

May, 2009

Edited by Martha Crawley

Goodbye, Good Friend

Jack Hardy, born August 30, 1923, passed away on October 26, 2008. His health had been failing for several years, but those of us who have been around the ranch awhile remember when we couldn't keep things going without Jack. He and his sister, Jeanne, lived on the ranch year-round, and kept us posted on what went on in the winter when most of us couldn't be there. Both Jack and Jeanne worked tirelessly for the ranch for years, doing whatever needed to be done. Jack is the one who used his woodworking skills to make our attractive street signs when we decided we were busy enough to need them. Not only did he make them, but he put them all up. Whenever a volunteer was needed, Jack was first in line. He left us a legacy of service and wit that is an example for all of us. Jack loved the ranch and the people who were his neighbors and friends there. He was cared for devotedly by his sister Jeanne, and I know I speak for all in offering her our sincere condolences. Her loss is a loss for us all.

From the President's Corner

by Bill Hoolan

Greetings from Montana,

Spring finally came to the ranch. It was not much of a winter, by mid March the county road was already half dry, but then it happened, Mother Nature showed us she was not through yet. In April it snowed almost every day for 3 weeks and the wind blew 20 – 30 miles per hour at times. Folks, we had drifts over 20 ft high in places. Here it is mid May and finally our ranch roads are open.

As with every year, the elk migrate in the fall across the ranch, down the valley. This time of year they are returning to the mountains in groups of 50 or 100. Driving back from Bozeman last evening we could see elk on both sides of the road slowly moving up the valley for 20 miles, a sight to see! You stay on your toes, driving a car through that gauntlet. It seems each year as the large groups cross our ranch, more and more stay. We have seen this now, starting about 5 years ago when only 2 elk stayed and had their calves, then last year about 10 stayed, and so far this year I have counted about 10 hiding out in our treed draws. They go from a very sociable herd animal to being all alone when you see them. It will be fun to see how many kids are born this year. Last year when you added up the females, the kids and the ones that feel this is just a good place to stay,

about 30 lived here most of the summer. Everyone enjoys seeing them in the evenings when they come out to graze and go down to the river for a drink. John Clark was fishing on the big bend last summer when the herd showed up at his spot. He told me, "Bill, it can get awful crowded on the river at dark." I have looked down and seen the same scenario several times with other fisherman, all alone, fishing the Madison surrounded by elk. I know they are thinking, if my friends could see me now, it just does not get any better than this. It seems our small elk herd is getting used to sharing the river with fishermen.

Wow, our ranch is having its 20th birthday this year, how time flies! I think it was Sept. 1st, 1989, Sandra and I first drove around the ranch. Two things I remember clearly, the ranch was empty and the roads were brand new. Now we have 50 + homes and cabins, I have known many of you since that first year and met most of the new folks, one thing I see that we all have in common is that sparkle in your eye when you arrive back at the "Last Best Place" every summer.

On the whole, the ranch is in good order. Of course there is always something, trees falling on perimeter fencing allowing cows on the ranch from the surrounding federal lands, automatic gates breaking, overhead log gate structures needing repairs, well needing upkeep, keeping the weeds under control, etc., etc. The main focus of the ranch this year will be the roads. They have served us now for 20 years with almost nothing put back into them and they are surely showing their wear, but things are looking up. We will start by hiring a professional operation that has all the necessary equipment for the job, such as very large grader that can get down deep and grind through the washboard, water trucks for softening the road, a motorized road rake for leveling it out perfect and last but not least a heavy roller to bind it all together. It even gets a little more complicated than that, it seems a good amount of our road base over the years has bounced into the burrow pits that border the road that has to be graded up onto the road surface in spite of the sage and vegetation growing there. How much of it we can get done this first year remains to be seen. We are going to give it a good start, especially at the famous teeth rattling right hand turn going up the hill on Flatiron Trail where we will add new road base for about 200 feet along that section. I'll let you all know what we were able to get done in the fall newspaper.

For those of you interested in drilling a well, as we have done in the past, we are negotiating a group rate with a discount based on volume. If you are interested, give me a call, 406-682-4334.

