. Hood's nephews tells of his expert markmanship which accounted for 48 Mexicans who attacked him. "Mexican Shortie", who came to Borden Co. with Mr. Hood, kept his guns loaded for him. Mr. Hood was a bachelor and when he died ownership of the Jumbo passed to his brother T. B. Hood and his four sisters.

By Edna Clark Miller

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#### LIFE ON THE JUMBO CATTLE COMPANY

(As told me by my mother, Mrs. J. A. A. Jones (Mary G. Wilson), daughter of Jumbo Wilson, boss of Line Camp Jumbo). Edd Jones.

The vast drama of life shapes the lives of those to come afterwards. Past struggles, defeats, and advances have combined to create the economic world in which we live. Lessons for tomorrow can be drawn from the great panorama of the past. As we look into the future, we know all is well - though we can not draw aside the curtain and glimpse into the great Beyond. When the wilderness of nature still held sway over this country and Buffalo still wandered wide and free, a few pioneer families came to make this their homes in block 97 of Scurry County... Came the Beal Bros. of the Jumbo Cattle Co. along with Jumbo Wilson, his wife and five children - Lela, Mary G., Tom, Bob, and Andrew. Later came the Miller family, A German who worked for the ranch. Following them came the people named later on



in this article. The first school was called Jumbo. It was started in 1889. There were 4 children, Mrs. Detmore was the teacher. Later 3 Rogers children came to the ranch. Those who first went to school at Jumbo with Emma Shaw as teacher, were Tom, Lela and Mary G. Wilson. The school was moved to what was called Dark which was a 6 mile walk for the children. In 1891 Dolly Detmore was the teacher and the following children went there - Frank & Ella Van Winkle, Etta Jones, Etta, May & Gornie Dargitz, Lee Stavely, Jessie Clipper, Maud and Walter Baily, Pearl Beal, Hallie and Joe Reid, Andrew, Jack, Mary G. and Jeff Wilson. The teacher for 1893 was Fannie Patterson. Among the new settlers to move in when block 97 was opened were the Whites, Stevensons, Canon, Clauson Davis, Jones, Bales, Patterson, Stewarts, Gleg-horns & L.H. Pruitte. The school opened with Miss Kate Buchanan, teacher, and her brother. The school was known as Dark. Then came Light. This was a 6 mile move. Then came the postoffice and the D. D. McGregor store. The new town attracted many more new people.

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 Jumbo Wilson and family & a neighbor, Mrs. Miller, at Jumbo Cattle Co. line camp in 1889. The location of this camp is north of Fluvanna on the A.D. Dodson ranch. Mary Gula Wilson, daughter of Jumbo Wilson Married J. A. (Jim) Jones.

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At one time this ranch reached from half way to Colorado City to as far north as Post and to the Caprock to the west of Gail, and over into Kent County. It reached almost to Snyder. There were 4 line camps in the opper part of this ranch. One was somewhere near where Gail is now, one near Post and two near Fluvanna. One was on the old John Rhea place, the other on the A. D. Dodson ranch. Jumbo Wilson lived at the old John Rhea place also at the Dodson Place. He was in this line camp when J. Wright Moorar drove 500 Buffalo all the Horseshoe Rim on the Caprock, north of Fluvanna Texas. Corn was used as food, coffee, and wood by many of the first settlers when supplies were short. It took 7 days to go to Colorado City and back. There were weeks of sand storms then hail and rain came. Old Sam the ranch cook was a crippled man. He was caught in a hail and rain storm away from the wagon. He put his saddle over his head and could be heard to call Nick Beal: "Mr. Nick, come and get poor old sam!" Mr. Beal had his saddle over his head trying to save himself from the storm. The year of 1900 was a bad year for the Jumbo Cattle Co. Block 97 was opened for settlera and Jumbo Wilson had the job of taking down mills and filling up wells with posts, rocks, or anything at hand. Thus the Beals ranching came to an end on Block 97. Turk, Nick, John and Guff Beal are among the past history of Scurry, Garza, Borden and Kent Counties.

So far as I know, Mrs. J.A.J. Jones (Mary G. Wilson) is the last of the people who lived there from 1887 until now. /s/ Edd Jones.

Note: Mrs. Jones (Aunt Gula) died September 6, 1968 at Pie Town, New Mexico.

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As most of you probably know, the LIGHT and DARK referred to by Mrs. Jones were the forerunners of the present day Fluvanna and Dermott. The following is from an article published in the ABILENE REPORTER-NEWS, nov. 6, 1966, on the occassion of the dedication of Historical Markers at Fluvanna and Dermott.

