

Stockman legend and innovator

Ronald Anthony Norris

Grazier

Born: August 7, 1916; Crafers

Died: February 27, 2005; Glenelg

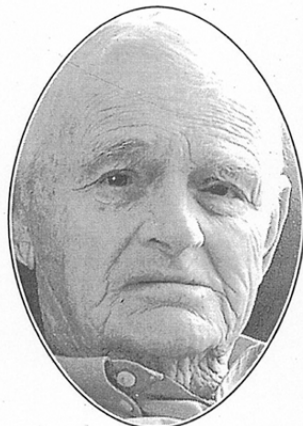
FROM humble beginnings as a drover, Ron Norris became a prominent South Australian station owner, grazier and short-horn breeder.

His impact on rural Australia has been recognised by the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, at Longreach, Queensland, where he features among other bush drovers, and by the National Library in Canberra, which holds an interview with Ron in which he recalls his life in the Outback. The eldest of 10 children, Ron grew up on the Crafers market garden of his parents, Harry and Mabel Norris, where from a young age he helped in the garden, and as a five-year-old began selling 'strawberries by the roadside.

While at primary school he also worked for a local butcher, delivering meat on a round covered by horseback. He told his employers that one day he would grow cattle which he would send to them so they could sell the meat. They were prophetic words. Ron left school at the age of 13 and worked on the family market garden until when he was 16, he wrote to "Cattle King" Sir Sidney Kidman asking for a job.

Sir Sidney replied that if Ron agreed to pay back the £5 (\$10) he would lend him for the train fare to Curdimurka in SA's Far North, and the cost of his swag, he could have a job at Stuart's Creek Station. Ron took the job, accepting a wage of 10 shillings (\$1) for a seven-day working week.

Aged 20, Ron became one of Sir Sidney's boss drovers. Several years later, Ron left the Kidmans to trap brumbies on Nilpinna



Station for sale as remounts for the British Army in India. He later returned to the Kidman empire, working first at the Glengyle station in Queensland and then at Anna Creek, before becoming a contract drover for the Kidmans, mainly driving cattle from Glengyle to Marree or Innamincka to Quilpie.

In the 1940s, Ron worked at Kenmore Park Station in the Musgrave Ranges, and then took up an offer of a job at adjoining Everard Park Station. In lieu of pay, Ron was allowed to run his own cattle. Purchasing 1200 breeders, he fulfilled his long-held dream of growing beef. In 1950, Ron purchased Kenmore Park and also began his most important partnership by becoming

engaged to Bette Bradey. They married in 1951. In 1954, Ron purchased Faversham, at Littlehampton, and established a beef shorthorn stud. The following year, he entered three females in the Royal Adelaide Show winning the junior, senior and grand champion sections. They were to be the first of 181 show championships Ron's cattle were to win.

The Faversham stud was designed to supply bulls to Kenmore Station and it was expanded with the purchase of Lake Alexandrina Station in 1962. Kenmore was sold in the late 1960s, and when Lake Alexandrina was sold in 1989, Ron bought Braidwood, at Mt Compass, to continue running his stud. This was sold in 1999.

Ron was an innovator in shorthorn breeding, importing cattle from Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s, and the US in the 1990s. He was one of the first in Australia to use artificial insemination and embryo transfer.

He had a heavy involvement with the beef industry in a variety of roles with the SA Stud Beef Breeders Association and the Beef Shorthorn state and federal councils. He was also a Mount Barker councillor for 15 years, a Rotarian, and inaugural president of Mount Barker Proburs.

He had a great love of sport and was runner-up in the Bay Sheffield in his youth. He played A-grade football in the Hills in his teens and on his return from the bush in the 1950s took up football again, captaining Nairne and Littlehampton to premierships. His playing days continued until he was 48. For 10 years he was a vice president of the Glenelg Football Club, the team he supported from its first game.

He is survived by his wife Bette, children Anne and Duncan and their families.

Duncan Norris