

THE COWBOY WAY

Rancher forms lifelong relationship with Noble Foundation

by J. Adam Calaway

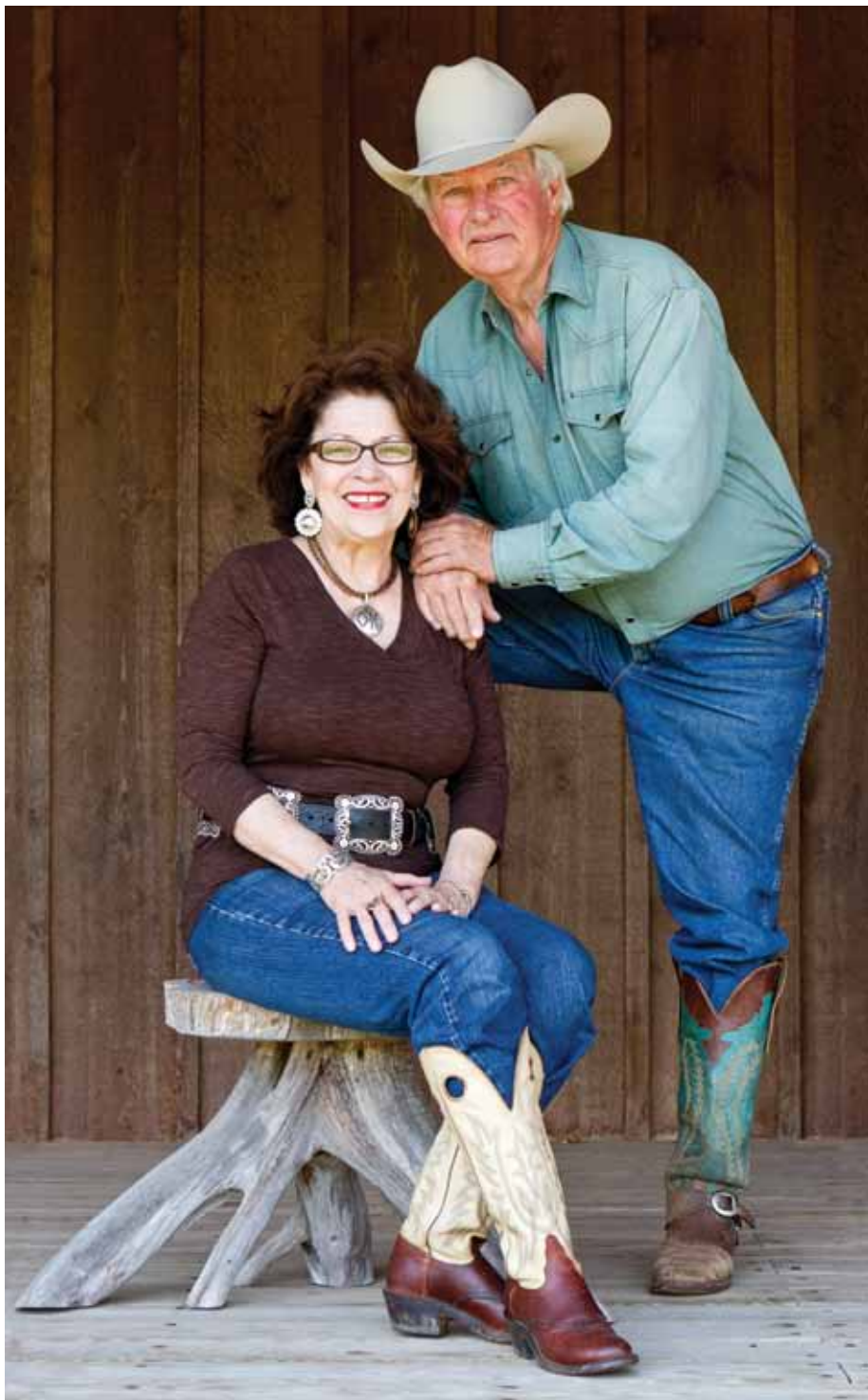
It only takes one glance to know that Kent Moore is a real cowboy.

