

# Zipperer Beefmasters Just getting started . . . for the second time around

by: Belinda Hood Ary

By the time most cattle producers reach their 78<sup>th</sup> birthday, they are looking for ways to slow down and retire from the cattle business. But Jennie Lee Zipperer is an exception to that rule. She is just getting started. . . .for the second time around.

"Figure that one out," she laughs. When you look at Zipperer's journey through the cattle business, it is easy to see that she has never been one to do things the conventional way. Her journey has been filled with many firsts in the Beefmaster breed.

Jennie Lee Zipperer wasn't born into agriculture, but like anything else she puts her mind to, agriculture became a part of her. She was studying science with an interest in genetics at the University of Florida when she met and fell in love with fellow student, John Zipperer, Jr., who she married. It was obviously a perfect match because in June the Zipperer's will celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a family of four children, eleven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

After marrying, the couple began working for John's father in Fort Myers. Zipperer Farms was already established as a distributor of floral ferns and a grower of gladiolas. But it wasn't until Zipperer applied her knowledge of genetics that the farm first developed its own varieties of gladiolas. Through the years of trials, her efforts yielded several superior varieties for winter cut flower production in south Florida, and those are still in production today in Florida



Jennie Lee Zipperer

and elsewhere around the world.

Following up on the success of her gladiola efforts, Zipperer channeled her interest in genetics to cattle production. The Zipperer's purchased a ranch in Oklahoma, already stocked with black baldies. In order to introduce some heat tolerance and insect resistance into the herd, they began looking for some options. An ad for Beefmaster bulls caught their eye, so they decided to buy a truckload and try breeding them to their black baldie females.

According to Zipperer, the results were better than they ever imagined.

"When the vet came out the first time right after the first calves were born, he told us they looked like a bunch of goats," Zipperer recalls. "But when he came back a few months later he quickly changed his

mind, and told us we had some good-looking, marketable calves."

The Zipperers were pleased to see an immediate increase in their calves' weaning weights, with heifers increasing around 35 pounds and steers increasing around 50 pounds.

"We proved the Beefmasters with those impressive improvements in weaning weights," Zipperer says. "It is pretty major when you can put that much weight on the ground. It puts a lot of jingle in your pocket!"

That success made it a simple decision for her to start her own Beefmaster herd. It was also during that time that Beefmaster Breeders United was being formed. Zipperer credits two early pioneers in the association, Wallace Harrell and Joe Hendricks, in building the association from the ground up, encouraging

people to raise Beefmasters.

"It was a wonderful time of camaraderie," she remembers. "All of us just starting out would sit around with them before sales in the hotel and ask questions. We were there to learn and they were there to teach.

"A group of Beefmaster breeders got together to promote a breed. They led us and helped us plan field days and sales, and a breed association (BBU) was born."

Zipperer learned fast and worked hard to improve her own herd using sophisticated techniques such as artificial insemination, embryo transfer and careful selection. Electronic monitoring was used to individualize feed conversion on young bulls. She also introduced ear tagging to track cows sired by a particular bull, which would later become a requirement for purebred certification by the association. In addition to producing outstanding animals in her own herd, Zipperer was able to identify superior animals in other herds. She purchased and syndicated two bulls significant to the Beefmaster breed – Robert E. Lee from Barfield Beefmasters in Florida and King Cotton from Schutts Land and Cattle of Texas.

While she saw success with her own herd, Zipperer also saw the need for more promotion of the breed and became involved in the Southeastern Beefmaster Breeders Association (SEBBA). She served in many positions, and the year she was president the association was able to achieve over \$1.6 million at SEBBA sponsored auctions, a first for the

Beefmaster industry.

In addition, she served on the board of directors and as vice-president of the Central States Beefmaster Breeders Association. But perhaps most notably, at the national level, she served on numerous committees, the BBU Board of Directors, and in 1992 was elected the group's first female president. No small feat in an organization of thousands of cattlemen.

"It requires a lot of hard work being the President of BBU," she explains. "There is not a weekend that goes by that you aren't attending an event or a sale or a committee meeting. I admire the men that take that job on."

In 1998 Zipperer was forced to take a break from the cattle business, due to health issues. Fortunately for Zipperer and the Beefmaster breed, that "break" only lasted 14 years and in 2012 a healthy Zipperer made the decision to jump back in, purchasing the Southern Cattle Company Beefmaster herd in April 2012.

Obviously for Zipperer, the decision to jump back in with Beefmaster cattle was an easy one.

"I could have gone with any breed when I went back in," Zipperer says. "They are all down here. But the Beefmasters are the only ones who select on the 'Six Essentials' and I just think that is what the commercial producer needs."

"Beefmaster cows today are way ahead of when I quit," she continues. "When you go away and come back, continued on page 7

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Zipperer's 400 head of momma cows live in harmony with the birds that inhabit the family's bird sanctuary called Devil's Garden, just outside Fort Myers.

