

# OUT ON THE RANGE

## Orejana Outfit

*Arizona's historic O RO Ranch.  
Words & photos by Kathy McCraine.*

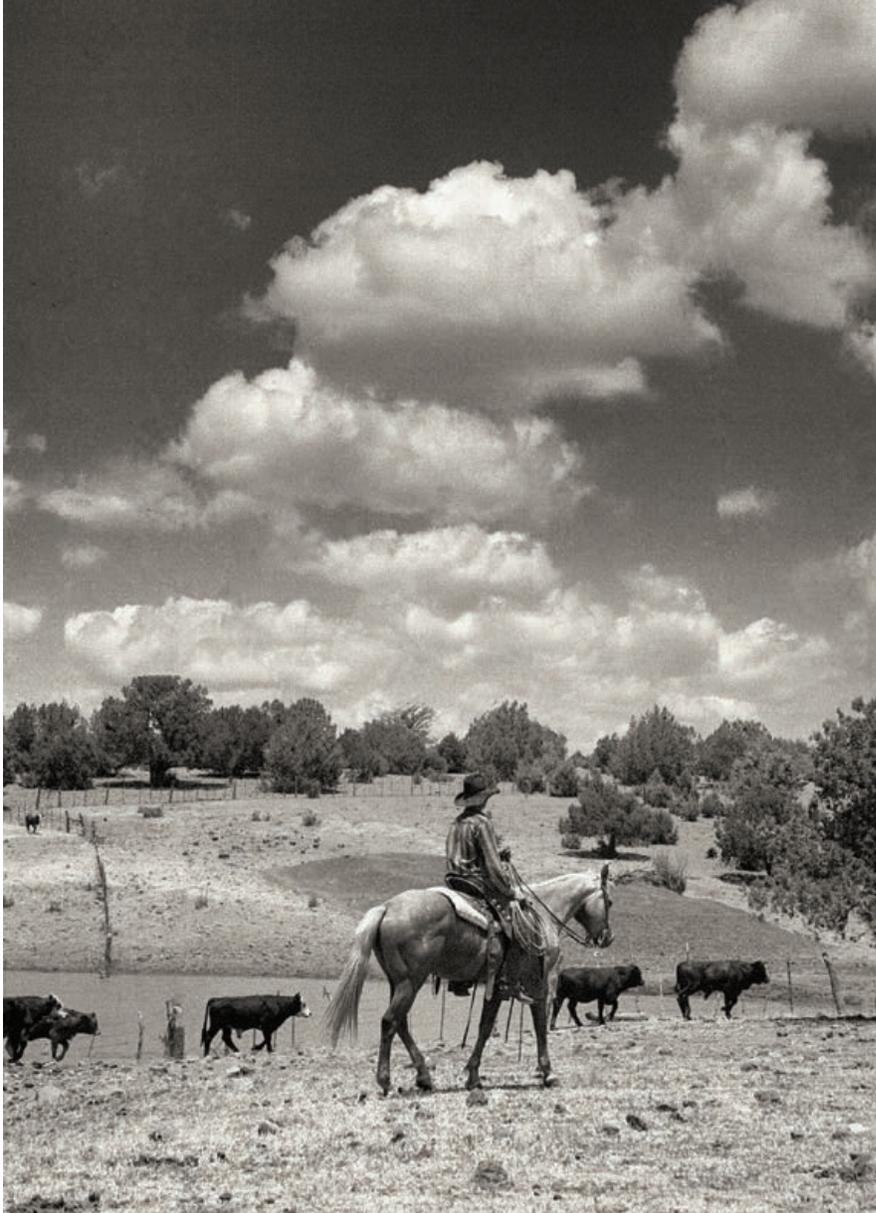
**T**o Arizona cowpunchers the Spanish word *orejana* refers to an ownerless, unbranded bovine old enough to quit its mother...in other words, a maverick. Somehow that word evokes images of the legendary O RO Ranch north of Prescott, Ariz. This rough and remote 257,000-acre ranch is as wild as the

elusive orejanas that brush up in its precipitous canyons, evading the rope and all semblance of modern civilization. Once a Spanish Land Grant, this outfit has a tangible mystique about it that everyone who has ever worked on or lived here feels.

