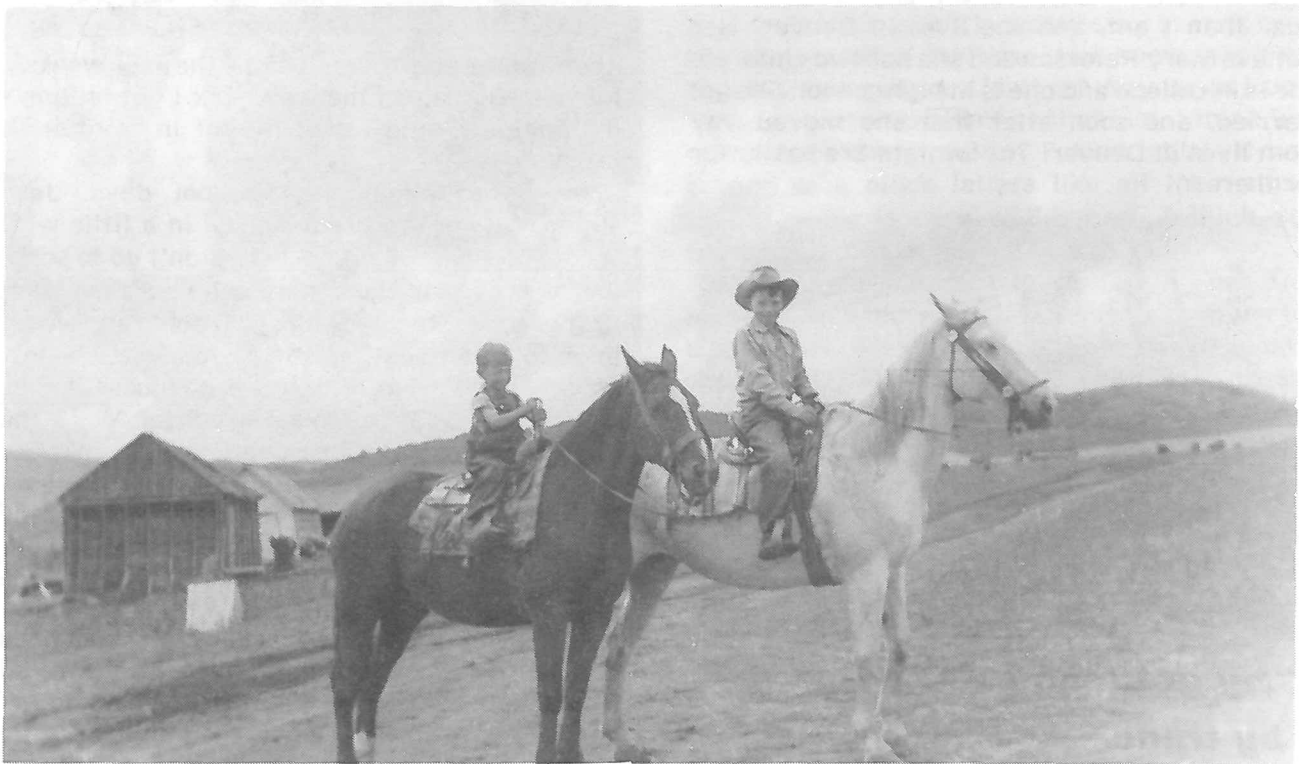


***“I don’t think any of us expect to get rich.”***

***Jerry and Rusty Nay***

***by: Troy Keller***

***Lara Johnson***



We interviewed two ranchers who are brothers. Rusty and Jerry Nay have lived in this area all their life. Troy has worked for Rusty the past two summers, and he became interested in that lifestyle. We started this story back in the fall when all the aspen leaves were turning gold. Our first interview was at Jerry’s house, which is located off 131 on the way to Oak Creek. Rusty, Jerry, and his wife, Shirley, were seated in their living room when the interview started. We began with their family history.

