



Brittany Pearce with her son Miles in 2013.

How Brittany from Texas Came to Telpara Hills

There are many times when I joke to myself saying, “How did you get yourself into this?!?” Now, I am a young mother living in remote Australia, a dual citizen and helping to create in my opinion one of the best Brangus studs in the world, Telpara Hills. It is a long way from where I started in life.

I grew up in a small town on the outskirts of glitzy Dallas, Texas. My parents owned a grocery store in one of Dallas’ roughest neighbourhoods, but I still loved going there with them and helping out wherever I could. My favourite job was helping the butcher put on the price stickers and I was paid in free candy. My parents did well and we had a huge home.

Everything changed after the store started to become a favourite target of armed robbers. My father was an imposing figure so they instead picked times when only my mother was managing the store. On the third time to be robbed at gunpoint my petite mother shot both of the men. She was hailed as a hero on the news, but the robberies had taken a huge toll on her and our family’s bank account. They sold the store and family life became very turbulent.

My form of rebellion was the opposite of most other teenagers. I excelled in my schoolwork and made a point to be extremely involved in extra-curricular activities. I was an officer in the dance team, the editor of the school yearbook and newspaper, president of the art club, and joined almost every academic club available. I also got a job at the local grocery store and worked any spare moment I had, paying my own way as much as I could.

After graduating at the top of my class from high school, I packed my tiny, old Mazda MX-5 convertible and headed off to Texas A&M University. It was HUGE! I instantly loved all the excitement of being surrounded by almost 50,000 other undergraduates. I made lots of friends, had a bit too much fun, and eventually decided on a whim that I wanted to study Horticulture.

It was in my third year that I met an over-the-top Australian exchange student named Stephen. We kept running into one another which was quite difficult at such a large university. Within only a few dates I knew that he was special. I told my sister and my roommate that I would probably marry him. They thought I was crazy for falling for someone so fast, but I have always been able to make my mind up quickly.

Stephen extended his studies at Texas A&M for another semester. We were having plenty of fun, but I could tell that he missed his family tremendously and yearned to return to his farm. To help Stephen, I contacted Camp Cooley Ranch whom I knew had some of the bulls which he had used in AI at his farm. Cheramie Viator returned my email and Stephen went to visit. He returned with big eyes and tales of an extraordinary cattle program and even better cattle.



Brittany on her first visit to Camp Cooley Ranch in 2003.

A few months later Cheramie invited me to visit Camp Cooley and join a tour of the ranch with a group of girls from Kansas State University. I was out of my depth. These girls had all grown up on farms and although I was interested, I had no idea what anyone was talking about. Amy Hughes, the daughter of Ken Hughes, master breeder of the Brinks herd was there. Referring to stud cattle breeding she made the comment, "You either just get it or you don't". The rest of the girls agreed, but I thought to myself, 'How can I know? I haven't even tried yet.'

Stephen then convinced me to go on a student exchange back to Australia. I found myself at the University of Queensland in Gatton, surrounded by wild Australian uni students. Their antics were far beyond anything I had ever seen in Texas, but I had a great time, made great friends, and even learned a little. After the semester was over Stephen and I set off in a road trip around Australia, eventually making our way back up to Telpara Hills in North Queensland. I loved Stephen's family, the farm and the cattle and the day before I left he proposed.

I returned to Texas and again graduated at the top of my class. Stephen's family all came over for our wedding and we took the opportunity to tour several Brangus herds including Camp Cooley Ranch, Center Ranch (both now dispersed) and Mound Creek. My head was spinning with all the numbers and pedigrees, but I was starting to see the difference in cattle and understand the passion that people felt for them.



Brittany and Stephen on their wedding day in July, 2005.

When we returned to Australia I began work as a lab technician with the DPI and spent my free time on the farm with Stephen, getting to know the cattle as well as this beautiful country. In order to fit in with the Pearce family you have to eat, sleep and breathe cattle. It is a part of who they are, and within a few months I happily did too. In the meantime we had begun to purchase embryo donor cows in Texas and make frequent trips between the two countries.

Life then took me on another adventure as I began work as a manager on a very large banana, avocado and coffee farm. I was in charge of 300 employees and thousands of tons of produce. Those years taught me a tremendous deal about farming, dealing with the demands of customers, supermarkets and governments, and even more about working with all types of people. I worked hard and in my time there I proudly helped to grow the business by at least three-fold and survived the aftermath of Cyclone Yasi.

Weekends and most of my free time were still spent at Telpara Hills, helping where I could. Every member of the family including myself loved cattle, so I embarked on making myself useful in other ways. I was the only Pearce who loved art (excluding the eldest son Greg) and knew a little about journalism.

Using google and trial and error, I taught myself photography, print design and how to build websites. It was fun. When the family decided to hold a sale at Beef 2009, I took a big gulp and took on the task of building a sale catalogue. Since then I have taken countless pictures, built dozens of advertisements, and created more catalogues and websites for our farm as well as others both in Australia and the US. I have even lectured a few times on the subject and work a few days a week from home doing marketing work for Telpara Hills and other businesses.

Stephen and I have travelled to many herds and cattle sales and displays in Australia and the USA. We talk about cattle constantly, always striving to improve and not afraid to do things differently. He values my opinion especially because even though I try and keep an open mind, I am not swayed easily by the opinions of others, especially salesmen. I know how to appreciate good cattle and just as importantly, spot the bad ones. Even though I was not raised with cattle, my ability to look at things from a different perspective has been a huge asset for the family.

Now I find myself on the greatest adventure of all, motherhood. In August 2012 Miles Pearce entered our world. All the clichés came true. It has been the most wonderful, frustrating, hard, fun, disgusting, loving time of mine and Stephen's lives, but we would not have it any other way. He already loves the farm, especially the tractors.

I often stop to gaze at my beautiful son and my handsome husband and make sure I take it all in. Although it is hard work, I feel very fortunate to be living this life in Australia and be part of Telpara Hills. It is a long way from my first home, but that is part of the fun. Who knows what the next adventure might take me?!?