



Mary Lou Kern gets used to feeding cattle in the winter.



Photos by Tim Keller

Mary Lou enjoys having her own semi in which to haul cattle and hay.

# Mary Lou Kern makes ranching a woman's work

By **TIM KELLER**  
*The Chronicle-News*

When Mary Lou Kern graduated from Raton High School in the early 1980s, she went off to New Mexico State University at Las Cruces to earn a pair of bachelor degrees - in agribusiness management and farm & ranch management. When she finished there in 1986, she parlayed an internship into a full-time career as a loan officer for the Farm Credit System, first in Albuquerque, then in Grand Junction, Colo. "It only took me one year to know that I didn't want to be a banker," she recalls. When her dad died in 1987, Mary Lou came home for good.

Her mother's and father's families had both come to Raton as immigrants in the early 1900s - hers from Italy, his from Austria - attracted by the coal mines. Her family ran the company stores at Brilliant and Sugarite. When those mines closed, they bought and ran Club Luna, a bar and

dance hall now occupied by Spur Lanes on the southern edge of Raton. His family saved enough money to buy a small farm outside Maxwell, where Mary Lou was raised.

"My mother tried to talk me out of taking over the ranch," Mary Lou said. "She saw how hard it is, how a lot of your success is more dependent on the elements than on how hard you work."

Her mother, Louise, now 83, wanted Mary Lou to go into computers. "But I've always preferred being outdoors," Mary Lou smiles.

Her dad, Charlie Kern, often told her, "You may not be as strong as a man, but you're smarter. You can use your brains instead of your back." She laughs when she adds, "That's why I have so much equipment!" Indeed, she reels off a long list that includes a bulldozer, backhoe, skidster, five tractors - mostly John Deeres, with "lots of hanging attach-



Mary Lou Kern at home outside Maxwell, N.M.

ments" - and "Leo," her beloved 1988 International semi tractor that she uses to haul her own cattle and hay.

"We do all our own maintenance and repairs," she says. "You have to - you can't stay in this business if you're paying people to do that. The best class I ever took was welding. It enables me to fix everything I break."

She runs 400 mother cows through the winter, adding 800-1,200 stocker yearlings across the summers. She farms 300 acres of alfalfa and oats. "I don't like the farming part of it, but I do it because my cows like to eat. We've put in a couple center-pivot irrigators the last couple of years. That saves us a lot of work and it's a more efficient means of water distribution than flooding a field."

Mary Lou owns her ranch northwest of Maxwell and summer pastures atop Bartlett and Johnson Mesas. She leases additional pastures east of Maxwell, west of Wagon Mound, outside Miami, and atop Fisher Mesa on the Colorado side. She trades labor - "We call it 'neighboring,'" she says - with fellow women

ranchers B.B. Cornay of Folsom and Nikki Hooser of Colmor, pushing each other's herds up the mesas on horseback each spring, then bringing them down in the fall.

She makes time to serve on the Maxwell School Board; in fact, she's been the board president for the past five years. She also serves on five other boards of directors in Colfax and Union counties. Five years ago she adopted a baby and now says her daughter Mia, 5, has changed her perspective on life.

"I can't control the weather or the markets. It's a very stressful business to be in. But since I've had Mia, I can come home from a rough day, walk in that door and get a smile and a hug, and all that stress just goes away."

She counts her blessings. They include a great full-time hand, Dago Chavez, good friends and good horses. A good dog and cold beer. "It doesn't get any better," she smiles.

## RATON POLICE BLOTTER

The Raton Police Department would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

### ARRESTED:

12-21-09

■ Steven Mayotte - Bench Warrant out of Springer Magistrate for

failure to appear

- Bobbie Gonzales - resisting/obstructing an officer
- Karl Duran - aggravated battery on a household member and false imprisonment
- Stephen J. Draper - battery and criminal damage to property

12-22-09

■ Jeanette Gonzales - DWI (2nd offense)

12-23-09

■ Jesus Perez - Bench Warrant out of Magistrate Court for Distribution of marijuana (1st offense) & Abuse of Child (2 counts) placed in dangerous situation

