

Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Twentieth Anniversary 2005 - 2025





CAROL DOPKIN
Founder of the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council



Carol Dopkin is honored for founding the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council in 2005—a group that began from her deep sense of community and camaraderie with her fellow riders. What started as a gathering of equestrian friends has grown into a valley-wide organization that, twenty years later, continues to serve horse people of all ages and disciplines.

Carol's journey began in Baltimore, Maryland, where she launched her real estate career. Frequent ski trips to Aspen with her family led to a love of the valley, and in 1978, she and her husband Buzz Dopkin moved west to pursue their passions—horses for Carol and airplanes for Buzz. Buzz, a builder, developed multiple projects in the valley, including their dream home on McLain Flats with its sweeping views, horse pastures, barn, and direct access to the Rio Grande Trail.

Though she didn't ride as a child, Carol fulfilled her lifelong dream here in Aspen. Her first horse, "Feather," a chestnut Saddlebred mare, became the foundation of her equestrian journey. Carol later bred Feather to the legendary Saddlebred stallion Sultan's Santana and raised three cherished foals. She loved trail riding, local hunter-jumper shows, eventing, and hunting with the Roaring Fork Hounds—especially aboard "Star the Wonder Pony," a gift from a fellow hunt member.

Carol's passion for skiing also led her to join the Aspen Skiing Company as an instructor, where she enjoyed a brief but fulfilling career as a "pro." But it was real estate that became her calling. Known valley-wide as the "Realtor with Horse Sense," she famously showcased her horses in advertising, always reminding people that her love for horses was real, not just branding. She insisted it wasn't a gimmick—those were her horses, and she truly rode them.

Today, Carol continues to ride and enjoy the mountains with her two retired horses and an Icelandic pony named Brynjar. Though she says she is "approaching retirement by not retiring," her passion for horses and real estate continues to shape her days.

The Roaring Fork Valley owes Carol immense gratitude for her vision, dedication, and energy. Thanks to her, the RFVHC stands strong as a unifying voice for equestrians across the valley—past, present, and future.

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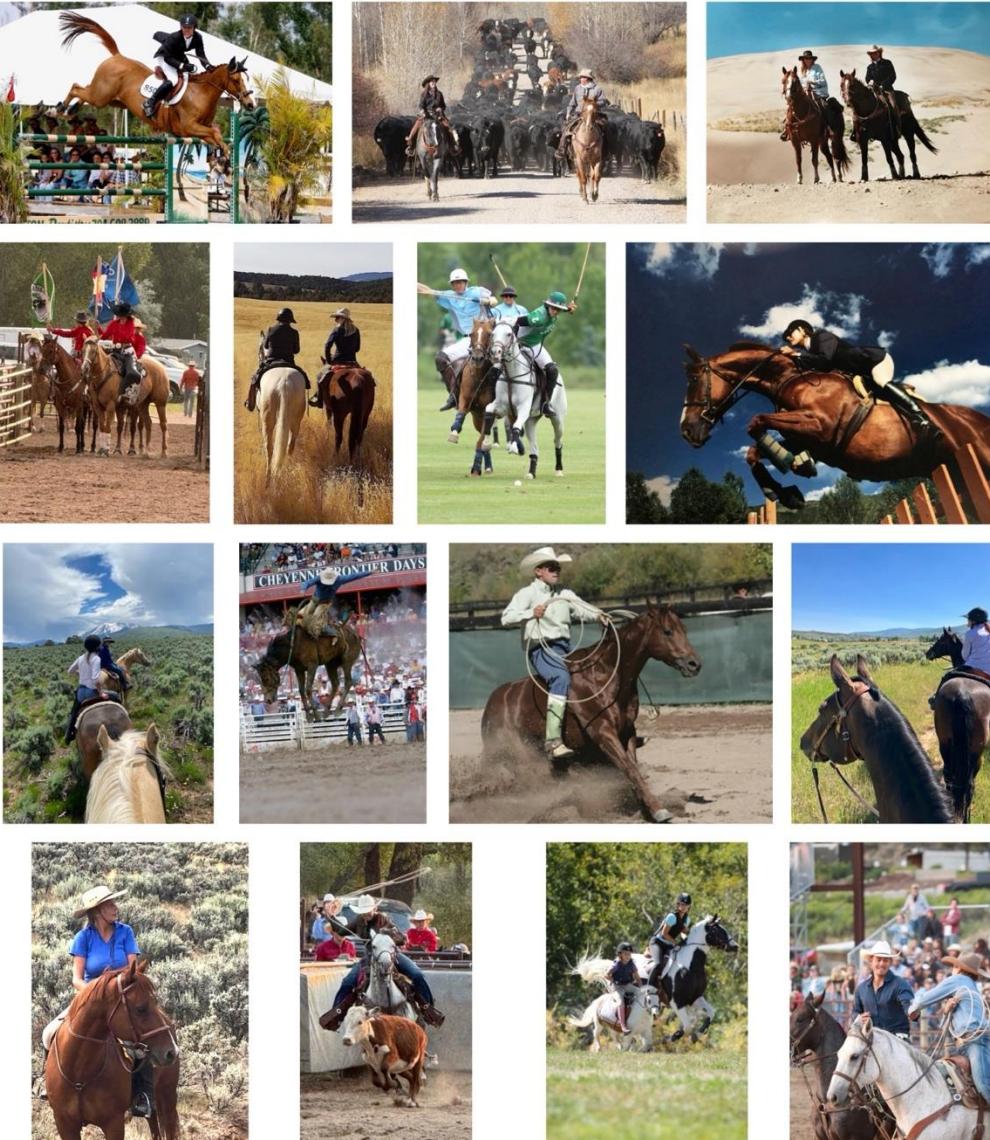
[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)