Rusty began talking. “My grandfather was William and my grandmother was Anna on my dad’s side, and on my mother’s side they were Byrn and Ida Adams.” Jerry added, “Our

parents on our father’s side came from Morrison. My dad was born in Morrison, and my granddad was born in Missouri. My granddad was a butcher by trade. When the Moffat Railroad came through this country, he had the meat contract, and he furnished the meat for the railroad crew. They started on this side of the Moffat Tunnel. He had the meat contract from there to Craig, so he lived in Kremmling, Hot Sulphur, Steamboat, Toponas and Craig. They eventually moved back to Steamboat. They settled here in 1906.

“Our mother’s parents were wanderers. There were six kids in the family. They started out in Missouri, then went to Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico and they eventually ended up in

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Milner. My granddad ran the store in Milner for several years. At that time, Milner was bigger than Steamboat. That was in 1918. Rusty and I have both lived here all our life."

Rusty told us, "My dad's name was Marshall and my mother's name was Anna. My dad was from Missouri and my mother was from Oklahoma. My dad was raised in Cripple Creek for a few years, from 1899-1906. He moved here when he was about seven years old. My dad had a ranch in Toponas. He sold it about three months before he died. The ranch here in Steamboat was split up between the three of us kids."

We asked Rusty and Jerry to tell us about themselves. Jerry began, "I was born in 1935 in Steamboat." Rusty then told us, "I was born August 29, 1946 in Steamboat. We also have a sister in between Jerry and I, she is four years older than I am, and she lives in Denver. Her name is Mary Peterson and she has two children. One is in college and one is in high school. She got married, and soon after that she moved. My mom lives in Denver. The winters are easier for her there."



***"My granddad was a butcher by trade."***

Jerry told us about riding on a passenger train when he was young. "The first time I took a train, I was six years old. Mother and I left here at four in the afternoon, and we got to Denver at four the next morning. It had a bunk they let down and you slept in it, and it was pretty wild. You got a lot of jerking and it seemed like it took forever to get to Denver. It was nice. It stopped at every little stop between here and Denver. For years, it was a steam engine and a mail car. Then just a passenger car, and a ticket was two bucks. Then they went to diesel. It was the same thing, just one diesel unit and the mail car and passenger car. The cars were heated. I rode one of the last trains out of here. They had a Vistadome that you could set up in and look at the country. Rusty was in Vietnam, and I took Rusty's wife to Denver. I got on the train at



Kremmling and it was one of the last weeks of the Vistadome. On the way back I got talking to the engineer, and he let me off in front of the ranch."

We asked about their school days. Jerry stated, "I went to grade school in a little white school house at Sidney. Rusty didn't go to school there. My sister went there one year, she was a first grader. Then they closed it down and we had to go to Steamboat, and so my parents bought a house in town on 3rd Street, because in those days it was up to you to get to school. You either had to live in town or supply your own transportation. At the little white school house, I was the only one there most of the time. The other student was Pat Barber. He and I were the only two there for about three years. The teacher lived in town. She caught the 8 a.m. train and she would get off the train at the Sidney school house and go to school at 8 a.m., then at 4 p.m. she would walk back to the train and they would take her back to town. That's how she taught us.

"Of course, my favorite story is that I was valedictorian of my class, because I was the only one in it. We went to school on horseback. The horse, after so many times, would automatically go from the barn to the school house. I'd throw a



rope over the saddle horn and ski back home. It was kind of a slow trip down, but it was pretty speedy going back. The horse would always go back faster. We had a near catastrophe a time or two, so we had to finally give that up." Rusty told us, "I walked to school because we lived in town



***"The horse, after so many times, would automatically go from the barn to the school house."***

in the winter time. I went to the old junior high which was the high school also. I graduated there. They moved into the new high school the year after I graduated in 1966."

