



By H. D. (Eddie) Bivens

07/06/2005

Remembering Jupiter

Submitted to History readers as written by original author. (Harold Dean "Eddie" Bivens, Rocking Hat Ranch, 20272 N. CR. 4560 Road, Keota, OK. 74941)

In the years from the mid 1950's through the 1970's, Jupiter, Florida and the surrounding area was a lot different than it is today. I'll concentrate mainly on the approximate 10-year period from the mid 50's till the mid 60's because that's the time frame that Jupiter was real close to being Paradise.

I was just a youngster then, born in 1944, but I began work as a Cracker Cowboy at about age 14. The reason I started out so old was that I wasn't born a Floridian, but migrated from Tennessee when my family moved to Jupiter. Most Cracker Cowboys were born into the line of work and started "Cow Hunting" along with all the other things that Cracker Cowboys were known for as soon as they could walk. Cowboying quickly became my chosen profession though, and I loved it then and still do.

Even though my Florida Cracker wife and I now live in Oklahoma, we still think fondly of Jupiter the way it used to be. I well remember in the early sixties when Florida had an outbreak of "Fever Ticks" that were deadly to cattle, causing great loss to the Florida Cowman's means of living. The Cattleman's Association and other authorities set up a Cattle Dipping Program in which every cow in South Florida had to be rounded up and drove to the nearest pen with a "Dipping Vat" and made to run through a chute and forced to swim through a concrete vat filled with some stuff that killed ticks.

I was on a Cowboy crew that was headquartered just outside of Jupiter off of Indiantown Road, across from what is now Jupiter Farms. Burt Reynolds's Dad had an Angus Ranch where Burt Reynolds's Horse Ranch is now located. I mention this to make it easier to know where the Ranch was located where our Cow Camp was. A Cowman by the name of Cecil Johnson ran about three hundred Mama Cows there, and I worked as a "day worker" for him at times along with my brother Jack Bivens, Perry "Buddy" Shook, "Buddy" Hand and a few others.

Back then, we would at times drive herds consisting of 150 to 300 head or more of cattle down Indiantown Road from out near the Pratt & Whitney area to the Ranch mentioned so we could dip them there, and then have to drive them back to their rightful owners spread. Such trips would sometimes take two or three days because many of the cattle were wild, and it was no easy task to find, gather, and hold them into a herd in order to drive them to the pens. I spent many a night in the saddle pulling guard duty over a bunch of half wild crazy cattle, then all the next day gathering more, introducing them into the bunch, and taking them a little further. And so far I've only covered the easy parts. Reflecting back, we must've gotten tired at times, but I only remember it as a whole lot of fun!

I often think of one roundup in particular at about the beginning of the "Dipping ordeal" that set the pattern of things to come so to speak. It was a ways south of Jupiter off of what was then Hood Road (maybe still is). We were sent to gather a man's cattle for dipping. The man's last name was Faulkner, and he had a son-in-law whose last name was Ross, for some reason he went by the nickname "Bitty" Ross. He had arms the size of corner fence posts, so I don't know



By H. D. (Eddie) Bivens

07/06/2005

why they called him "Bitty". He was a Dragline Operator by trade, but insisted on going Cow Hunting with us to gather his father-in-law's cattle. He came out of the barn with what looked like a Budweiser horse. He tied him to a post, and retreated back into the barn. I noticed his Saddle Girth was made out of a burlap feed sack, (fairly common at the time) but the strange thing about his was that every time the big old plow horse took a deep breath, I could see a string or two pop and break in the rotted material. "Bitty" came back out of the barn carrying a big wad of grass rope that looked over an inch in diameter, with a knot that must have weighed 10 pounds to hold a loop in the rope. I asked him, "what you gonna' do with that big old rope?" He looked at me like I was a little slow, and said, "Some of these old cows ain't never seen a man before, much less been penned, and likely we'll have to rope some of 'em!" I knew not to question him further, even when he stuffed the rope up under and around the cantle of his saddle and tied it fast and hard to his saddle horn. No way was He going to let one get away!

I think it's worthwhile to mention that most Cowboy's just take a "dally" or wrap the rope around the saddle horn a time or two, because sometimes you get in a bind and need to turn loose a bad cow or bull. Anyway, early in the gather, our dogs had a small group of these extremely bad half Brahma cattle bayed up in a small but thick cypress head, and as we waited for the dogs to work on them a little to get them under control, "Bitty" rode right up close uncoiling his anchor rope and a big old red cow weighing well over half a ton with mean looking horns quit the bunch and charged "Bitty's" horse intent on murder. The horse sidestepped and as the cow grazed it and almost knocked it down, "Bitty" calmly and matter of factly flung his rope underhand and the tangled up thing made a perfect figure eight over the cows horns, she kept going right past him at full speed, and when she came to the end of the rope, the rotten girth busted, and the saddle slid off over the horses neck and head at full speed.

"Bitty" was still in the saddle with his feet sticking straight out and beating the ground with his quirt hollering YEEHAWW, GIT GOIN' YOU –BLANKETY-BLANK! (I left out some of the colorful words in case children read this.) The saddle soon caught and hung between two palmetto roots, and the cow turned a flip and got up real mad at "Bitty" who was staggering to his feet. The cow charged him, and I figured it was all over for him, but he not only had arms as big as corner posts, he was quick too! He sidestepped just in time and grabbed the huge cow "Bulldogger" style as she tried to gore him and threw her to the ground. I threw him a rope to put on her and tied her to a tree before she could regroup for another attack. "Bitty" calmly dusted himself off, and said, "I got mine, how come you let yours get away?"

As I said, this set the pattern of things to come during the three or so years we were dipping for fever ticks, and this was Jupiter in those days.