A sweat-stained cowboy hat adorns his head, not for show, but for shade. Dusty jeans are tucked into working boots. No. 4 Blanchard spurs are clasped firmly in place; functional accessories for a 70-year-old who still rides horseback to check fields and move cattle.

Weathered hands offer a vise-grip handshake and a genteel greeting – “Glad to make your acquaintance” – echoes from an era when masculinity included politeness.

Everything about Moore reflects the lifestyle that defines him. Everything except his office. ▶

Kent Moore stands on a small outcropping, overlooking part of his 2,000-acre ranch near Lindsay, Okla. Moore, 70, has worked with the Noble Foundation for 40 years and credits the organization with providing him the information and advice to be successful.



Kent and Duchess Moore pose on the front porch of their ranchhouse. The couple have spent the past 40 years working the ranch, sharing everything from chores to office space. Kent often uses Duchess's salon in nearby Lindsay, Okla., as a makeshift office for meetings.

Seeing Moore – the embodiment of the American cowboy – sitting in a room with crimson walls, plush furniture accented by leopard print pillows and frou-frou knickknacks elicits a visual paradox not easily reconciled.

To be fair, Moore's office is actually his wife's beauty salon, located in the heart of Lindsay, Okla. Duchess Moore has tamed both hair and prairie alongside her husband for 40 years, so his presence – which has quietly expanded to two desks and a card table, all piled with papers – in her space is both expected and welcome.

With the family homestead north of town and farms to the east and south, Duchess Moore Salon serves as the perfect intersection for Kent's daily travels. Mail, phone negotiations and the occasional meeting take place in the convenient, but unlikely, headquarters. Still, for the sake of visitors, Moore attempted further explanation for his salon squatting.

"In defense of my office," said Moore, continuing his explanation. "When we built our new house about 11 years ago, I was going to take two rooms that I had added onto our old mobile home and turn them into an office, but I ended up making those a bunkhouse for one of my hands so I have to office here."

Duchess cocked an eyebrow in disbelief. Moore smiled and moved to a new topic. Cowboys always know when they're outgunned.

A guardian of the land

Moore settled into his chair to discuss the subject that drew everyone to Duchess's salon in the first place: his 40-year relationship with the Noble Foundation.

Moore is one of more than 1,300 farmers, ranchers and land stewards who participate in the organization's no-cost consultation program.

The program stands at the heart of the Noble Foundation's mission to support agricultural producers in the Southern Great Plains in reaching their financial, quality-of-life and stewardship goals through the adoption of sustainable, research-proven practices.

"What's great about the Noble Foundation is they never tell you what to do," Moore



Noble Foundation Consultation Program Manager Hugh Aljoe (right) reviews Kent Moore's management plan during a recent farm visit. Moore has received advice and support through Noble's consultation program for 40 years.

said. "You set your goals, and they try everything to help you get there. They reinforce your ideas. They're a sounding board. They're that knowledgeable friend you turn to when you need help. I'd hate to think what I'd do if I didn't have them to call on."

Moore owns the Diamond K Cattle Company, a commercial stocker operation with more than 1,000 head of cattle on 2,000 acres of wheat, ryegrass and native pasture.

A portion of the land belonged to his grandfather and two great-uncles who settled in Lindsay around 1906, a year before statehood. The brothers planted broomcorn, a type of sorghum used to make brooms. Moore's father continued the family legacy, tilling the same fields and planting the same crops his entire

life. When Moore came along in 1940, he joined the family's agricultural lineage – with a twist.

"My father and grandfather were farmers. They liked to plant and grow stuff," he said. "I like to grow cattle and horses, so to speak. I was going to be a cowboy. I knew it from the beginning. Of course, if you want to be a cowboy and run cattle in this country, you also have to be part farmer."

Moore would ranch, but not right away. He earned a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry from Oklahoma State University, where he was a member of the esteemed Livestock Judging Team, and also attended Texas Christian University's Ranch Management Program. He returned to Lindsay in 1960 and bought a small piece of land north of town. His

parents loaned him equipment, and he returned the favor in labor. He raised alfalfa and broomcorn. "I did the same thing that I did growing up," he said, "but now it was mine."

