

# Lifetimes

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Herding 'em and heading 'em out, a cowboy drives the herd across a shallow creek bed along the Utah-Idaho border. Cattle spend the summer grazing on public land while ranchers grow hay on their farms to feed their livestock over the winter.

Photos by Gary Boyle

## Ridin' the range

Hill's Mills brothers drive cattle

by Gary Boyle  
Hilltop Times staff

On the open ranges of Northern Utah and Southern Idaho, cattle ranchers carry on a tradition of self reliance and land management, preserving a way of life that goes back to the earliest pioneers and Western settlers while providing a food staple for their country.

Hill employees David Mills and his brother, Deloy, along with family friend Timmy Baldwin, raise a herd of approximately 50 cattle on 200 acres near Snowville, Utah. David Mills, an environmental engineer and program manager for the Environmental Management Directorate, is responsible for the investigation and remediation of the more than 300 environmental sites at the Utah Test and Training Range. Deloy Mills is a mechanic in the Maintenance Directorate.

The Mills brothers took over the spread after their father retired promising not to let the land leave family hands. Their ranch, AM Farms, is named after their mother, Artensz, and their herd is branded with a TH for their grandfather, Thomas Harman.

"You're not going to get rich being a farmer. It's more in the heart than in the wallet, it's a lifestyle," said Baldwin, who, like some other farmers, works additional jobs at a local convenience store and as a long-haul truck driver to make ends meet.

During the spring, the cattle are taken from their various ranches and allowed to graze on federal land. The Mills' father bought the grazing rights from the Bureau of Land Management 30 years ago. They also tend the land, keeping up fences and making sure their cattle don't overgraze one area so that they may use the acreage again the next year.

The Mills brothers and other ranchers let their cattle graze together through the spring and summer then as fall approaches they round them up. During the warm months, they grow hay on their ranch for the cattle

to eat during the winter. This year's combined herd numbered more than 650 head and was tended by five separate ranches near Snowville.

Ranchers and ranch hands mounted their horses as the sun rose above the Southern Idaho mountains Friday and began rounding up the scattered herd.

"These guys have been doing this their whole lives. They may look like they're just riding along but they're paying close attention, looking for a stray calf, an ornery bull, snakes," said David Mills.

The riders round up the cattle, chase down the ones who wander off from the herd and help them through natural obstacles like muddy streambeds. At the corral, the slow paced quiet lifestyle the farmers espouse vanishes in a haze of dust and a siren of moos as the cattle move about in their temporary surroundings.

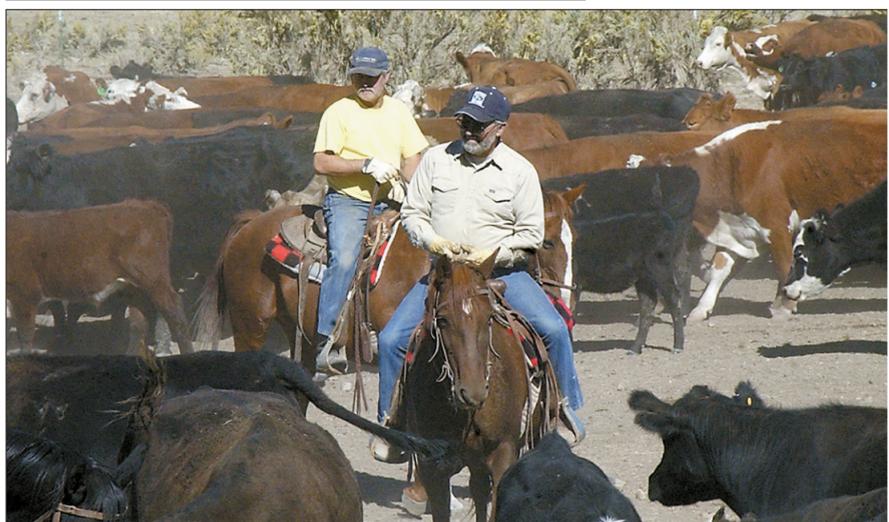
The ranchers move their horse trailers into a semicircle expanding the corral area and begin separating the herd into individual groups. Cowboys ride through the herd separating it into more manageable sized groups. In addition to the brand on the cow's side each has a colored tag pierced on to its ear distinguishing ownership. The cattle are drove into smaller corals separated by ranch ownership. Most of the cattle are driven into the corral by the hoots and hollers of the cowboys who swing lassoes above their heads for effect, occasionally snaring a steer.

Calves are weaned from their mom's and later sold to fattening farms for further processing. After the cattle have been split into groups, some are left to graze in the open for a while longer, others are herded to ranches along country roads and the remainder are herded into cattle trailers and taken to their home fields where they'll stay for the winter.

"During the winter the cows have calves and in the spring we take them back up into the hills. It's a continuous cycle," said David Mills.



As was done 100 years ago, cowboys use lassoes to corral cattle splitting them into smaller more manageable groups and separating them by ranch ownership. Galloping out on the open plains a cowboy reunites a stray calf with its mother. The peaceful-looking lifestyle involves working in all types of weather from morning to dusk often seven days a week for very little material gain.



Deloy Mills, left, and his brother David ride through the corralled herd locating their cattle and separating them from the rest of the herd before driving them into a separate corral. They then loaded the cattle onto livestock trailers and brought them to their ranch near Snowville, Utah where the cattle will spend the winter months.