

# November, 2001

*I usually try to keep the newsletter brief, but this time there were several additions that I couldn't abbreviate. So put on your specs and get comfy*

## .... From the President's Corner

I was very disappointed that the Conservation Easement proposal did not pass. A great majority of those present at the meeting really wanted it to happen. I believe the early cut off date and the lack of votes was the problem. It will be on the agenda for next year's annual meeting.

The new bridge is in and most welcome!!

Bill Hoolan reported that the new gate is still working in top form. He checked the counter and approximately 2400 folks went through the gate since it was installed.

There was quite a bit of construction happening on the Ranch during this past Summer.

I wish you all a happy and prosperous Winter.

Jeanne Loughrey

### **Hardy's On-The-Scene Report:**

*Weather:* The weather has been so unpredictable over the past year – a snow storm in June?! During the summer months temperatures did not run as high as last year; although we still had many windy days that continued to keep things pretty dry. Also, since last winter was so mild, the lack of water really shortened the growing season. For the last month or so temperatures have been dropping. Nights are in the 20's (one night it was 10!) and days are in the 30 to 40 degree range. Most of the days are beautiful and clear, but COLD. A couple of exceptions occurred in early October when we awoke to a snow storm – you just never know!

*Wildlife:* We seem to have an abundance of deer this year, but still not many antelope. Our fox family is still with us. In fact one of their youngsters came close to the house and was watching our dogs playing in the yard. Good thing there was a fence!

Our birdfeeders were activated again late in the spring. We still managed to attract some Pine Siskin and Mountain Chickadees. And late in the summer a Hairy Woodpecker found his way back to us.

Wildlife is now starting to migrate – we hear Canada Geese flying overhead. A few swans have stopped over for a rest in the ponds and a few elk have passed close to the house.

*Local:* The expansion of U.S. Hwy 287 between Cameron and Ennis was finally completed. Our \$3 Bridge replacement (Sappington Bridge) was moved through Ennis and down our way in July. In mid-July the removal of the old bridge and the construction of the new bridge began. That's the good news. The bad news was you could no longer use that portion of the road until mid October. Our normal 5 miles to our mailbox on Hwy 287 suddenly became 14½ miles by using the Horn Creek road off of Hwy 87. Jack and I took many pictures during the different stages of construction and hopefully we will be able to share them with everyone at the next Annual Homeowner's meeting.

Things were busy on the Ranch this summer. We not only had cattle all summer, but 4 or 5 new homes were under construction. It appears the construction is about complete and the cattle were finally removed October 31<sup>st</sup>. So things are quiet again

What a pleasure to have a new electronic gate in operation at the main entrance to the Ranch. We're sure it will minimize any conflicts and frustrations that were encountered in the past.

Jack has had two separate cataract surgeries this summer and came through it with no complications. He has been doing very well since his quadruple bypass but still has some physical limitations.

### **Cattle Grazing Update by Pat Toalson**

During the property owner's meeting this past summer it was decided to create a committee to work in conjunction with board director, Ray Strickland, to assist in addressing property owner's concerns about the cattle grazing program on the ranch. The cattle grazing committee members are: Pat Toalson (chairman), Ray Strickland, Jean Hardy, Mark Schnittger and Mike Wells.

At this year's owner's meeting, Ray had invited representatives from Sitz Angus Ranch, our current grazier, and the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group to speak to us on a project called the Madison Valley Collaborative Land Stewardship Program. The first 2 tasks of the cattle committee this summer were to **1)** Complete the development of a grazing lease agreement with Bob Sitz of Sitz Angus and **2)** Explore the possible opportunities afforded to the ranch by working with the MV Ranchlands group through the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program.