Moore soon began to fashion a plan to break into the cattle business. He met renowned cattleman Leonard Wyatt. "I became buddies with Leonard Wyatt, figuring I'd just do what he was doing," Moore said. "Turns out he was getting his information from the Noble Foundation, so I began to work with the Foundation."

Noble Foundation consultants initially helped Moore transition from broomcorn to rye and wheat for stocker cattle use. With that, his course was set.

Through four decades, Moore has leaned on the Noble Foundation's ►



At 70 years old, Kent Moore still checks fields and herds cattle on horseback. Part of his daily attire is a pair of No. 4 Blanchard spurs clasped to his boots.

expertise to advise him on every aspect of his operation from seasonal pests and annual markets to soil testing and purchasing livestock.

“Working with the Noble Foundation has been good from the beginning. Every consultant I worked with through the years has helped make me successful,” he said. “Anytime I had a question or a plan that I thought was feasible, they’d give me their opinion. I didn’t take all their advice, but I probably should have.”

Through the years, Moore attended countless educational events, gleaned new methods to improve his operation and learning about the latest research. The respect he has for the Noble Foundation is reciprocated as Moore has been asked to be a guest speaker at a few Noble seminars.

“Mr. Moore is one of those producers who is completely focused on being a quality land manager,” said Hugh Aljoe, Noble Foundation agricultural consultation program manager. “He pays attention to his land. He understands that you can’t take too much from the land, that you have to give back. He is a true guardian of the land.”