A note of interest on real estate, 2008 stats; 27 homes were sold in the

rural areas of our valley, the price averaged \$ 385,000, 16 % less than 2007. Average time on the market 9½ months. Raw land in the valley has been on average \$ 8,000/acre. Some areas are holding the 2006 pricing while others are down 34 %. I have a report of no land being sold on MRR in 2008, can that be true after a wild 06 and 07? Madison County construction permits: 2005, 139 / 2006, 125 / 2007, 106 / 2008, 105. On the upside, Montana is one of 4 states in the nation that has seen relative stable prices. Ennis and the Madison Valley was written up as one of the “20 best places to live in the west,” May 09 edition of American Cowboy. Thanks to Reed Real Estate for this info.

In closing, I think we all would agree in these trying times, what is most important, our streams are full of fish, our mountains are full of animals and the scenery is to die for and we all have a piece of the rock.

*** Exciting news for us in the upper valley, Chris and Terry Leech are opening up the Grizzly Bar and Grill. It sure will be great to have our landmark up and running again. Chris tells me, he plans on keeping the menu fairly simple, good food for a reasonable price. Won't it be great not to have to drive 40 miles to have something to eat?

Memo from Martha:

I can second what Bill said about this Spring! As I write this, it is May 1, and Dave and I are well and truly snowed in at our cabin. Today is Friday, and we have been here since Sunday, with no real end in sight. When we drove in it was daylight, but still very difficult to see because of the blowing snow. The road had been plowed to our gate recently, and we had called Harry List (bless him!) to plow our driveway earlier in the day. While it was a little scary, we made it, and unloaded our car in a raging blizzard. The road closed behind us. By the next morning, there were 3' drifts on the road, it snowed like crazy all day, and pretty much hasn't stopped since. I am trying to avoid thinking about the “Worst Case Scenario” – that our first visitor this summer discovers some gnawed bones and a really fat dog!

Thought for the day: “Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.” Mark Twain

Ranch Recipes

My daughter, Alice, introduced me to this great bread recipe. It's quite easy to make, and produces a crusty, fragrant loaf that is heaven to eat with butter straight from the oven. If you have any left, I like to slice it and keep it in the freezer in a zip-lock bag. You can take it directly from the freezer to the toaster, and enjoy that fresh, hot taste all over again. This bread is what the word “YUM!” was invented for! Alice says it's even better if you

use a sourdough starter, so if you have one, go for it. Otherwise, it is delish as is.

Alice's Crusty No-Knead Bread

Combine:

4 c. flour

Scant ½ t. instant yeast

2 T. salt

Add 2 c. water at 70 degrees. Dough will be sticky. Leave in same bowl, or put in oiled bowl, cover w/plastic wrap and leave about 18 hours at about 70 degrees (room temp.).

Remove dough and fold once or twice on floured board. Cover w/plastic wrap and let rest 15 min.

Shape dough in ball w/just enough flour to make it not sticky. Coat a cotton towel w/cornmeal or flour (heavily coated – you don't want it sticking anywhere), put in dough, seam side down. Sprinkle with flour or corn meal and cover with plastic wrap or another towel. Leave for 2 hours.

30 minutes before your two hours is up, preheat oven to 450, and put a Dutch oven with a lid in the oven to preheat too.

Take out Dutch oven, spray lightly w/Pam, and roll dough in. Put on lid and put back in oven for 30 min.

Take off lid and bake for another 20 or 30 min. If it starts to smell scorched, turn down heat. Bake until it's a gorgeous golden brown. Let cool on wire rack.

Association News

The annual Homeowner's Association meeting will be held on Saturday, June 27, at 1 PM. This year the location is the Volunteer Fire Station on Hwy. 287 next to the Howling Mad Moon Resort. An official meeting announcement will be sent to all homeowners with proxy form and ballot for board positions.

There will be an Association Work Day the day after the annual meeting (Sunday the 28th). We will be cleaning up the common area and removing old fencing around the Ranch to allow easier wildlife movement. Sign-up will be at the meeting. **All volunteers will be appreciated!**

Fishing With Mike Wells

Sweet Agony

Rod rocks rhythm into motion, slicing sky blue sky

Line slithers gently from fingers, snaking through guides
Fly whispers to sparkling water, begging jeweled kisses from within
Sincere and deceptive offers.....refused by yet another

Serenity Interrupted.....Montana Stream Access Law

By John Clark

The winter doldrums have settled in and you are sitting at your fly tying bench dreaming of warm summer days. As you finish tying your last salmon fly of the evening your mind drifts to the thoughts of your favorite time of year, the time you spend on the Madison trying to fool that big brown with the art form you have just created.