### INCIDENT

12-21-09

■ Xanadu A. Vigil - victim of burglary  
■ Vickie J. Lewis - victim of larceny

- Maria Requa - victim of criminal damage to property
- Doris Trujillo - victim of aggravated battery on a household member and false imprisonment
- Venus Martinez - victim of battery
- Kimberly J. Kite - victim of criminal damage to property

12-22-09

■ Frontier Construction - victim of larceny  
■ Monica Cordova - victim of criminal damage to property

12-23-09

■ Bealls Department Store - victim of larceny

### CITATIONS:

12-21-09

- Jeanette Gonzales - larceny
- Donna Bernal - speeding
- David Houser - speeding
- Amilla Vigil - stop light violation
- Kay Amanda Unger - speeding
- Mike Vialpando - speeding

12-22-09

■ Jeanette Gonzales - impeding

traffic

■ Joseph Romero - suspended/revoked license

12-23-09

■ Juan C. Acosta - dog at large

### ACCIDENTS:

12-21-09

■ Haley McCarty & Elizabeth Bennett - involved in an accident causing moderate damage to both vehicles  
■ Gilbert Montoya - struck a vehicle owned by Susanne Burke causing moderate damage

## NURSING HOME VISITED BY SANTA'S HELPERS

*All residents receive gifts*

On Friday, December 11, 2009, Santa's helper (volunteers) from The First National Bank of Trinidad branch at Walmart and many other volunteers contributed and distributed "fleece blankets" with the Trinidad State Nursing Home logo to all the residents at TSNH. The event was held at 2 PM, attended by residents, their family members, staff and management in the main dining room.

Nancy Vigil, Activities Director from TSNH coordinated the event with Roberta Noel, Branch Manager and Kim Harrington, Loan Officer from The First National Bank in Trinidad / Walmart and Mari Bumstead from ABC Biz.

The residents were not only elated to receive their fleece blankets, but thankful that local community businesses made their Christmas a little more special.

The TSNH Activities Department has several other key holiday events lined up for the residents to promote quality care, entertainment and a healthy lifestyle.

Trinidad State Nursing Home is a 119-bed skilled nursing facility, offering STAR CLUB / Adult Day Care Services, a secure memory unit, open to all eligible Colorado residents offering adult day care services, a secure "memory" unit, private rooms, a 15 acre park-like grounds and much more. For more information about our long term care services, our diversified programs and facility contact Tom Martinez, Jr. at (719) 846-9291.

from left to right, back row  
Kim Harrington, Loan Officer, Roberta Noel, Branch Manager at FNB Walmart branch, Mari Bumstead from ABC Biz.

Front row Flo Moore, President of TSNH Residents Council.

**Trinidad State Nursing Home**  
*Caring for our Community of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.*  
**719-846-9291**

What is the saying?  
When things are at their worst, people are at their best. Well that certainly could not be more true than with all my family and friends.

During my illness, your support with prayers, kind words, and helping hands have made this road much easier to travel. The many cards and phone calls brighten my days. The visits and food nourish my soul and body to recovery.

Words cannot convey my gratitude for all the generosity that you have shown to me during this trying time. Your kindness will not be forgotten and I am eternally grateful.

During this holiday season, I ask the Lord to bless and keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy. May you have a blessed and prosperous new year!

Sincerely,  
**Troy Velarde and family**

**Merry Christmas**

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## Christmas Greetings from....

- South Central Board of Cooperative Education (BOCES)
- Children First Child Care Resource and Referral
- Huerfano Country Department of Social Services
- Early Interventions Colorado
- Huerfano Country Youth Service
- Spanish Peak Outreach Clinic
- Las Animas Country Department of Human Services
- Las Anima / Huerfano District Health Department
- Spanish Peak Mental Health
- South Central Council of Governments
- Trinidad State Junior College
- Las County Sheriff Department
- Trinidad School District
- Aguilar Pre-School
- Hoehne School District
- South Easter District of Colorados Association for the Education of Young Children
- South Central Council of Government Early Learning Center
- Primero Puppy Land
- RMSEER Head Start
- Spanish Peaks Day care
- Kiddy Korner