[2005- 2024 - Home](#)



EQUESTRIAN DISCIPLINES

Photos by Louisa Davidson - Holly McLain, Liz Miller & friends



The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.

Winston Churchill.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
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[2005- 2024 - Home](#)



RIDING THE RANGE: THE HISTORY OF THE ROARING FORK COWBOY



Tending cattle in the high meadows with views of the Elk Mountain Range.



McCabe Ranch, Snowmass, Colorado



Jeff Groom, Photo by Brooke Casillas Photography

The cowboy has left an indelible mark on the history and culture of the Roaring Fork Valley. From the frontier era to the present day, the cowboy's spirit of adventure, resilience, and connection to the land has persisted. The cowboy remains an enduring symbol of the West, reminding us of the rich heritage and ongoing legacy in the Roaring Fork Valley.

The Frontier Era

In the late 1800s, the Roaring Fork Valley was a rugged and untamed frontier, attracting pioneers and settlers seeking new opportunities. The cowboy emerged as a central figure during this era, playing a vital role in the cattle industry. Ranchers herded their livestock across vast expanses of open land, braving challenging terrain and fickle weather conditions. They established ranches and worked tirelessly to build a livelihood amidst the wilderness.

Ranching and Cattle Drives

With the arrival of the railroad in the late 1800s, the cattle industry in the Roaring Fork Valley experienced a boom. Ranches flourished, and cattle drives became a common sight as cowboys transported herds to market along the Colorado Midland Railway. These long and arduous journeys required exceptional horsemanship, endurance, and a deep understanding of the land.

Aspen's Silver Rush and the Cowboy

The discovery of silver in Aspen in the 1870s brought a surge of fortune seekers to the valley. As the mining industry thrived, the demand for beef escalated, providing cowboys with new opportunities. Cowboys supplied meat to the growing population of miners, sustaining the workforce that fueled Aspen's prosperity. The cowboy became a familiar figure in the town, a rugged symbol of the West amidst the glamour of the silver rush.

Changing Times: From Cattle to Skiing

As the 20th century unfolded, the Roaring Fork Valley underwent significant transformations. The once-booming cattle industry declined, giving way to other economic pursuits. The arrival of skiing in the region brought a new wave of settlers and visitors. Despite the changing times, the cowboy spirit endured, adapted, and found new avenues of expression.

Cowboy Culture and Rodeos

The legacy of the cowboy is celebrated in the Roaring Fork Valley through various cultural events, most notably rodeos. These events showcase traditional horsemanship skills, roping, and riding competitions, keeping the cowboy tradition alive. Rodeos like the Snowmass Rodeo and the Carbondale Wild West Rodeo attract locals and visitors alike, offering a glimpse into the rich history and cowboy culture of the region.

Conservation and the Cowboy

In recent times, the Roaring Fork Valley has become a hub for conservation efforts, preserving the natural beauty that attracted settlers and cowboys to the area. Modern-day cowboys, often known as "cowboy conservationists," play a crucial role in maintaining and stewarding the land. They work alongside land management agencies and ranch owners, practicing sustainable ranching techniques that balance the needs of the environment and the community.

Credit - The Scout Guide

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[2005- 2024 - Home](#)



MOUNT SOPRIS HEREFORD RANCH

Bob & Ditty Perry

(1918 – 2006) (1919 – 2015)

The Perry Family Lives The Abundant Life

Bob & Ditty Perry established the foundations of the Roaring Fork Valley Ranching traditions. Hard work, conscientious commitment to detail and kindness towards other people and animals was their ideology.



The Perry Family



The Town of Carbondale – 1908



Bob and Ditty at the ranch

Faith has held this close knit family together with love and respect.

Bob was born in Denver in 1918. He grew up riding, hunting, fishing, skiing and loved the outdoors. In 1940 he married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth McNutt Brown. In 1941, they moved to Carbondale, Colorado and started "Mount Sopris Hereford Ranch", encompassing vast meadows with excellent water rights.

They raised their seven children there and created a welcoming environment for ranch hands, fellow ranchers, exchange students, and friends.

