

LIFE ON A RANCH IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA Interview with Lucinda Proctor Gillespie
By Denny Peterson

Lucinda Proctor Gillespie was born July 1903 in Tucson, Arizona.

She is the daughter of Maria Jesus Salazar Proctor and Charles A. Proctor, a fairly prominent rancher of the Tucson area during the early 1900s. She had four brothers and one younger sister. Lucinda is short with black hair, greying. She speaks English with many errors and Spanish with English thrown in. The first ranch Lucinda remembers is the Box Canyon Ranch located in a branch of Madera Canyon. Later, her family acquired and moved to the Sopori Ranch, a large fertile parcel near Arivaca. While still living on the Sopori (still owning Box Canyon Ranch), Charles Proctor bought the Batamote Ranch. Although she recalls many experiences on all the ranches, Lucinda's favorite memories are of the Box Canyon Ranch. Was ranch life dreary and dull or was it exciting and romantic as many paint it?

Q: What was it like living on a ranch?

A: Wonderful!

Q: What did you do?

A: I rode horses, milked cows. I wasn't too little then because I milked the cow. We had the dogie calves - the little motherless calves - to take care of. I had chickens - little chickens. Some kids had pet rabbits, pet javelina. My friend Betty even had a pet deer. It was different then - we could keep them for pets. It wasn't like now. If you fed them, they would stay.

Oh, we would go walking in the canyon. At Box Canyon Ranch, there were big rocks in the creek that we could slide down. We wore our panties off. When I was on the Box Canyon Ranch, I wasn't in school yet. Sometimes we would pan for gold, too. I used to help water the cattle. We had a big trough and I used to walk on the edge. One time I fell in, face up. They found me because of the bubbles in the water. To fill the trough (now everyone will know how old I am) - we didn't have gas engines - there were great big sacks made out of canvas and they would use the horses. They would lower the sack down in the well (hooked up to the horse) and, when it was full, the horse would pull it up.

I had my four brothers older than me. Because I was the first girl, my daddy spoiled me. My brothers did too. Of the brothers, George was the most thoughtful. He would cry when his little sister got a spanking. So, rather than see George cry, they let me go.

Oh, what else. We had hogs. We went on picnics. People came from, all over - Nogales and Tucson. When I was older, I went to country dances.

Q: What ranches did you live on?

A: I don't remember it, but we lived on La Tesota Ranch, where Green Valley is now. It was a stop for the stage between Tucson and Nogales where they changed the horses so they could keep going fast. Then I do remember Box Canyon Ranch. That's where I had the best times. You know, my daddy owned the Graveyard Mine there at Helvetia. I used to run down those hills. Oh, I carried you on those hill - years later. Do you remember? No, you don't remember because I was carrying you. Oh, you could walk, but I

carried you you were little. Then we lived on the Sopori (Proctor) Ranch. It was named that because of the Sopori River - it's a river like the Santa Cruz. Now there are two or three places called the Sopori. Down the creek from us was the Robledo Ranch. They were from Mexico. Then my daddy bought the Batamote Ranch - where we kept most of the cattle. We lived on the Sopori. Daddy bought the Batamote for \$380. What a price! On the Sopori we would farm and bale hay and then we brought the cattle. We sold both the Sopori and Batamote in 1926. My brother Henry sold the Box Canyon 6-8 years ago. It was in the family for 80 years.

Q: What did your daddy do?

A: He branded. He butchered cattle for Helvetia. You know, Helvetia was a mining town, and he supplied all the miners with beef.

Q: What did your mamma do?

A: Washing, ironing. She would boil the Levi's. They would fade to a light blue like you buy now. She would boil them in a tub outside. We had a wood stove. We baked bread, cooked beans, pork. Daddy would come to town to go to the grocery stores. He would take the wagon and be gone one or two days. He had good credit. Everyone liked my daddy. We sold cattle twice a year - May and October. We paid our bills then. You heard of Harry Drachman? We got our shoes from them for the whole family. Old man Jacome, too.

Q: Did your daddy have cowboys?

A: He had 2 or 3 cowboys. My brothers helped as they got older. We had dogs who worked. They helped drive. I remember driving cattle. Somebody had to ride behind. I would take lunches to cowboys when they couldn't come in. We had a chuckwagon, too. Fun - it was fun. Some people say they were the good old days. I wonder. Those old outhouses, wood stoves. We had to chop wood. We had a friend who worked for us we called Hijo. He was ornery.

We would play and run races. Some people came and took him to work on their ranch. I told him once that if he wanted to come over, he could put a bunch of ticks in his ears and come get mamma to get them out. He would come and have mamma get the ticks out. She would pour oil in the ear. She asked "Hijo, how do you get so many ticks in your ears?" Of course, he did it on purpose. Living on a ranch, there was no pressure of city life. My daddy was proud and good. He knew no Spanish and didn't want to learn. English, I didn't learn English 'til I went to school. He couldn't hardly speak to us.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: Amado. There was a country school in a brick building. It was six or eight miles in a buggy. My youngest brother Frank drove us girls to school.

The boys went to school in Tucson. There were other ranchers - La Osa. They would drive from ranch to Amado to the railroad where the cattle would be shipped out. They would drive along the river. We could hear the cattle coming. We would run over to talk. The cowboys would leave the cattle and come talk. We would sew and read and do fancy work. It would be nice if more kids could be raised on ranches.