The day has finally arrived. The winter did pass as it always does, helped along with the memories of summers past and dreams of those to come. The drive from wherever was long but as the miles draw short you find yourself becoming like the child of your youth, giddy with expectations of what the future has in store. It is July, and the salmon flies are on. As you drive through the lower gate you see the bugs in the air and barely notice the trucks parked outside the entrance. The parking area has just one other vehicle and as you open your door you notice the wind has calmed. The storm clouds on the horizon are a distant reminder of an earlier tempest. As you rig your rod and tie on your tippet, you try to calm your hands that you have just noticed are shaky with anticipation. While you walk down the trail the sudden splash of a frog jumping into the spring creek startles you. Before long you notice an osprey hovering above the Madison, looks like you might have a little competition today. Experience tells you the trout will be holding near the bank and in the best holes. You know where you are going.

As you approach the River you see a couple of fisherman just upriver of the spring creek confluence, one standing on the trail. Time for plan B, going down stream has been just as successful in years past. Turning left and heading down river you now notice three more fishermen spread out for the next two hundred yards along all the prime holes along the Ranch's common area. Now you feel that shaky feeling coming back but this time it is not from anticipation but frustration. The only option is to continue downstream and as you pass by the fishermen you notice the one standing on the trail has a large net and is helping the other two locate fish, a guide. Although you are starting to feel your blood pressure rising, you continue down the trail without saying a word, after all you have been waiting all year

for this day. Before you know it you are down to the lower fence boundary and you wave to a fellow landowner who always seems to be in his favorite hole with a fish on. No time to slow down and talk. After a little more walking you wade into a fine-looking hole to cast the beautiful fly that you tied last winter. Before long your mind settles into the rhythm of the river but you can not quite get the thought out of your mind of the guide and his clients. It just does not seem right to have shared the trail with those who do not own property on the Ranch, after all when the Realtor sold you your lot he said you would have "private access" to the Madison.

The realtor was right, you do have the right to private access to the Madison from the common area and it is protected by Montana state law. Montana is unique among other Western states and most states in general. In 1984, the Montana Supreme Court held that any river or stream that has the capability to be used for recreation may be so used by the public without regard to the ownership of the land underlying the waters. It also stated that recreationists can use rivers and streams up to the **ordinary high water mark**. Anyone who wants to fish the Madison along the common area boundary has every right and opportunity to do so as long as they stay below the ordinary high water mark as defined by state law. Montana state law describes the ordinary high water mark as:

"The line that water impresses on land by covering it for sufficient time to cause different characteristics below the line, such as deprivation of the soil of substantially all its terrestrial vegetation and destruction of its value for agricultural vegetation. Flood plains next to streams are considered to be above the ordinary high mark, and are not open for recreation without permission."

In other words, the river bank below the vegetation line.

The abuse of the rights of every Madison River Ranch landowner occurs when fishermen and guides hike down from Three Dollar Bridge or the stile gate outside our lower gate and once they arrive to our property line continue to use the trail and not enter the river and stay below the ordinary high water mark. The trespassing has escalated over the years and complaints from landowners have reached the point that the Board has decided to confront this issue on a few fronts. First, signs have been posted at both boundaries of the common area informing fishermen they are entering private property and asking them to observe state law and stay below the high water mark. A letter has been sent to the outfitters in the valley asking them to obey the state law and to not allow their guides to trespass on our private property. The local sheriff's office has been advised of our problem and they are in full support of protecting us from

trespassers. Communication with Montana Trout Unlimited is ongoing addressing the misuse of the physically challenged stile gate located just outside our lower gate.

It will be up to all of the landowners to help protect our interests. Confronting trespassers can be uncomfortable depending on the individuals involved. No one expects the Association to become a law enforcement agency, but a kindly reminder or a little education of what the ordinary high water mark actually is may be all it takes to keep a trespasser from returning. We all know the 55 acres of common area along the Madison is the most precious asset to our Association and anything we can do to protect it will help maintain its value for all of us.

All landowners are also reminded that they may not give verbal permission to others from outside the ranch to use the common area access or the easements to the national forest; they must be personally accompanied by the landowner. The covenants (4.1, last paragraph) states: "No property owner may give permission to allow transit across the ranch or to access the national forest or adjoining lands to any outside person or entity other than their personal accompanied guests without express written permission of the governing body of the Madison River Ranch Association."

Thanks to Bill Hoolan, Mike Wells, and John Clark for their great contributions. As always, please send or email me anything you think would be of interest to our neighbors. I really enjoy hearing from you!

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