EARLY DAY cowboys who recall picking up mail at a half - dugout store called Dark just east of present day Dermott remember the store-keeper but do not recall if he was named Dark. They do, however, recall that a man named Light ran a ranch store for the Jumbo Land and Cattle Co. a few miles east of Fluvanna and that "Jumbo" was soon called Light for him. Light moved farther west as did Dark.

Some Fluvanna residents still live in "Old Light" a mile east of Fluvanna. S. P. McDermott bought the Dark store and moved it to where the Polar road intersected the road to Post City, just across from "half - way house" where teams and youngsters were rested and watered on the way to Snyder.

THE RAILROAD built a mile past Light because, as Stamford Land, Snyder RS&P agent, recalls hearing, the charter called for building 50 miles and Light was only 49. That didn't bother Light much, it just moved itself to the Fluvanna townsite laid off by an Abilene promoter, J. M. Cunningham, who had bought the land when he learned of RS&P plans. A surveyor named the new town Fluvanna after his home county in Virginia.

## THE BORDEN COUNTY SUN

**The Borden County Sun**

Published every Thursday at Gail, Borden County, Texas. Vol. 1., No. 9. The Only Newspaper In The County.

Subscription Rates: \$1 Per Year In Texas. Outside of Texas, \$1.50 Per Year. Advertising Rates Given Upon Request.

Office of Publication: Sun Building, N.W. Corner of Court House Square, Gail, Texas. Mrs. M. L. Hunter, Publisher.

Entered as second class matter April 25, 1940, at the post office at Gail, Texas, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

**Early Days In Borden**

H. D. Beal, honored and esteemed citizen, is Borden county's oldest settler.

Mr. Beal came to this county in 1879 from Milam county. The year previous his brother had selected a ranching spot in what is now Garza county, near Post, and it was with a herd of cattle, en route to the spot intended for a ranch, that caused Mr. Beal to settle in this section.

When a herd of cattle had reached what is now Justiceburg, the party camped where the stockpens are now located. During the night Indians stole a big portion of their saddle horses. Mr. Beal stated that the Indians were followed as far as Cedar Lake. Of what tribe

the Indians were, it was never learned, but true to Indian tradition of that time, they were splendid horse rustlers.

"This was a fine country in those days," said Mr. Beal to The Sun editor, as he recalled incidents of early days, "the range was fine, the country sparsely settled, and the cowmen's prospects were rosy. Our ranch, the Buckle B, had its headquarters at the head of Double Mountain river. The first ranch house was a dugout. I spent 19 years on this ranch. The company, composed of J. T. Davis and J. T. Beal, both of Marlin, and J. H. Drinnan, of Calvert, went broke. Dry years and low prices hurt lots of ranchmen in those days. I believe 1884-85 were the driest years we experienced in this section of the country.

"After the Jumbo Cattle Co. went out of business I bought the company's improvements. Not having many cattle, and range being good I got cattle to pasture. Hood & Caufield of Waco, placed lots of cattle on my range from their ranches in Old Mexico. Later, in 1898, I sold out to Hood, and went to the Lubbock country, locating 7 miles north of Lubbock, where I ranched for 21 years. The altitude being high caused me to sell out, and we returned to make our home in Borden county. I

bought the Francis Abney ranch, and have since resided here.

"I have seen lots of changes in the country. The first time I was in Colorado City it was a town of tents. The railroad had just entered the town, and Pete Snyder's store occupied the only building at that time. That was in 1881. The same year the railroad pushed on to Big Spring. In the early days of Gail the Kincaid Hotel was a most popular place for the ranchmen and travelers. I remember being at the hotel one day during a term of court. A real sandstorm blew in during the day, and at dinner time when we sat down to the table to eat, the dust was terrific. When one would pick a biscuit off the bread plate, a ring of dust would remain on the plate, marking the spot where the biscuit had reposed. Yes, I have seen lots of changes in Borden county. The country has been fenced up, farming operations have been put under way, along with other changes, but the people have not changed a great deal. Everybody was hospitable and friendly in the early days—neighbors were neighbors—and today the people are the same way. Borden county is a fine county, and the people can't be beat anywhere.

The above article about Mr. H. D. (Nick) Beal appeared in the June 20th, 1940 issue of the BORDEN COUNTY SUN which was loaned to us by Mrs. Lorene Jones.