Ranching was a calling and not a job, and he spent his life taking care of the land and his cows. He was a man of honor, who treated everyone fairly and as an equal. His quick sense of humor and generosity defined him.

Ditty was known for her enthusiasm, hospitality, and love of family.

Both Bob and Ditty were both involved with community service and they were much loved by everyone who knew them.

The Perry family tradition of community service continues today.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
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VIVIAN GOODNOUGH



Compliments of the
Aspen Historical Society

Born in Pittsburgh and raised on Long Island, Vivian Vacquier discovered her love for horses through Mary O'Hara's *My Friend Flicka* and the 1943 film adaptation. That early spark turned into a lifelong passion for riding, teaching, and shaping generations of equestrians in the Roaring Fork Valley.

After graduating from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, Vivian taught school but remained devoted to horses. She rode at the Thomas School of Horsemanship and later served as a counselor at their camps. She rode English, Western, and even side-saddle—famously using the side-saddle in Aspen's Fourth of July Parade and at her own wedding. Whether galloping bare-headed or camping in the backcountry, Vivian embodied the spirit of adventure.

After meeting William Reid Goodnough in Aspen in 1955, they married in La Jolla, California. Vivian hunted with the Roaring Fork Hounds and the Arapahoe Hunt in Denver, taught riding where the Aspen Institute now stands, and competed in hunter/jumper and eventing shows. She treasured memories of family team rides at the Hunter Trials at Strang Ranch.

Vivian also mentored Aspen's own Karin Reid Offield, nurturing her early development and following her career with pride. Alongside Heather Tharp, she co-founded the Aspen Pony Club, which brought local kids together for years of horsemanship and fun. Many members went on to Kay Simon's 4-H Horse Program and even rodeo royalty.

Her generosity knew no bounds. Vivian loaned horses, tack, and opportunities to any child who wanted to ride. She even lent family horses for Marlboro ad campaigns filmed at the T Lazy 7 Ranch. Whether organizing tack swaps or working with Carolyn Moore at the thrift shop, she ensured that many had access to horses.

Vivian was part of the village that raised a generation of horse-loving valley youth. Along with the Strangs, Sandy Smith, and others, she built a legacy of compassion, discipline, and lifelong connection. Her influence endures in the many who now pay it forward.

Tally ho, Vivian—and thank you.

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[2005-2024 - Home](#)



NIESLANIK RANCHING FAMILY



I have lived on the ranch for 65 years, and even though the city of Carbondale has changed from dirt roads to stop signs and roundabouts, when you climb to the top of Whitehill Road the view remains the same.

When John Nieslanik set foot back in the United States after the Korean War, he laid eyes on Ceciel Letty and they married on June 9, 1956. He was determined to carry on with his farming heritage and around 1958, bought the ranch from Oceri Blanc. At that time, his brothers Bob and Paul got together and formed Nieslanik Brothers with John and purchased property from the Rosengrens in 1972. Seventy-five dairy cows, potatoes, and around 300 mother cows supplemented their ranching business. It was all hard work.

Bob and Paul both married, and with their growing families, split the ranch in 1992. I had already been working on the ranch for the brothers since 1984, so with the split, I stayed on with my dad. At that point, we combined each of our cattle and workload but kept separate business names and books. My family worked beside John daily, and we always said our boys, Parker and Johnny, attended Nieslanik University.

In 2012, Nieslanik Beef was formed, making John and myself partners in the cattle business, working alongside our boys. Once again, with the changing times, we had to supplement the farming/ranching business; therefore, we started selling individual cuts, wholes, and half cows to the public and to restaurants.

With the passing of John in 2022, the business partners of Nieslanik Beef now consist of myself and our two boys. It is a pleasure to have them as my business partners. They are both married, and we currently have two grandchildren.

As my dad quoted, in the book by Anita McCune Witt's stories, *I Remember One Horse*:

"When I'm gone, I hope some of them will carry on the Nieslanik ranching tradition in some way."

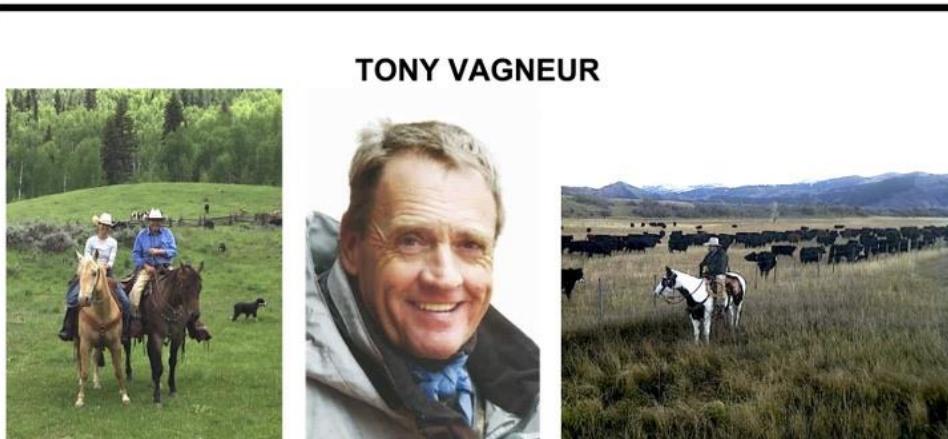
Marty Nieslanik
Nieslanik Beef



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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)

