

THE ADAMS FAMILY

A History of Success in Law and Ranching

By Mike Boslet

LASTING LEGACIES



Alto Lee Adams Sr.'s (LLB '21) legacy would have held a place in University of Florida history had he toiled solely in his chosen career of law. But the courtroom, where Adams rose to become the first UF alumnus to serve on the Florida Supreme Court, was but one place that recorded Adams' influence on historic events.

From the Alto Lee Adams Sr. U.S. Courthouse in Fort Pierce, the late jurist's hometown, it's a 16-mile drive west on Orange Avenue to arrive at the headwaters of Adams Ranch. Here begins a 50,000-acre spread that's home to Adams' legacy in the cattle industry, including three successive generations who earned degrees at UF en route to returning to the ranch.

Adams didn't intend to be a rancher, but his purchase of 15,000 acres in St. Lucie County in 1937 set in motion his only son's aspirations. **Alto Lee "Bud" Adams Jr.** (BSBA '48) took over the ranch after college and turned it into one of the largest cattle operations in the country.

Along the way, Bud developed a new breed of cattle that showed greater durability to heat and insects. Bud's Braford breed, a cross of Brahman and Hereford cows, changed the cattle industry throughout the South. Today, the ranch maintains approximately 16,000 cows, calves, heifers and bulls and includes citrus groves on acreage that extends from south to central Florida.

"I knew everything I needed to know about ranching by the ninth grade," says Bud, 89, explaining why he studied economics, not agriculture, at UF. Bud still works on the ranch, where he and his wife of 66 years, "Dot," live with their three married sons, 14 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

"We all get along really, really well," middle son **Mike Adams** (BSA '77), president of Adams Ranch, says of the extended family. Eight family members work on the ranch, including **Mike** and **Rachael Adams** (BAE '78) eldest child, **Zach** (BSA '04).

Mike and Zach say that when the time came for them to think about college, only one school stood out. "There isn't any place you can go for agriculture information that's better than UF," Mike says.

"When I was growing up, that was the place to go for ag," adds Zach, 33, a foreman who manages cattle on 15,000 acres in Osceola County.

Since graduating from UF, father and son have continued to access their alma mater's agriculture education resources. Zach attends UF's annual Florida Beef Cattle Short Course in Gainesville while Mike stays involved with the UF/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce.

(L to R) Stewart Adams, Rob Adams, Zachary Adams, Mike Adams, LeeAnn Adams, John Adams, Lee Adams, Alto "Bud" Adams.

UF honored Alto Lee Adams Sr. as a Designated Distinguished Alumnus in 1974, and in 2013, Gov. Rick Scott added his name to the list of Great Floridians.

Mike, 60, recalls seeing his grandfather (Adams Sr.) sit on the Supreme Court while the family patriarch served a one-year appointment in the late '60s. Justice Adams originally served from 1940-51, with the final two years as chief judge. He died in 1989 at age 89.

A few years ago, Bud Adams published "The Old Florida," a paperback book of his photographs and memories of ranching. The ranch's success, he wrote in the book, "is not due to one individual, but comes from four generations of a family working toward one common goal, a cattle ranch. The secret is constancy of purpose." ♦

TELL US YOUR STORY

Does your family boast many generations of Gators? If so, we'd love to hear from you. Email floridagator@ufalumni.ufl.edu and tell us who of your relatives attended and what the UF tradition means to your family.