Various members of the grazing committee met several times this summer on the ranch to discuss current issues voiced to us by ranch property owners. Our intention is to be responsive to the ideas, concerns and issues raised by property owners on how to improve the use of our ranch, with cattle grazing being but one rangeland management tool at our direction. It was felt by the committee (and with the support of the board of directors) that entering into a 5 year grazing lease with Bob Sitz of Sitz Angus would be in the best interest of the ranch. We came to this decision for several reasons, first Bob is willing to work with us and make substantial investments into our ranch to develop the watering system and other potential items if he has commitments from us to work with him for a time period greater than a single year. As a businessman/rancher, he can't afford to make these commitments if he felt like we were going to switch graziers the following year and he could not recoup his investment of time and materials. Secondly, in this arrangement, Bob Sitz will be our only grazier thereby giving us more control over whose cattle are on the ranch and when and also insuring that we only have cow/calf pairs grazing. This lease still provides all of the control we need for the ranch board to oversee the grazing arrangement and make adjustments to the lease on an annual review basis. If it is determined that continuing the lease is not in the best interest of the ranch in subsequent years, the lease can be altered or terminated by the board. Already this summer with the assistance of Bob Sitz and several ranch members we were able to address several areas of concern. We worked on improving the watering tank system already in existence by moving some stock tanks to areas away from the roads to lessen the congregation of cattle on the roadways. We have increased the number of stock water tanks on the ranch and will do more next year in order to use a rotation system of tank use to keep cattle moving around and reduce cattle congregation in certain areas. A new underground water pump was installed on the well in the south pasture this summer by Bob Sitz (at his expense) in order to improve water distribution on this end of the ranch. We are exploring ways to open up other wells or improving the water access into the River Pasture for continued usage in the last few weeks of the grazing season in the future. We also (via Bill Hoolan's assistance) were able to address a couple of areas where cattle had begun to cause bank erosion along the ranch roadways.

The second task for the summer was to explore working with the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program (CLSP). Ray Strickland and I met with members from the group a couple of times during the summer to discuss their program and our thoughts on goals for developing a long term management plan for the ranch. This management plan would include not only cattle

grazing activities but also soil conservation/rangeland improvements, wildlife management and habitat improvement, fisheries management and forest management. Our ranch board of directors has agreed to work with the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program and at the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program's August board meeting they voted to work with Madison River Ranch to enhance our ranch. The Collaborative Land Stewardship Program is made up of members from many organizations including area ranchers, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Forest Service, Montana Dept of Fish Wildlife and Parks, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nature Conservancy and many others. By working with the CLSP we still maintain all of our control for what occurs on the ranch but have at our disposal the expertise of these various groups. This can be very valuable to us since as a group we are not experienced in cattle and rangeland management. This group's focus is on responsible stewardship of the land and preservation of it's historic uses by all species. They also bring to us access to numerous sources of funding available as grants or matching funds which we can use to improve the quality of our ranch for years to come.

So what does this partnership bring to us? So far this summer and fall several board members from the CLSP have visited the ranch and begun the process of doing a ranch inventory. The purpose of this inventory is several fold. One area that needs to be assessed is the quality and quantity of the ranch's forage base for both cattle and wildlife. Secondly, assessing the carrying capacity of our ranch for grazing and determine a proper number of AUMs (animal units per month) that should be grazed in the future to provide good forage distribution but prevent overgrazing. This is important because many of us want to insure that adequate forage remains for elk and other wildlife during the annual migration season. Third, understanding cattle movement patterns and preferred grazing areas so that we can develop a better grazing rotation pattern. Fourth, mapping out a water distribution system which allows us to keep cattle moving and provide adequate water for cattle and wildlife species. And fifth, exploring needs for improving the fencing around and within our ranch and outlining a plan to accomplish the fencing improvements.