[2005-2024 - Home](#)



TONY VAGNEUR

Born in Woody Creek in 1946, Tony Vagneur proudly represents the fourth generation of his family rooted in this rugged valley. Descended from pioneering families like the Clavels, Stapletons, Prindles, and Slosses—early settlers from Italy and Ireland—Tony grew up steeped in the traditions of ranching and mountain living. His childhood memories are filled with the warmth of lantern light in a small log cabin, the early hum of a generator before electricity reached Woody Creek, and summers spent riding the range alongside his grandfather, Ben Vagneur, who shaped him into the dedicated rancher he would become.

Horses have been a lifelong constant for Tony, starting with Stardust when he was just three years old, and continuing through a long string of loyal mounts that carried him across pastures and high-country trails. After earning his business degree from the University of Colorado, Tony balanced his ranching heritage with entrepreneurial grit, leasing the T Lazy 7 stables and later building a successful career in the solid waste industry. Even while managing businesses, he never strayed far from ranch life—hauling hay, branding cattle, and riding with the McCabe Ranch operation well into his so-called retirement.

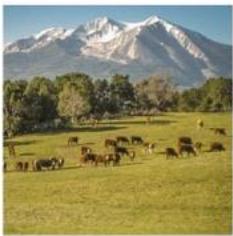
Today, Tony's legacy lives on through his daughter, Lauren, and grandchildren, Cash and Charli, who carry forward the family's ranching spirit as sixth-generation natives. For over twenty years, Tony's voice has reached the wider community through his beloved Aspen Times column, *Saddle Sore*, chronicling life in the valley with honesty and wit. As his great-grandfather Jeremie once said, "All in all, it's been a pretty good life"—a sentiment Tony wholeheartedly echoes, as he continues to ride, write, and inspire those who know him.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005- 2024 – Home](#)



THE CRYSTAL RIVER RANCH Sue Anschutz-Rodgers



Sue Rodgers & Trigger (rescued from the Denver Dumb Friends Rescue Ranch)

The Crystal River Ranch, nestled in the Thompson Creek Drainage and Cottonwood Pass areas southeast of Glenwood Springs, has been a fixture of Colorado's Western Slope since Fred Anschutz purchased it in 1958. Passed down through the Anschutz family, Sue Anschutz-Rodgers became sole owner in 1987. From the beginning, the ranch has raised Hereford / Angus cross cattle, selling commercial feeder calves each fall.

A life-long rancher and conservationist, Sue is deeply committed to preserving land, water, wildlife, and the ranching way of life. Her stewardship has brought modern irrigation improvements like pivots and side rolls, while preserving flood irrigation in key areas for wildlife and aquifer health. Her philosophy is simple: care for the land, and it will care for future generations.

Sue served for many years on the board of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust and still hosts its annual dinner at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS). In 2019, she made a transformative gift to NWSS, resulting in the Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Livestock Center—now the hub of livestock events in Denver. She serves as a vice-chair of the Honoring the Legacy campaign and continues to advocate for agriculture and education.

Sue is also President of the Anschutz Family Foundation, which her parents founded in 1982. She is especially proud of launching Rural Philanthropy Days, which brings statewide funders to rural communities to support local nonprofits and economic resilience.

Tom and Ginny Harrington moved to Crystal River Ranch in 2008, where Tom is ranch manager. Ginny is a proud, fifth generation Western Slope native, and like many a ranch wives, she helps out with riding, cooking for brandings, and running errands. She calls herself the "go-to-meeting gal", as there are so many issues that affect ranchers and "if you're not at the table you're on the menu."

Tom, served for many years on Carbondale Wild West Rodeo board, and was President and is Past President for Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA), and serves on the Roaring Fork Valley Co-Op, Holy Cross Cattlemen's Association, the Rocky Mountain Ranch Roping and Stock-horse Association boards. Each September, Tom and Ginny host the Roaring Fork Ranch Roping, a true ranch-style event celebrating practical horsemanship, with ongoing support from Sue and other valley sponsors. This annual gathering marks its 15th year.

We honor Crystal River Ranch, its people, and its legacy—a shining example of stewardship, community, and the enduring spirit of ranch life.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005- 2024 – Home](#)



Holy Cross Cattlemen's Association (HCCA)



Preserving western heritage and tradition, while advocating for the future of beef and agricultural industries.