We asked Rusty if he enjoyed school or would he rather have stayed and worked on the ranch. "I wasn't a very good student, and I couldn't get into studying at school. I would rather have been on the ranch. But, the thing that did keep me going was skiing. I like to ski and not only did the school make me have good grades so I could ski, but my parents had a rule that if we didn't make good grades, we couldn't ski.

"We had a good skiing program. We had a lot of Nordic skiing back then. I think now the emphasis is on Alpine skiing. Back then we did a lot of ski jumping and not too much cross country. Cross country was just getting started in Steamboat. We didn't really have good coaching for cross country skiing, but we had pretty good coaching for jumping. I went to the Junior Nationals my sophomore through senior years. We used to have a four way meet called the Lions Club meet. I think it's really a shame that they've eliminated it. At Carnival time, we had jumping, cross country, slalom and a downhill. They would combine all the points together for the winner. It was a true test for the skier's ability. We had a lot of fun, and there was good competition.

"I jumped the 90-meter some. I wasn't all that good of a jumper. I jumped about 275 feet. Skiing really is expensive. There aren't very many ranch kids that skied. The kids were really in-

involved in the ranches. There are a lot of the older ranchers around that resent the ski area. They feel threatened by it. But, there are a lot of us that accept it and make the best of it."

We asked them how many students were in their graduating classes. Jerry said, "I think we had 42 in our graduating class. We graduated in 1953. Shirley and I graduated together. It was a large class in those days; most classes had about 30 in them." Rusty stated, "I had 65 in my graduating class. I graduated in 1965."

We then asked them who their favorite teachers were. Jerry began, "There was a chemistry teacher named Bogie that's a professor at Mesa now. Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Stevenson were both there too." Rusty said, "I think the one I remember the most was Mrs. Campbell. She taught math and she was a tough teacher. She always made you study, but when you got out of her class you knew something."

We asked them about their high school days. Jerry told us, "I grew up in the '50s, and '50s were kind of like the movies. It was a pretty good time. It was kind of a care-free time. It seems that the high school kids back then didn't have the troubles that kids have today. There weren't any drugs or alcohol because they weren't a big deal. We partied on Friday and Saturday nights. Hardly anyone dated before their sophomore year in high school. We had a lot of dances. The schools had dances on Friday nights and there were a lot of group activities. The girls would get together and have a picnic. Not a school picnic, but maybe the 15 or 20 people you run around with would go on a picnic on a Friday or



Saturday night. There were movies and the show would change three times a week.

"There were always bunches of us doing things, not one or two, but we always double dated or triple dated. Out of our graduating class

of 40, there were probably five who had their own car. If one guy had a car he didn't go anywhere by himself."

Rusty states, "I can remember before I was 16, I had a date, and Jerry took me to pick up my date and took me to the Prom and picked me up afterward." Shirley, Jerry's wife, added, "We never danced to records, we always danced to small bands. In the summertime, we had bands going through and they weren't big bands, but ***"That was in the 50's when '57 Chevys were just another Chevy."***

they were entertainment." Rusty also said, "The dances I went to in the '60s were strictly rock and roll. The Beatles and the Beach Boys and that sort of thing. At our dances we danced to a lot of records. We had a few bands, but that was usually only for our Proms. We still have a lot of dances, but not as many as in the '50s and '60s. They kind of dwindled away."

Jerry also said, "Right after the war, we had the first Studebaker that came into Steamboat. My dad was a personal friend of the Studebaker dealer. They were six cylinders and they got about 25 miles to the gallon. They didn't have much power. That was in the '50s, when '57 Chevys were just another Chevy. Not too many kids owned newer cars. One of my friends had a 1948 Ford and one of Shirley's friends had a 1939 Plymouth. It would be a classic today. It'd be worth who knows how much today, but he bought it for \$75. I bought my first car right out of high school and I think I paid \$200 for it and it was a four year old Studebaker.