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## 1969 Regional Meeting of the State Historical Survey Committee

On April 15, 1969, Vivian and Pauline Clark, Opal Stephens, Jorda Walker, Edna Miller and Sibyl Gilmore, members of the Borden County Historical Survey Committee, spent a very enjoyable day in our neighboring city of Post, Texas. The Garza County HSC was host for the regional meeting with Truett Latimer of the Texas State HSC as the key speaker. We also enjoyed hearing Richard Roberts of the Texas Highway Department in Austin praise our great State of Texas and show films of the famous "Texas Trails." Miss Diana Files, State Museum Consultant, spoke on development of museums over the state and also gave a talk on Archeology, in the absence of Mr. Curtis Tunnell who was scheduled to give the talk. I might add that she did a magnificent job as the speech was well received by all. Mr. Bob Watson also spoke on the contents of the county chairman's handbook and its place in the RAMPS program. After the meeting everyone enjoyed a delightful lunch catered by Jackson Cafe in Post. We then journeyed across town to tour the Garza Mfg. Co. where we saw sheets being made and witnesses the entire process from the ginned bale of cotton to the finished and packaged sheets. This climaxed a delightful day in Post. We returned home tired but happy and much wiser.

By Sibyl Gilmore

On May 1st, Ruth Weathers of the Borden County Historical Survey Committee attended the dedication of an Historical Marker in Scurry County for the Von Roeder Seed Farms & also one for Deep Creek. And on May 2nd, Vivian & Pauline Clark of our committee attended marker dedications at the Community of Pyron and the old Snyder Cemetery.

May 5, 1969, Miss Diana Files, State Museum Consultant, met with members of the Borden Co. Historical Survey Committee, the County Judge and Commissioners to discuss plans for a new museum. Thanks to her and a hard working group of officials plans are now under way for building a beautiful new museum. "Thanks, Gang"

May 9, 1969, Pauline Clark, Mrs. Monk, and Opal Stephens took the cub scouts with Mrs. Weldon Colley, Mrs. Nelton Davis, Mrs. Rich Anderson and Mrs. Shorty Farmer on a tour of the museum and jail.

May 15, 1969, Pauline Clark, Doris Rudd, Opal Stephens & Dottie Wills showed the 8th Grade Class of Borden I.S.D. thru the museum. Dottie Wills told them the story of Borden Co., then they toured the jail. Mr. Choate, Mrs. Samuelson and Mrs. L. B. Jones were also on this tour.

Word comes from Inez Weatherford Williams of El Paso of the death there of Mrs. Lucille Prim Jackson O'Sullivan. Mrs. O'Sullivan and her husband, Ray Jackson, at one time were teachers in the Gail School where Mr. Jackson served as principal for several years. He later became District Judge of the El Paso Area.

Raymond V. Daugherty, 71, longtime resident of the Fluvanna Community, passed away on May 21, 1969.

Jess York, of Albuquerque, N. Mex., brother of Joe York of Snyder and the late Jim York of Borden County passed away in May. His parents, Mr. & Mrs. J. N. York, were pioneer settlers of Borden County. His wife, Alma Sealy York, survives.

We are saddened to learn that Army 1st Lt. William L. Long, son of Mr. & Mrs. Louis E. (Bobby) Long of El Paso, has been killed in action in Vietnam. Lt. Long was the grandson of Elmer Long whose father and uncle, Frank & Andy Long, established the Long ranches in Borden County.

Mr. Ira Jeter, 70, of the Key community died on June 13. The Jeter family were early day settlers and are associated with the history of Borden County.

Glenn Cary Miller passed away June 21, 1969, in San Angelo. She was born in Content, Coleman Co. on Oct. 4, 1892. Daughter of J. R. Cary, Sr., she moved with her parents to Borden County in 1901 and later moved to Scurry County. She was married to Fred Miller in 1911. She is survived by several nieces and nephews.

Earl T. Sealy, 80, died June 25 in the Veterans Hospital in Big Spring. Earl was a charter member of the Masonic Lodge at Gail and a World War I veteran. He had lived in Borden Co. since 1899 when his family settled here. His wife and two sons survive.

Mr. Louis Conrad, 81, member of pioneer ranching families including the Connells and Reynolds who ranched in Borden County, died May 18, 1969, in San Angelo. Much of Mr. Conrad's Borden County ranch is now under the water of Lake Thomas.

Mr. Eddie Marshall Dempsey of O'Donnell died in a truck accident at Mercedes, Tex., April 15, 1969. He was born Feb. 19, 1922. Mr. Dempsey operated the County Line Gin which is the only Gin in Borden County. He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

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Gail, Texas 79738

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