The HCCA an affiliate of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA), has 104 ranching members and 55 collaborative agricultural supporting businesses in the valley from De Beque, Parachute, Silt, Rifle, New Castle, Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt, Woody Creek, Snowmass, and Aspen and the Eagle Valley.

The state of Colorado has 66.3 million acres, half of which is comprised of ranches and farms. Cattlemen and their families preserve and protect these open space lands by grazing 2.7 million head of cattle on these beautiful ranch lands. Approximately 60% of Colorado's \$7.1 billion in agriculture cash receipts come from livestock. Farmers and ranchers provide food and habitat for 75% of the nation's wildlife.



McCabe Ranch branding - 2011



Cattle drive through Carbondale, CO



*Original Cowboys of the Roaring Fork Valley
From left to right –Ranchers, Jim, Bob, Paul, John
Nieslanik & standing, Anita Witt*

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[HOME | Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)

[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)

[2005- 2024 – Home](#)



Strang Ranch

Mike & Kit Strang



Strang Ranch has been a vital part of the Roaring Fork Valley's equestrian community since Mike and Kit Strang purchased the property in 1965. Cattle came first, but horses soon became the focus for breeding, raising, and training for both ranch work and competition.

Kit (Kathleen Sherry Strang), born in 1934 near Milwaukee, grew up riding English, driven by a passion for "everything horses." Camp summers in Jackson, WY inspired her lifelong dream of moving west. She graduated from Vassar in 1956 with degrees in geology and English, then headed to Colorado to ski, later encouraging all four of her children to ski race.

Mike Strang, born in New Hope, PA, was raised on Ralston Creek Ranch outside Golden. After graduating from Princeton in 1951, he returned to Colorado, where he met Kit. They married in 1960 and settled in Carbondale five years later to raise Hereford cattle and Thoroughbred horses.

The ranch became a welcoming home, from its early days in a log cabin to the expanded stone house full of warmth, family, and equestrian friends. It also became a hub of community activity. Kit and Mike were instrumental in launching the **Roaring Fork Hounds**, a hunt club with deep local roots. Mike served as Master of Foxhounds, and Kit fondly recalled, "We hunted coyotes instead of foxes, but none were ever harmed."

In 1967, the **Roaring Fork Hounds Pony Club** was formed—emphasizing horsemanship, care, and etiquette for young riders. The **Strang Ranch Horse Trials**, which began in the 1980s and continued into the early 2000s, helped popularize Eventing competitions in the region. The ranch also hosted Colorado West Hunter Jumper Association shows, helping launch riders across the Western Slope.

Strang Ranch stood stallions Hilltop and Finisterre and produced many quality horses. Kit and her family are strong advocates for land conservation, and they protected 460 acres of their ranch with an Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT) conservation easement. Today, Kit, daughter Bridget, and son, Scott continue the tradition with horse boarding, lessons, horse shows and sheepdog trials.

The Strangs' legacy is one of dedication, community, and love for the land and horses that define the heart of this valley.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005- 2024 – Home](#)



TRUDI PEET (1935–2013)



Born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1935, Trudi Peet lived a life defined by bold independence, art, and horses. From a young age, her passions were clear—her early paintings featured horses galloping across imagined landscapes, revealing the dream of a life she would one day build. After attending Radcliffe College, she spent summers studying art in Vienna with famed expressionist Oskar Kokoschka. But it was the Roaring Fork Valley that would ultimately capture her spirit and give her vision room to grow.

In the 1950s, Trudi arrived in Aspen and quickly rooted herself in the horse community. She purchased her first ranch, St. Finnbar in Woody Creek, using her Porsche as a down payment. There, she helped found the Roaring Fork Hounds and supported a rising community of English riders alongside Sandy Smith, Kit Strang, Vivian Goodnough, and others. She even formed a local polo team, where she proved herself on the field and quietly challenged convention—once providing the horses for a tournament that tried to ban women riders. The match never happened, but Trudi's resolve made a lasting impression.

In 1970, she moved her equestrian operations to a 160-acre ranch near the Catherine Store in Carbondale, again named St. Finnbar. With ambition and artistry, she transformed the ranch into a true "horse factory," training and selling sport horses for competition. She built two outdoor show rings, a cross-country course, a regulation polo field, and one of the largest indoor arenas of its time. National teams came to her to scout future champions, and Trudi's operation became a vital part of the valley's equestrian economy.

A serious riding accident ended her jumping career, but not her spirit. During recovery, she painted a dressage arena diagram on her studio floor and practiced test movements on foot. That determination paid off. With her beloved Grand Prix horse, Bit O Shine, Trudi earned first in the Fourth Level Olympic Test and reserve champion at the Detroit Olympic screening trials. They were named backup for the U.S. Dressage Team at the 1976 Montreal Olympics and continued to compete at the highest levels of the sport.

