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Beef industry set for changing times, forecasts lifelong cattleman

By Frank J. Buchman

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A lifelong cattleman involved in every phase of production at one time or another, Koons has recently made the transition from western Kansas feedlot owner-manager to Flint Hills cattle grazer-operator.

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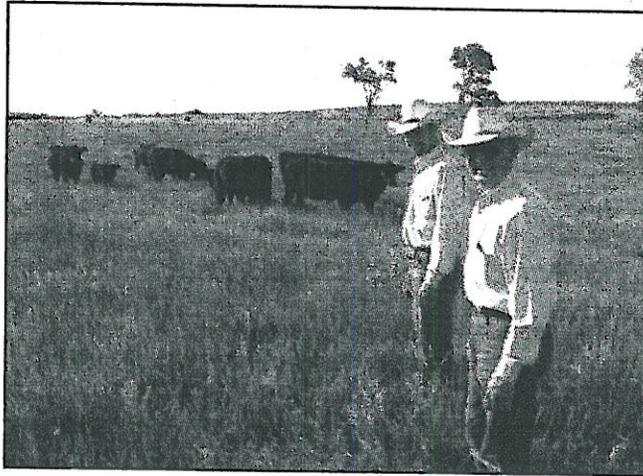
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Cautious in his analysis of those changes, Koons added, "I'm not here to say it is good or bad. We can only watch, because time will tell what happens."

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was cattle manager, through several diverse cattle endeavors, Pat Koons is probably best known as partnership-owner-manager of Kearny County Feeders, a 25,000-head custom lot at Lakin.

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While Koons was growing up, his dad was employed at several different operations including a stint at the Silkville Ranch, a Hereford herd near Williamsburg. "After high school, I enrolled at Kansas State University and worked in the purebred beef barn."

His boss was Miles McKee, purebred herdsman, and Koons was a member of the KSU Livestock Judging Team, coached by Don Good. "Those two men had a strong influence on me, and lots of young people, in the cattle business," credited Koons.

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During this time, Koons also began getting top training as a horseman. "We handled our own cattle on horseback, and also helped other ranchers over a wide area. I knew I was supposed to have my horse fed, saddled and ready to go at five o'clock or I'd be left," Koons said.

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peaks, valleys, challenges and transitions, such as those taking place now. "It's such a big business, so dynamic with big dollars. The split-second decisions one has to make and the excitement really made it an enjoyable career."

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Later, Koons married his current wife Sharon (Dechant), a western Kansas farm girl who was a special education teacher at Lakin and attended his church. "She is 17 years younger than I am, so that was the talk of the small town for awhile," he remembered.

