

THE STOCKTON TAKES ON BIG SKY COUNTRY.

Can The New Roper Boot Live Up to Life on a Real, Working Ranch in Montana?

(Penned by Ryan Newfell)

I've seen wide-open spaces before. I grew up in Texas, just outside of Austin. When I was younger, I would pass many open fields and ranches each morning on my way to school. Outside of the cities, everything is a flat, open space in Texas. Years later, when I moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to attend Harvard, everything felt cramped and claustrophobic. New England is tightly packed and urbanized compared to what I had called home. When I decided to take a trip to Montana to see Tecovas' newest line, the [Stockton Roper Boot](#), in action, I was nervous and excited – although I had designed these boots for the most demanding real-world conditions, would they hold up on a working ranch? And how had our first pair ever created, provided as a test to the rancher I was about to visit, performed?



Paul Hendricks, Founder and CEO of Tecovas.

As I stepped off the plane in Bozeman, I realized this state has a different kind of openness. Green pastures extend throughout the Gallatin Valley for tens of miles until they hit the confluence of multiple mountain chains – Bozeman is, quite literally, surrounded. Still, it doesn't feel cramped and

claustrophobic like I experienced in my college years. I was excited to get out of the valley and into the openness that lends Montana its nickname – the “Big Sky Country.”

After renting a car, I began the three-hour trip to Whitewater, where I would finally meet Lee Douglas and his family to spend a day on the ranch. As I left Bozeman, I realized how isolated one could feel in the wilderness. As I passed mileposts on the highway, each community I encountered was further from the last. Finally, the mileposts ceased altogether. I still had ninety minutes to go until my destination.

I arrived at the Douglas Ranch as the sun was setting. The private road leading to the ranch led me about eight miles until I saw a lamp post in the distance. I gulped. Lee had now owned his [Stockton Boots](#) for over a year – initially, we offered our boots with only a leather sole, but due to emails from customers like Lee, we developed a line of [Vibram rubber-soled boots](#) for the most rugged work. Had our boots held up to the day-to-day lifestyle of a working ranch in northern Montana? And how would my personal pair of [Earl Roper Boots](#), our original leather-soled western boot, do?

Lee was waiting on the porch. He must have seen my car at least five miles down the road. We shook hands, and I presented him with a gift for taking me in for the night – a Bison leather belt. He insisted I didn’t need to give him a thing and that I may want it back after he works me hard in the morning. He walked me inside and through the kitchen, where I met his wife Beverly, their four-year-old son Ben, and their 18-month-old daughter Alisha. The family had just finished dinner, but they offered me something to eat after my long journey. After I ate, Lee said we should head to bed since we would be getting up around 4:30 in the morning.



Lee Douglas, Beverly Douglas, Ben Douglas, and Alisha Douglas on their property, Douglas Ranch.

I awoke at 3:30 am, unable to sleep due to the excitement – and nervousness – of the upcoming day. At 4:30, I met Lee in the kitchen, where we quietly ate our cereal since the rest of the family was still asleep. Even in the summer, the mornings are cool, so we donned our coats and headed to the barn where we would be saddling up for my first cattle drive. I finally gained the courage to ask Lee about his boots – had they held up well?



Lee's loyal dog, Benji, awaits orders as the sun rises in the background over Douglas Ranch.

"100%," he said. He told me that not only had they held up to the brutal winters and sweltering summer but had become more comfortable with age, conforming to his feet. Lee explained that these quickly became his daily boot, wearing them for every task on the ranch. "I love the way they look too, but it's function over form for me," Lee explained.



Lee Douglas wearing his [Stockton Boots](#).

As the sun was peeking over the mountains, Lee and I headed to a far, enclosed pasture where he held his cattle. We'd be moving them out an open field over a ridge, on the far side of his property, where they would graze for the day. Upon arrival at the pasture, Lee took the lead. He led the way, going a gingerly pace since it had been years since I spent time on a horse. Donned with my [Earl Boots](#), I felt like a true cowboy. The cattle knew the drill and moved in one large group. I would love to claim I helped, but I simply stood as a witness, watching the remarkable fluidity of the cattle's movement.

We headed back towards the house in the afternoon as I had a long car trip to the airport and a flight to catch back to Austin. On the drive, I reflected on my journey from selling boots from the trunk of my 4Runner to the successful business I have today. I'm thrilled to see that [The Stockton](#) held up to the rigors of a working ranch.

My goal for Tecovas has remained unchanged. I want to provide boots to everyday people with twice the quality of similarly priced boots at half their cost. I also want to provide unparalleled quality by working directly with our [leather artisans in Leon, Mexico](#). Now I can also confidently say that our [ranch boots](#) will hold up to daily wear-and-tear serving everyday people on ranches and farms all over the country.



Beverly Douglas wearing [The Jamie Cowgirl Boots](#) next to Lee, wearing his [Stockton Roper Boots](#).