Through injury, reinvention, and artistic devotion, Trudi Peet helped shape the Roaring Fork Valley's equestrian story. Her legacy lives on in every rider who trains with courage and every horse who learns to dance with lightness and grace.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005- 2024 – Home](#)



SANDY SMITH



Born in New York City in 1950, Sandy Smith first fell in love with horses after a summer at the iconic Eaton's Ranch in Sheridan, Wyoming—a place where generations of visitors experienced the joy of western riding under wide Wyoming skies. In 1950, her family moved to Aspen, Colorado, settling at the Stillwater/North Star Ranch, a 245-acre property just outside town. There, Sandy's lifelong journey with horses began in earnest, aided by local legends like Elizabeth Paepcke, who gifted her first English saddle.

As a young rider, Sandy trained with the Aspen Riding Club and Vivian Goodnough, showing at arenas throughout the valley, including the original 1880s race track at Aspen Meadows and the Dixon Oval on her family's ranch. It was at one such show that she met Trudi Peet, a notable equestrian, who invited Sandy to ride in a pair class—an early moment that sparked her interest in serious horsemanship.

After graduating from the Kent School in Denver, Sandy pursued her studies at Colorado State University. Her passion for dressage took hold soon after, leading her to train with elite coaches such as Colonel Bengt Ljungquist, who coached the U.S. Olympic Dressage Team, and to observe clinics by Germany's Reiner Klimke, a six-time Olympic gold medalist. Sandy became a devoted student of the discipline, committed to refining her understanding of both classical principles and modern technique.

Through her work with the Rocky Mountain Dressage Society and national leaders like Elizabeth Searle and Colonel Anders Lindgren, Sandy helped bring formal instructor seminars to Colorado, elevating the quality of dressage education in the region. In 1980, she built Cedar Ridge Ranch in Missouri Heights, a full-service boarding and training facility known for hosting top clinicians and offering a home to over 30 horses.

Later, she built a second horse property overlooking Spring Park Reservoir, where she continued to ride and train before selling the land in 2004. Alongside her equestrian work, Sandy enjoyed a long and successful career in Roaring Fork Valley real estate.

Now retired, Sandy lives at River Valley Ranch and travels the world with her camera in hand. Her legacy as a rider, teacher, and dressage advocate continues to shape the valley's equestrian community—one thoughtful lesson and elegant ride at a time.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)

2005-2024 - Home



BARBARA MCELNEA



Long haired Barbara was the star of the Roxy Theatre Ice Show



Born in Pasadena, California in 1932, Barbara McElnea has spent a lifetime blending elegance, artistry, and equestrian excellence. She began riding at the age of six, training with Captain Foster and later at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, where her early foundation in dressage and jumping took shape. Barbara also studied ballet and ice skating with Olympic medalist Barbara Jones, developing the posture and grace that would later define her as both a performer and horsewoman.

In her twenties, Barbara followed her artistic dreams to New York City, where she became the featured soloist in the Roxy Theatre's ice-skating shows, replacing U.S. Champion Sonya Klopfer. She also performed as a classical soprano in New York supper clubs, earning acclaim for her stage presence and poise. In 1962, she married John Sangmeister and had a son, John Hunt. She later married financier Bill McElnea, whose business ventures included the groundbreaking purchase of Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. Together, they traveled the world, collected art, and eventually found their way to the Roaring Fork Valley.

In 1981, Barbara and Bill bought 35 acres in Missouri Heights—now expanded to 447 acres—where they built Les Corbeaux Farm, a serene estate surrounded by open land and elk herds. With its indoor arena and training facilities, the farm became home to dressage clinics, RMDS shows, and champion horses. Barbara trained with Kit Strang and bred notable sport-horses, including her beloved Oldenburg, Von Grannus, who won at Third Level before advancing to national competitions with professional riders.

Barbara was instrumental in developing the dressage and English riding scene in the valley alongside friends Kit Strang and Sandy Smith. She hosted clinics, supported education, and helped create a vibrant local equestrian culture that continues today. Among her most cherished memories are the freestyle rides she performed in her arena with best friend Sally Shaffer, set to Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*—a perfect union of her passions for movement, music, and horses.

Now 92, Barbara still lives at Les Corbeaux, swims daily in a 90-degree pool, and follows a wellness lifestyle with remarkable discipline. She remains surrounded by beauty, memory, and lifelong friends—grateful for a life filled with family, creativity, and the horses that helped shape a community.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005-2024 - Home](#)



SALLY SHAFFER



Born in Paris, Texas in 1944, Sally Shaffer grew up in New York City after her family returned east following World War II. At just seven years old, her love of horses began at Pit Hall Farm in Old Chatham, New York. Summers in Wyoming at the famed Teton Valley Ranch Camp sealed her bond with the West, where she learned to rope remuda horses and developed a lifelong passion for the open landscapes of the Rocky Mountains.

After graduating from the Chapin School in 1962, Sally attended Hollins University in Virginia, drawn by its equestrian program and academics in Russian history. But her path shifted toward the arts, where she immersed herself in theatre and modern dance. After college, Sally became personal assistant to the legendary choreographer Martha Graham, working in the heart of New York City's dance and performing arts scene.