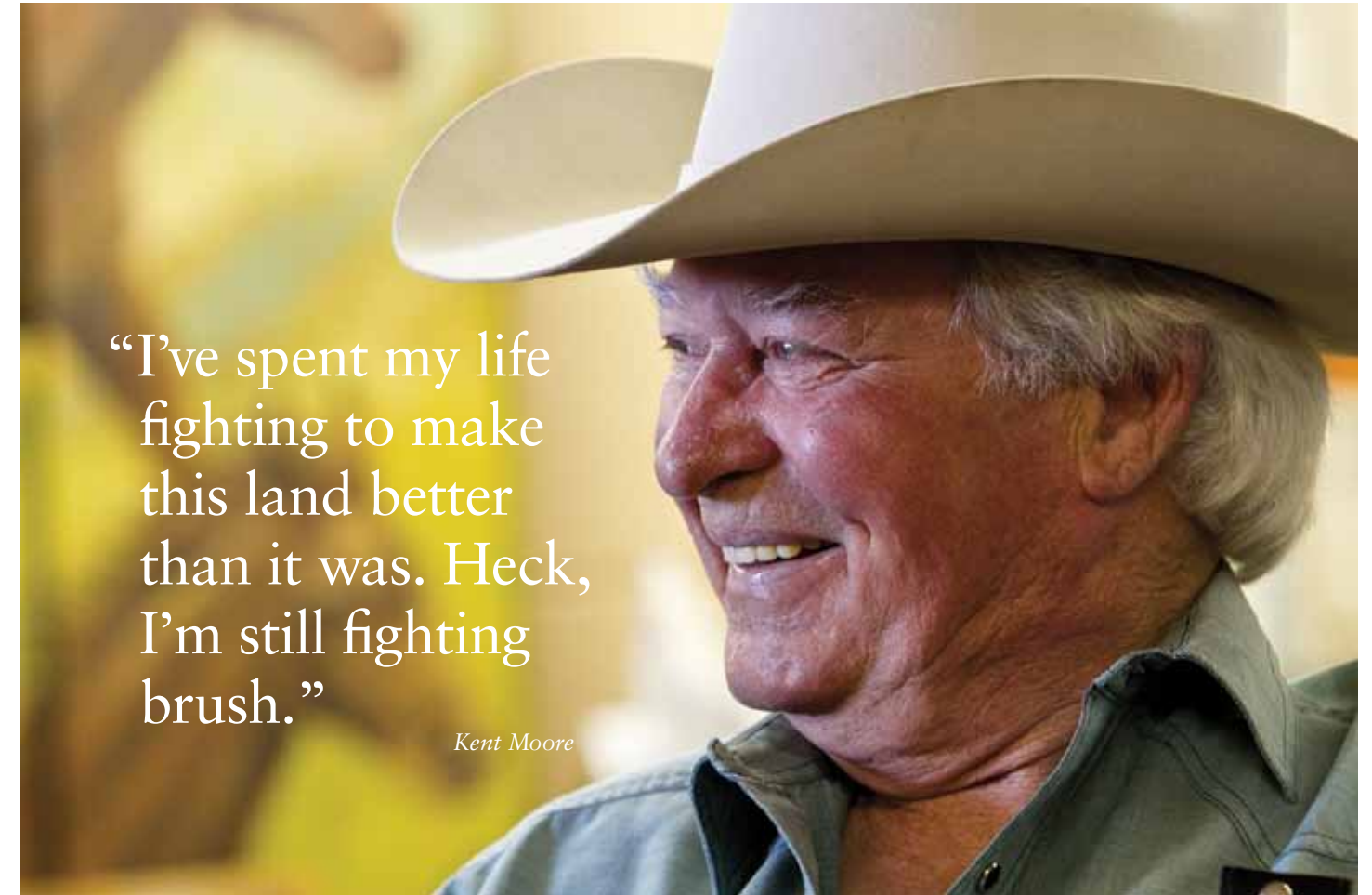
One dry year

Thirty minutes after finishing his interview, Moore found a more traditional setting – the horse stalls at the family ranch. Petting Diamond, a buckskin gelding, the cowboy expounded on the virtues of one-horsepower transportation versus all-terrain vehicles (ATV).

“You just go too fast on an ATV,” Moore said. “When you’re on horseback, you see more of your pasture. You’re able to see the weeds and fields better. You are able to spot places that may wash out soon. You see your cattle better. Plus, it’s more pleasing.”

Riding through his fields this spring has been a much different experience than in years past. The Southern Great Plains has endured one of the worst droughts since the Dust Bowl years. By May, Moore’s fields are usually waving emerald seas filled with herds of plump cattle. On this day, undersized rows of rye reveal dry red dirt, and only a handful of stockers remain.

As the drought progressed through the spring, Moore’s experience told him it was time to reduce his herd, but he



“I’ve spent my life fighting to make this land better than it was. Heck, I’m still fighting brush.”

Kent Moore

Kent Moore laughs about using his wife’s salon in Lindsay, Okla., as a makeshift office. With a homestead north of town and farms to the east and south, the salon sits in the perfect location to hold meetings and take phone calls.

wanted a second opinion. His advisors at the Noble Foundation confirmed his instinct and helped formulate an effective destocking plan.

When asked to consider facing the annual trials of agriculture without the Noble Foundation, Moore chuckled and said: “I’d be so dumb. I would’ve done everything through trial and error. If I didn’t have them to guide me, I wouldn’t know what to do. When Lloyd Noble put the Foundation together, he couldn’t have had any idea of its impact on agriculture, on the producers.”

No sunsets here

At lunch, Moore chewed on chicken fried steak at a local greasy spoon. He teased the waitress, who called him by name

and teased him right back. He waved to every person who entered, all strands of a tightly woven community he’s supported with his life and land. It was clear everyone knows Kent Moore, but that phenomenon is not limited to Lindsay.

Moore’s passion for ranching propelled him to become an industry advocate and leader. He helped found the Working Ranch Cowboy Association. He has served in leadership positions for the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association, where he helped found the Range Round Up, a charity event supporting the Children’s Miracle Network, and the Oklahoma Quarter Horse Association. He has traveled across North America – from Texas to Canada – supporting an industry and a lifestyle he’s led so successfully.

Eventually, though, the conversation returned to Lindsay and a word cowboys never really consider – retirement.

“Some people encourage it, but I don’t know what I’d do if I retire,” Moore said. “I probably need to form an exit plan. I have to decide what is the best way to taper off. I wouldn’t want to rent out my land. I’d want it taken care of to my satisfaction. I’ve spent my life trying to make this land better than it was. Heck, I’m still fighting brush.”

He takes another bite and then completely rejects the idea of riding off into the sunset. “Nah, I still look forward to getting the wheat in. I look forward to getting cattle. I look forward to selling them. It’s just what I do. It’s just who I am.”

It’s just the cowboy way. ■