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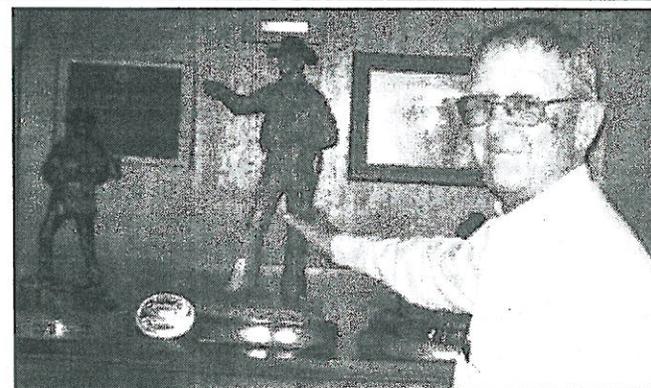
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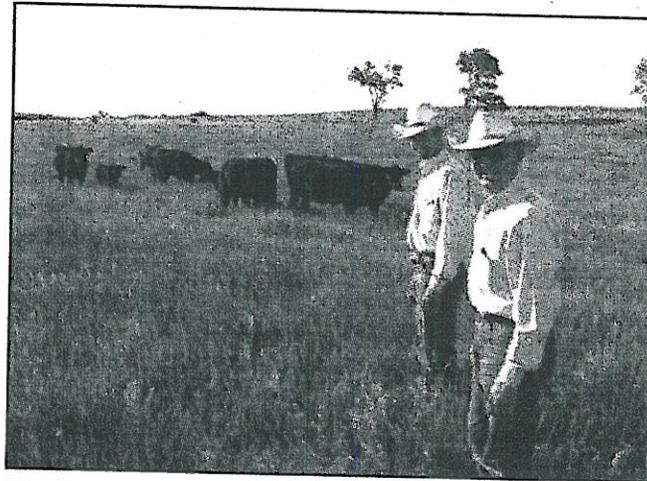
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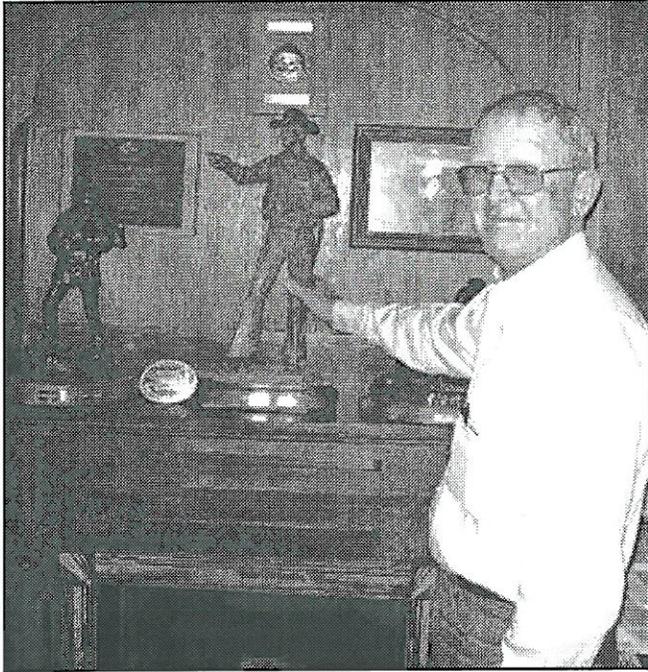
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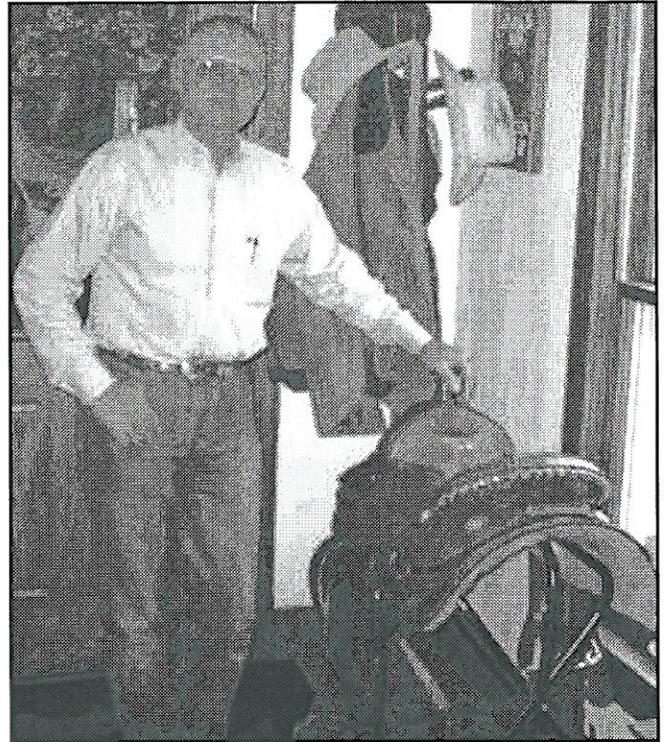
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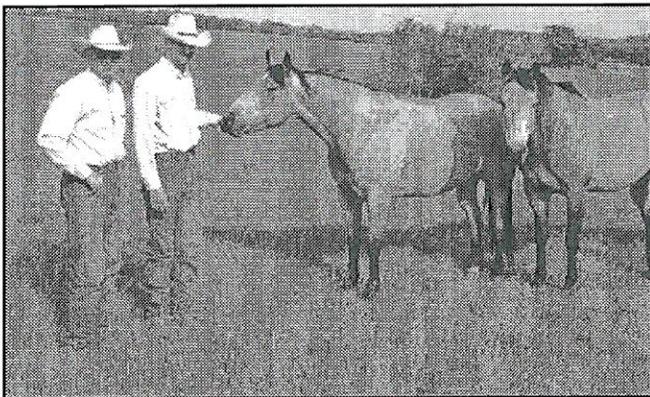
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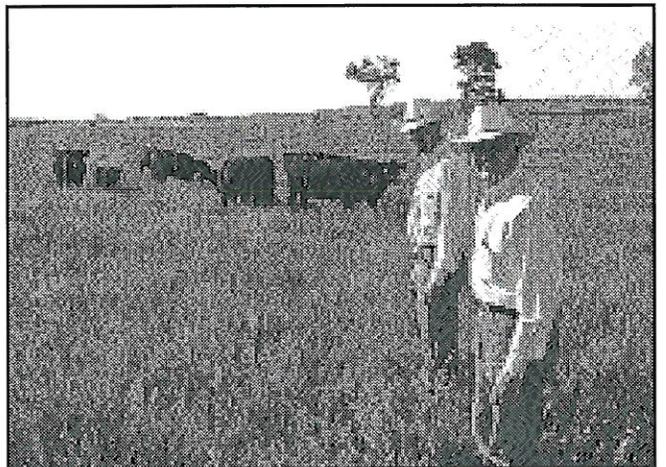
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His employees gave Pat Koons this handmade, appropriately engraved saddle when he recently retired as manager of Kearny County Feeders at Lakin. It hasn't been on a horse yet, but Koons has a handful of buckskin Quarter Horses where he'll put the saddle to use this spring. "The best horse I ever had was named Big John. I have some more that'll be just like him right out there in the pasture," Koons indicated.



Pat and Danny Koons are proud of the buckskin Quarter Horses they have on their ranch near Burdick. All of them came from Titus-Stout Quarter Horses at Cottonwood Falls and feature Zans Rawhide and Sun Otoe breeding. "Danny has been riding these horses at the feedlot all of their lives, and now they're being used here in the Flint Hills. My horse is called Little Dan, and that darker horse, Willie, has been shown by my daughter Betsy to win lots of awards," Koons noted.



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