"There wasn't anything like a compact car. There were a few Volkswagens starting to come in, but mostly there were the big Chevys, Fords and Chryslers. There were a few Jeeps. Usually the old army Jeeps. They were four-wheel drive. I think our first four-wheel drive pickup was in 1962, and that was kind of a novelty. We just didn't have four wheel drive pickups on the ranch. We didn't fee that we needed them. The county plowed the roads out and they didn't do as good of a job as they do today. My mother would go to town once a week, which was probably sufficient. She bought items by the case and kept them in the basement.

"We didn't have stoplights in town as we do today. We just didn't have the business as we do now. You take the population of Steamboat at the time. It was around 1,200. I suppose most families owned one car, very few had two. And there just wasn't that much traffic. We were talking about going to the movies with our dates and you'd get out of the movie at 9:30. I can always remember that, and at a quarter to ten, the streets were bare."

Jerry told us about electricity when he was

little. "We had one of the first light plants in the county before REA was here. It was a small diesel generator in the basement. There was always electricity here and so I can hardly remember the point of not having it. We had a light plant two or three years before electricity came in."

We asked Jerry how he met his wife, and how old he was when they married. Jerry started by saying, "Shirley lived up the road about two miles and our parents were close friends. Our fathers were friends in high school. In grade school they went to the same city school together and Shirley and I just drifted together. It was love at first sight. I saw her when she was three months old. Shirley and I went off and on together in high school, and we came back and got married. We've been married 31 years."

Shirley added, "A lot of people got married a lot younger than we did. I suppose within two years, 80 percent of our graduating class was married. It's fun having your kids when you are



young because you have more patience and you enjoy them more. I wouldn't start a family at 30. If you're young, you have more patience with kids. I was 21 when I had my first child. We were married in Steamboat Springs at the Methodist Church. We were married in the church, and we wore the long dresses. We didn't have as many stand up with us back in those days, usually one, the bridesmaid."

We asked how many children Rusty and Jerry had. Jerry said, "We have three children. We have a daughter Sherry who is 30. She married a metallurgist engineer and they've been in South Africa for four years. They've toured all of Africa. Sherry came home around Thanksgiving. We have a daughter named Terry who is 29, and she lives in Hawthorn, Nevada which is a hundred miles south of Reno. They have two children. And our son, Larry, is on the ranch with

us." Rusty told us, "I have one daughter named Megan. She's 9 years old and she lives with her mother in California."

Rusty and Jerry both were in the service as well as their father. Jerry stated, "Our father went in when he was 18, he was drafted. He got to Denver and World War I was over. They released him and sent him home, so he spent three days in the army."

"I went into the army in 1955 right after the Korean War. I was a mountain cold weather training instructor, and I taught skiing in Camp Hale, which is by Leadville, in the wintertime, and rock climbing in Colorado Springs in the

***"My father was my dad, but he was also one of my best friends."***

summertime. We taught troops to ski, and winter survival out in the cold. They had little war games every winter. You were lucky if you didn't freeze to death. They took a lot of troops out of Kansas and places like that and they brought them up here and tried to make ski troops out of them. We lived in snow caves and winter tents, I haven't really enjoyed camping since."

Rusty told us, "I joined the service in 1967 and I had a year in Vietnam and then I had a couple of years in California. I was trained for Morse code, which wasn't real exciting. It was good in Vietnam because there was a lot of communicating going on over there. We took the Morse code, then we had back-up people, another group of people, that broke the code. We always got kick-back so we always knew what was going on, and where the troops were moving."

We asked Rusty what he learned from his father that has helped him today. "My father was my dad, but he was also one of my best friends. I respected him a lot. I think my father was one of the most honest people there was. I think honest people do a good job, and I try to do that. He was a lot braver than I am because he would go borrow all kinds of money to get what he wanted and he would work it off. I'm chicken to go borrow money."