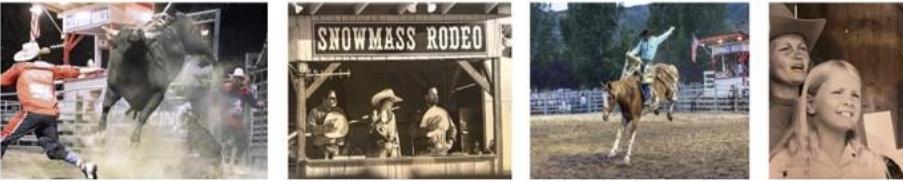
Sally met Alan Shaffer in New York and together they discovered Aspen in the early 1970s. In 1982, they purchased land in East Sopris Creek Valley and established Flat Bush Farm, where Sally returned fully to her love of horses. Riding with Kit Strang and Sandy Smith, she became active in the Roaring Fork Hounds, serving as Whipper-In to Mike Strang and Heather Tharp. In the 1980s, she began importing and breeding Dutch Warmbloods and Anglo-Trakehners, helping bring high-level dressage bloodlines to the valley. Her homebred Grand Prix dressage mare, Najinska, ridden by Shannon Dahmer won the FEI Freestyle competition at the 2008 Del Mar International Dressage Show, San Diego, California.

Sally and Alan raised two children, Alexandra and Peter, who balanced summers on horseback with winters on skis. In 1988, Sally served as President of the Aspen Valley Ski Club. After relocating to Park City, Utah in 1998, she and Alan volunteered at the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics, where Sally was Chief of Timing and Calculations for alpine and snowboard events at Park City Mountain Resort.

Following Alan's passing in 2004, Sally moved to Midway, Utah. She continued to breed and train horses until retiring from the barn. Today, she enjoys gardening, spending time with her four grandchildren, and staying connected with her longtime Missouri Heights horse community — including Sandy Smith, Barbara McElnea, and the Strang family — while supporting the traditions she helped foster for decades.

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[HOME](#) | [Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council](#)
[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
[2005-2024 - Home](#)



SNOWMASS RODEO

In 1971, Doug and Arlyce McLain leased the Snowmass Stables property from Snowmass Partners and soon after started the Snowmass Rodeo—the longest running rodeo in Colorado.

Snowmass Stables offered summer trail rides and winter sleigh rides to the Divide Cabin on Snowmass Mountain. Inspired by a visit to Cody, Wyoming, Doug and Arlyce launched the Wednesday night rodeo in 1973. They bought 10–15 bucking horses, 10 bulls, and leased steers and calves for roping events.

Neighbors pitched in. Rex Coffman was the first announcer, then Twirp Anderson took over in 1975. Tom Fritzlan and his sons rode bucking stock; daughter Vicki barrel raced; wife Vi timed events. Jim Mazuchi, Chuck Disney, and Kenny Latham helped behind the chutes. Chuck Disney Jr. worked as a bullfighter. It was a true community effort.

At the first rodeo, there were 50+ competitors and there were 700 spectators. Arlyce took entries by phone and paid winners after each event. Concessions started with snacks, later adding burgers and hot dogs. Daughters Pamela, Julie, and Tracy worked at the stand.

Doug left in 1978, and Arlyce ran the rodeo until 1982. Today, the Snowmass Western Heritage Association produces the rodeos. Stock contractor Darce Vold now manages the event, drawing 2,000 guests weekly with BBQ, bar, shopping, and a professional show. Tickets are available online.



**Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council
501 C(3) Non-profit Organization
Holly McLain RFVHC
Communication Chair
(970) 948-2151**

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CARBONDALE WILD WEST RODEO



In 2005, Mike Kennedy and Dave Weimer started the Carbondale Wild West Rodeo Association (CWWRA) as a 501c(3) Non-Profit, as it still is today. The weekly event runs every Thursday night at the Carbondale, Gus Darien Arena for 12 weeks during June through August annually. The CWWRA board members are volunteers, as are the cowboys who work the chutes and open the gates for the mounted rough stock of bucking horses and bulls. Sub-contractors, such as the stock contractors, announcers, the secretary, judges and the security company are paid by the rodeo to provide a professional show.

The rodeo started small, but it now boasts an average crowd size of 1500 +/- and about 125 competitors each week, rain or shine. Parking is challenging, so the rodeo runs 3 shuttle buses from the Town of Carbondale every week, all night long. Local cowboys, cowgirls, ranchers, young 4-Hers, and Latino horsemen compete enthusiastically to show their skills and hopefully win some "dinero". A crowd pleaser is the many specialty acts like trick riding, trick roping, the Latigos Up Drill team, the Adult Calf Scramble, Pair A Dice Carriages and more.