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you see things you didn't see before. I am amazed at what they have done with the cattle and I am proud of what they have accomplished."

Today, Zipperer's 400 head of momma cows live in harmony with the birds that inhabit the family's bird sanctuary called Devil's Garden, just outside Fort Myers.

"The cattle and birds are completely compatible," she explains. "The cows and birds and whatever else is out there, all get along just fine."

Currently Zipperer is spending a lot of time on the farm getting things organized and familiarizing herself with the cattle. She has also spent time travelling with her partner and son, Douglas, looking for bulls to enhance her breeding program.

"I've got to get settled first," she laughs. "It's like moving into a new house. I don't know where everything will go yet."

"Our goal is to get these cows bred to a bull that will produce a marketable calf," she explains. "But I am very fond of the maternal side of the pedigree. When I look at a bull, I want to know about that bull's momma. If a cow can produce a good bull calf consistently each year, that is a plus."

Zipperer's enthusiasm for her cattle and the Beefmaster breed continues to grow. And it seems she has picked back up right where she left off 14 years ago, reacquainting herself with old friends.

"The nicest thing about being back in the Beefmaster breed is the people," she says. "I have more friends in this breed than anywhere else."

"I am proud of this breed and what they have done with the cattle," she continues. "The breeders should be proud of themselves as well."

## RFD-TV to re-broadcast Beefmaster feature

**San Antonio, May 8, 2013** – On April 8, 2013 Beefmaster Breeders United (BBU) and RFD-TV's *The American Rancher* premiered an episode featuring the Beefmaster cattle breed and it received positive feedback by Beefmaster breeders, RFD-TV viewers and the general public. Due to the huge success of the episode's premiere on April 8, 2013 the two groups have decided to re-air the episode once again on Mon., May 27, 2013 at 8 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST). The Beefmaster feature will also be broadcasted on the Tues., May 28 episode of *The American Rancher* at 10 a.m. CST and on Sun., June 2 at 11 a.m. CST. BBU invites the public, cattle industry professionals, all BBU members, Junior Beefmaster Breeders Association (JBBA) members and potential Beefmaster breeders to learn more about the Beefmaster breed and how the breed is positively influencing the beef cattle industry. The episode is also available for viewing 24 hours a day online at the BBU website [www.Beefmasters.org](http://www.Beefmasters.org), BBU's Facebook page and BBU's YouTube channel.

"We had a great response from our breeders who expressed that the episode did a wonderful job portraying the breed and educating the public about high performing Beefmasters," said Jason Bates, BBU field service representative. "We are excited that the episode will be re-aired and even more potential breeders will be introduced to this outstanding breed."

The Beefmaster episode on *The American Rancher* explores the history of the breed and takes an in-depth look at the Six Essentials - weight, conformation, milk production, fertility, hardiness and disposition; that the Beefmaster breed was founded on over 60 years ago by Tom Lasater. The episode features purebred and commercial cattleman, as well as Hall of Fame pitcher and former BBU President Nolan Ryan, as they discuss why they are utilizing Beefmasters in their cattle operations. The show also examines the importance of the Beefmaster breed to the cattle industry as a whole and how Beefmaster cattle bring unique opportunities to cattlemen and women all over the world. Tune into the re-airing of this outstanding episode to learn from true blue cattlemen and how their ranches embrace the Beefmaster breed.

"The show had an outstanding response. The BBU office received several calls from all over the country inquiring about the Beefmaster breed the day after the show premiered on April 8 and our website also experienced increased traffic," said BBU Executive Vice President Dr. Tommy Perkins, Ph.D., PAS. "We hope to receive even more breeders and inquiries after the May 27 episode."

The Beefmaster feature sponsors include Bounds Swinging B Ranch, Collier Farms, Emmons Ranch, Lyssy Beefmasters, McManus Beefmasters, the Lasater Ranch and Cherry Glen Beefmasters. These ranch sponsors are also featured on the episode and can be contacted for Beefmaster genetics.

*The American Rancher*, hosted by Pam Minick, is entering its eighth year of broadcasting on RFD-TV. The series began in the fall of 2004 and brings audiences in touch with the people and places that make ranching an American lifestyle. *The American Rancher* is a half-hour television series that reaches a vast audience and premieres each Monday night at 8 p.m. CST and re-airs Tuesdays 10 a.m. CST and again on Sundays 11 a.m. CST. Contact your local cable or satellite provider for RFD-TV channel information.

For more information about Beefmaster Breeders United please contact the BBU office at 210-732-3132 or visit [www.beefmasters.org](http://www.beefmasters.org). Stay connected to BBU through Facebook, view our videos on YouTube, follow us on Twitter and receive our news updates through joining our mailing list.

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## Zipperer Beefmasters

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