We asked Jerry and Rusty about their ranches. Jerry began, "At one time, the family owned about 4,000 acres. You don't ask a farmer how many acres he's got or how many cattle he runs. Code of the West. Most ranchers I know won't give you a straight figure on either one, but you just don't ask them that in our society. We shouldn't ask our neighbor how many cattle he's got. We know how many he's got, but you wouldn't ask him."

Rusty said, "I think it's just like today, I wouldn't ask your dad how much he's getting paid."

Jerry also added, "It's no big secret, it's open.

You could go to the court house and find out. We're just raised that way. We're hesitant to give the acres and amount of cattle we own. I've been in the ranching business since I was 18. We do the same thing we've done all these years. The expense of ranching isn't what it used to be. The machinery is high because we used to be able to buy a new tractor for \$3,000 and it was the best you could buy. Now they cost \$50,000 to \$60,000. Our family used to hire a high school kid or a junior high kid, and hire him every summer until he graduated from high school. The kids we hired, if they took care of their money, could usually live with us.

"All our parents were used to having a lot of people around the house. My mother had three children, a husband, of course, and a hired man in the house, sometimes all together. Our grandfather lived with us also. Our mother cooked for five men three meals a day. We didn't have microwave ovens and electric stoves and stuff like that. The women were the ones that caught hell in the olden days because they did not have the modern conveniences."

Rusty said, "When I was a kid, I used to drive a team of horses to rake hay with. I was pretty young and didn't do it much. We had old trucks that turned around backwards and bucked hay. We made loose hay stacks. We went to square bales then and now we're getting into the big round bales. The big round bales keep better and they don't absorb as much moisture in the fall when it rains a lot. Square bales are kind of like a



***"I used to drive a team of horses to rake hay with."***

sponge, they soak it in. The square bales should be covered, but that's real expensive. There are different methods of rolling the hay off hydraulically."

We asked Rusty how inflation is affecting the farming and ranching. "I think everybody knows the cattle business is not too good right now.



***"We made loose hay stacks."***

Inflation and the cost of machinery is putting a lot of cowboys under. That's why I work at the ski hill in the winter. I'm supporting my cattle by working at the mountain. I guess it's all our hope that the cattle market will come back, so that we won't have to work a second job to keep going. I guess we are dedicated to our cows, and our ranches; that's why we try to keep it going however we can. My crew at the ski hill is probably 80 percent cowboys and farmers. They are doing the same thing the rest of us are doing, trying to keep our ranches going. Most of the crew on the mountain are younger men, and they're good people. They are very knowledgeable with machinery. They understand the value of the dollar, and they are not wasteful."

We also asked Rusty what his biggest headache is in ranching. "My biggest headache is the railroad tracks running through my ranch. It's always a worry to me because no matter how you build the fence there is always something that gets out on the track and gets run over. We don't have very good cooperation from the railroad, they don't want to build a fence. I haven't lost too many, but I do worry about it."

We asked Rusty what he enjoyed most about ranching. "I think it's the freedom you have. I have my horses and my dogs. You have to like your animals and your freedom and see if you can make it on your own and be your own boss."

We asked Rusty about the cost of running a ranch today compared to when he first got started. "I guess the price of beef has gone up, but so has inflation. In the '70s the cowboy made some fairly good money. At times we did alright, but in the '80s it's been real tough. Machinery expenses are the worst, followed by the cost of fuel and the interest rates."