As part of our early discussions with CLSP directors and representatives of the NRCS and Forest Service here are a few items we may want to consider as a ranch organization that they have begun to identify:

- Installing new perimeter fencing around the ranch (our current fence is over 100 years old in some sections!). Ray Strickland has already begun to line up a fence contractor for us to work with on the sections most in need of repair.
- Using high tensile let down fences which provide containment of cattle but allow improved movement of large game species (elk, moose) during migration. The CLSP are willing to work with us to accomplish our fencing needs and will be able to direct us to possible grant funding through various organizations which we can obtain to cover a portion or all of the costs associated with fencing improvements.
- Exploration of additional cross fencing within the ranch to create more pastures. This would allow us to create a better grazing rotation system allowing for keeping cattle in certain areas for shorter time periods then moving them to new pastures and placing some pastures into a year of rest from grazing. This would also allow us to publish a grazing schedule for each pasture for the next several years and thereby give property owners an idea of when cattle may be grazing their individual property and schedule visits accordingly.
- Aspen regeneration programs to enhance the health and growth of various Aspen stands on the ranch.
- Riparian enhancements within the common area for wildlife habitat improvement.

There are so many areas to explore that space is not available here to discuss them. Over the

next several years we will have the chance to work on many exciting projects if as a group of owners we wish to participate. I truly believe that by working with the CLSP we can make the Madison River Ranch the *premier* ranch in the Madison Valley. In conjunction with next summer's property owner's meeting, I will work with the Collaborative Land Stewardship Program to arrange some possible field trips for those interested to look at other rangeland and habitat improvement projects they have created. For instance, for those interested in Aspen regeneration, Ron Schott with the Forest Service would be happy to take us on a trip over to Antelope Basin to look at the Aspen regeneration work they have done in the past few years there and how we could do similar projects on the ranch.

In closing let me say, the cattle grazing committee's goal is to make sure everyone feels that their concerns are heard and appropriately addressed with the needs of the entire ranch owner's desires in mind. In that regard, if you feel that you have an idea for improving the ranch or a concern you want someone to listen to on these matters, please feel free to contact one of our board directors to discuss them or contact myself via email or phone ([flyroddr@bellsouth.net](mailto:flyroddr@bellsouth.net) or 205-980-9250). I'll be glad to discuss ideas with you and see if we can work out common solutions.

## Ranch History, by Bill Hoolan

Our Madison River Ranch sits on one of the crossroads of the early West. By the time Jim Bridger guided Government Surveyors over Reynold's Pass in the early 1860's, using what was then called the Blackfoot or Madison Trail, many exciting times and events have passed. This trail is one of our ranch roads, from Lot #1 at the main gate through the Ranch to Lot #98 at the Hardy's.

Carbon dated fire rings show evidence of early travelers who came through this area 12,000 years ago. About 250 years ago, the first large scale settlers began arriving – the Bannock Indians.

In 1825, the first of the new wave of Mountain Men arrived in search of beavers. Soon these trappers were crossing our Ranch, going to and from the famous rendezvous held north and south of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The likes of Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Joe Meeks, Bill Sublette, Osborne Russell, and other Mountain Men crossed our Ranch several times, some of them even wrote about camping here.

Osborne Russell was the most descriptive about our ranch and the surrounding area. He tells of much fighting between the Blackfoot Indians and the trappers. I've been able, using his writings, to find some of the exact battle sites. If any of you are interested in seeing these, I'll be happy to show you.

After the price of beaver crashed about 1840, the valley became quiet again, except for the occasional fights between the local Bannock Indians, who called this valley theirs and the Blackfoot Indians, who called everywhere theirs.

The Bannocks were a peaceful tribe, numbering at maximum 1500. Sacajawea was related to this group of Indians. They spent their summers and falls hunting and fishing with wooden traps in the Madison River, crossing over Reynolds Pass to the Pocatello area for the winter. Sandra and I have found more than 100 teepee rings on the banks of the river.

Things were apparently quiet then from the last trapper in the 1840's to the discovery of gold in Bannock and Virginia City in the early 1860's. The only information I have found was about a gold prospector who traveled up and down the valley by himself from 1840 until his death around 1855. The Bannocks told early white settlers that the prospector knew of the gold in the now-famous Browns Gulch of Virginia City, but preferred to work a small mine a few miles south of our ranch, half way up Horn Creek because it was safer around the friendly Bannocks. He died at his mine and was buried by the Indians. Many years later the Indians showed his grave

to one of the first ranchers in the valley. After the gold strike in Virginia City in the 1860's, our valley and everything in it was about to see great change.