This is the CWWRA's 20th year of holding this rodeo, and after 20 seasons, they still operate on a hand-shake (no written contracts) with all of their sub-contractors. This is the old way of doing things, with pride and trust, they continue to provide an excellent rodeo for competitors and spectators alike, and "that says it all!"



Photos by Paula Wood & the Carbondale Wild West Rodeo

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GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



Leslie Thomas
(1962 – 2020)



Bob Pietrzak
(1936 – 2021)



Matt Neislanik
(1969 – 2024)



John Neislanik
(1932 – 2023)



Susan Gibbs (1956 - 2017)



Debbie Deutl Fischer
(1954 – 2024)



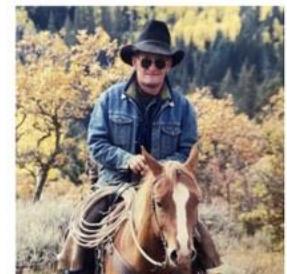
Anita Witt (1938 – 2018)



Jeff Groom (1969 – 2025)



Roz Turnbull (1943 -2020)



John Burtard (1948 – 2023)



Twirp Andeson (1937 – 2023)

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[Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council Resources](#)
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WE ALSO HONOR

Here are many friends and long-time residents whose steady presence, mentorships, and passions have shaped the equestrian culture of the Roaring Fork Valley.

These individuals gave of their land, their time, and their knowledge and often their horses with little fanfare, but with a “lasting impact”.

Bob and Sue Pietrzak - Conservationists and equestrians with ties back to the earliest days.

Bob and Ditty Perry, Bill and Marj Fales, Tom and Roz Perry Ranchers - Go back to the early settlers, Protecting our Open Space Lands.

Dede Whitcombe Morgan A lifelong horsewoman and gracious friend to many.

Kathy Honea - With quiet helping strength, and artistic generous spirit, she supported generations of riders.

Jennifer Morse - Her grace and deep knowledge and resolve enriched countless friends.

Kit and Kim Howell - A sister duo who offered fun for all, and were ever generous with their time, tack, horses, and hearts.

Jill & Brynn Burkee - Two sisters, devoted to horsemanship, art from their hearts, community, and kindness.

Tina Rubey - Brilliant in the saddle, remembered with love by son Hunter & husband Ron Barr.

Jonas Irbinskas - Horseman, storyteller, and friend, whose laughter filled the many arenas where he taught. His storied career in horsemanship and Olympic competition brought Aspen, where he held horsemanship clinics. His students gained a new level of expectations and fueled a new joy for horses.

Holly & Trudi Hurst - A dynamic sister-sister pair, who brought grit, grace, and generosity to every ride and trail adventure. There was fun around every corner.

Danny Barry - A quiet confident horseman and horse boarding manager, who's strong hands kept many operations running smooth for boarders and friends.

Carol Craig and Family - Owned the Ranch in Woody Creek, that boasted six decades of providing horses and riders a home. It is still to this day an dedicated open space land.

Heather Thorp - A visionary and co-founder of Aspen, Roaring fork Hounds Pony Club. She was a mentor for many over decades of equestrian instruction and love the Roaring Fork Hunt.

Art & Betty Pfister & Family - They were Champions of the land and engaged in community gatherings that brought us all together. As kids, their three daughters rode horses from their Buttermilk property into town, across the valley and there were always sunset horseback rides with friends. When growing up in Aspen, everyone had a horse or two.

Sarabeth McEachern - A tireless rider, whose love of horses was contagious.

Kay Simons - An admired 4-H Horse Program leader, dedicated to western reining competitive sport, and teaching with patience and grit.

Kathy Weiss - A successful competitor in the jumping world and leader today for so many.

Mary & Maude Franke - Experimented with high altitude horse breeding to improved genetic stamina for the race track. Their home ranch, barn doors were always opened to all who loved horses.

Ray Snow - A gentle soul with a cowboy heart, quiet strength, and a mentor to many.

Anita Witt - Storyteller, and extraordinary entertainer with her music, her horses and her dogs.

And, So many more...please help us to remember them.

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Remember. Honor. Share.
A living tribute to equine mentors—now
on **RFVHorseCouncil.org**.
Send us their names and your stories.

RFVHC.Colorado@gmail.com





RFVHC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council is to provide a unified voice for equine interests by preserving our Western Heritage, protecting wildlife and the habitats essential to their survival, securing safe parking access to trails and open lands, promoting charitable and community involvement, connecting the public through education, resources and partnerships, and supporting the well-being of horses, mules and horsemanship.

ROARING FORK VALLEY HORSE COUNCIL

501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/ www.rfvhorsecouncilresources.org/

RFVHC Board of Directors

Karin Reid Offield – President & Marketing/Promotion Chair

Rheta Fulton – V President & Event Chair

**Susan Cuseo – Secretary & Trails
Alexandra Anwyl-Davies -**

Treasurer

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Chuck Maker DVM – Community Outreach

Shannon Weeks - Fundraising & Rodeo

Arnie Mordkin - Member-at-large