As a neighbor on the adjoining 7 Up Ranch that my



*Cowboss Wes Foote leads a horse he just caught out of the remuda. The horse is stepping over the rope corral the cowboys use to hold the horses in a group when they are catching the day's mounts. September 2008.*



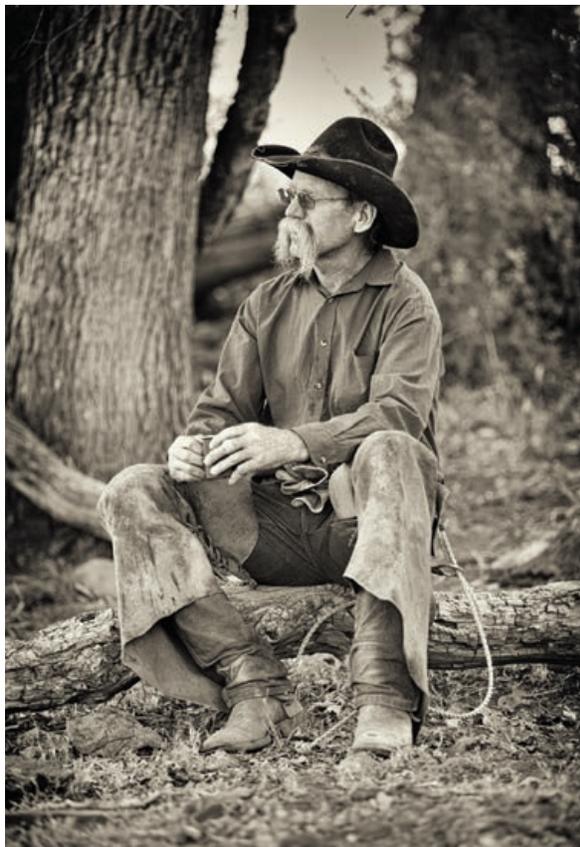
*Willie Moorhouse  
at Cabin Tank, June 1993.*

*This chuck box on the back of  
the “wagon,” which was  
actually a 1940s’ 6x6 Army  
truck, holds many of the  
wagon cook’s supplies and is  
his primary work space.  
West Split, March 2012.*





*Branding at Antelope Tank, spring 2007.*



*Texas cowboy Brother Daniel, May 2009.  
He has worked for all the big Texas outfits  
like 6666 and Pitchfork.*

husband, Swayze, and I own, I have had many opportunities over the years to photograph the working cowboys on this iconic outfit. I have visited big ranches all over the country, but the O RO Ranch is like nowhere I had ever been. It is as if Burro Creek Canyon, the jagged gorge that defines its southern border, has cut it off from the modern world and suspended it in an earlier time.

Because of the vastness of it and the lack of maintained roads, it has always been known as strictly a horseback outfit. Those who work here are truly the last of the big outfit cowboys, savvy to the ways of big wild country, to wily cattle gone feral for seldom laying eyes on humans, and half-broke horses that test the competence of a greenhorn gunsel.

It is also one of the last outfits to run a true roundup wagon for the spring and fall works out of necessity, not for show. The mule-drawn chuck wagon from earlier days was replaced in 1945

by a 1940s' six-by-six Army truck fitted out with a chuck box, but other than that little has changed in 100 years.

Since 1973, the O RO Ranch has been owned by the JJJ Corporation, originally headed by the late John N. Irwin II. Today his son, John, and daughter, Jane Droppa, and their families are carrying on a tradition begun in the 19th century. Though many things have become more modernized, the entire family is committed to preserving the ranch's integrity and continuing to operate it as a working ranch. ■

*Kathy McCraine is a rancher, writer, and photographer from Prescott, Ariz. These images are excerpted from her new book, "Orejana Outfit: Arizona's Historic O RO Ranch 1993-2013." This beautiful 128-page, coffee-table book is available for \$34.95 at [www.kathymcraine.com](http://www.kathymcraine.com).*

*Late in the evening at the Francis Creek corrals, Linc Bundy looks through the horses already caught out of the remuda for the morning circle.*