The Madison Valley had several large horse ranches that grazed the entire valley. The roundups were held each year in the fall, starting at present day Ennis Lake, driving the horses south to our ranch area. There were as many as 5000 horses rounded up at one time. Must have been a wild time! The U.S. Cavalry would always be there to get the first pick, ahead of all the other buyers. Madison Valley horses were reputed to be the toughest in the world.

After the horses, the cattle came, but things did not go well in the beginning. Grizzly and black bears, wolves and lions made short work of many of them and things got more exciting about this time. When Idaho sheep herders started moving into the valley, there were hard feelings all the way around. I read one report of ranchers raising coyotes to keep the sheep numbers down and no ranch hand was to shoot any coyote in the valley.

It was about this time, the last part of the 1800's and early 1900's when homesteaders started settling on our ranch and surrounding areas. I've been told that 2 brothers and one mule showed up in 1911 and plowed 5 acres around lot #123. It must have been a good year, as the brothers got 100 bushels of oats per acre. They wrote letters home to Missouri of their success, and the stampede was on. There were soon so many settlers that this area was referred to as Missouri Flats. It grew to 70 homesteads. This era lasted 35 years but, for many reasons, these homesteaders failed and moved on. Their 160 acre homesteads were consolidated into larger cattle ranches, mostly used for summer grazing. By 1944 our ranch boundaries were as we see them today and stayed that way until the formation of Madison River Ranch in 1989.

I've been around the West , like many of you, and I think you will agree there's no place like our ranch!

#### **For Sale:**

I heard from Brett Vaughn that his lots, 54a and 54b, are for sale. They're approximately 10 acres each, and are priced at \$22,900 each. His realtor is Keith Goodman of Headwaters Realty, 406-684-5686.

Also, lot #132, belonging to Erin Donovan is for sale.

**\*\*Don't forget, if you have any real estate or non-real-estate items for sale that might be of interest to other ranch owners, send info to me and I'll include it.**

**Neighbor News:** Dave and I were at our property a couple of times this summer, working away, as usual. Now that we've built the Fanciest Storage Shed in Montana, the current project is The Million Dollar Outhouse. The last time we were there in early October, we got in on one of the early snowstorms Jeanne mentioned. We were lucky to get our 5<sup>th</sup> wheel out before it started sticking! We also were a little nervous about the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel fitting under the clearance of the new bridge, but luckily it worked.

Don't forget to send me any family news or anything else you'd like to share with your ranch neighbors.

## **Ranch Recipes:**

*This is from the Westport Room in Kansas City, my hometown.*

Recipe from Martha Crawley

### **Cow Town Salad**

Dressing:

1 clove garlic, crushed

1 c. mayonnaise  
2 T. Parmesan cheese  
1 T. lemon juice  
salt and pepper  
Thin with cream

Turn dressing onto bowl of one head each crisp romaine and head lettuce broken into bite size. Toss gently. Sprinkle ½ head grated cauliflower over greens. Top with about 1 cup toasted bread crumbs or croutons.

**Thought for the day:** “One out of every four people in this country is mentally imbalanced. Think of your three closest friends, and if they seem okay, then you’re the one.” Ann Landers

As usual, MANY thanks to Jeanne and Jack Hardy for their careful record-keeping, and for being our eyes and ears on the Ranch. I know their “Update” is what everyone looks forward to reading. Also, thanks to Bill Hoolan for the enlightening and very interesting history of our area. I hope this will be a regular feature, as Bill assures me he has lots more where that came from! Thanks too, to Pat Toalson for his clear and complete report on Cattle Grazing at our Ranch. I know this is an issue important to all of us who spend time there, and we all appreciate being kept so well informed. I will get the next newsletter out toward the end of February. There! Now that I have made that commitment, I’ll have to keep it, and we won’t have such a LONG spell between newsletters! So if you want anything included, notify me by Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>.

Please send any address, phone number, or lot ownership changes to Dave Crawley (contact information below).

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