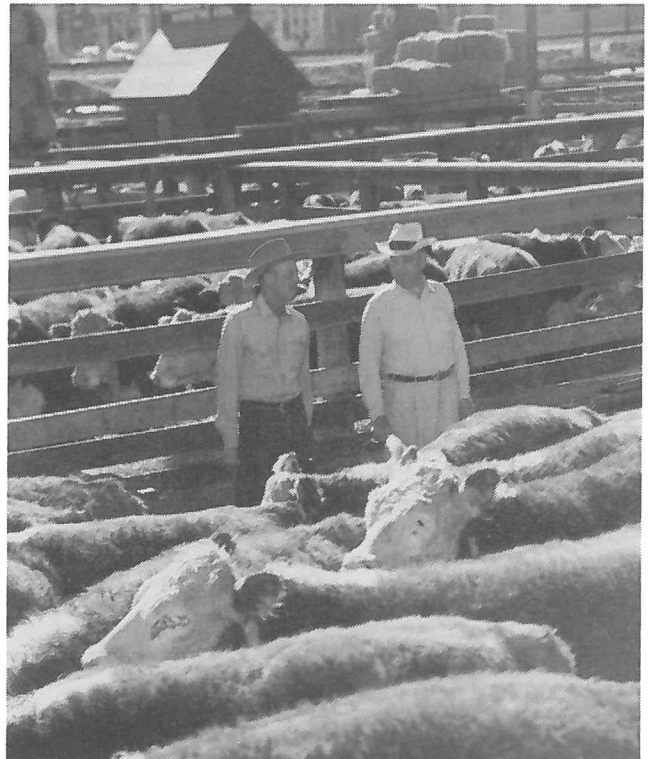
We asked Rusty how cattlemen are going to

adjust or change to get out of the slump they're in now. He said, "I really don't know. I think as in any business, be more efficient and be more organized. I think the cowboy should be more organized, though that would defeat the whole purpose of being a cowboy. That's why the prices aren't real good is because we aren't organized. I think most of us don't believe in unions or big organizations like that."

We asked Rusty what the future of Routt County will be and if it might get better. He said, "I don't think it's going to be very good. If the cattle market improves it could be alright, but I'm pretty skeptical about that."

We asked him what changes he's seen in Steamboat. He said, "I've seen a lot of changes in Steamboat. I can remember when I was a kid, the total population was about 1,200, and because it was a ranching and farming community at the time, everybody knew almost everybody else in town. Now it is a resort area, and knowing everybody doesn't come so easily."

Rusty explained to us about ranchers and what type of people they are. "I think they're unique people and they're good people. I hope that this area doesn't push them out. I kind of resent the fact that we raise food for all the people, and can't get a good price for it. That's why we're



***"The expense of ranching isn't what it used to be."***

proud people, because we feel like we're doing our thing for society, raising food for people, and right now it's real tough. We just want a fair deal. I don't think any of us expect to get rich."

Rusty has a second job at the ski hill. We asked

him how he got it and what he likes about it. "I had just got back from the army and went to college for a couple of years. My dad died so I went back to the ranch and during the first winter, I loaded trucks with hay for an extra job. I was just getting started on the ranch, and Gary Kline was slope maintenance manager on the hill at the time and he called me up and asked if I wanted a job, and I said yes. That's how I got started. They were having trouble finding heavy equipment operators to work at night and the pay wasn't very good at the time.

"The machines were smaller and they had kind of a brake system on the turning and now it's hydrostatic. I've had a few scares. You start sliding and get out of control, and you slide off in the trees. I think the scariest one is the left side of Drop Out and the left side of Upper Tornado too. You get on the edge and it kind of wants to suck you down into the trees. We've been sideways a lot, most of us. The machines today are the safest machine I've ever driven. They're a lot safer than a car, without a doubt. They'd be almost impossible to roll. If you lost a track on a real steep slope you could probably roll it. Usually you can tell when the track is starting to come off, so you just stop and get it straightened out.

"I like the machinery we operate up there and I like the people I work with; I have a good boss. He gives me a lot of freedom, and we're up there kind of by ourselves at night. The night crew can work about anything they want to, but we have to watch. If a storm is coming we have to leave the beginner slopes for the morning crew so they can

get the snow packed down for the beginner skiers.

"My job is on an on-call basis during the first of the ski season. They usually start skiing during Thanksgiving time. There are some of the guys on the cat crew that work there year-round, so they are always there. As the snow increases and the skiers increase, we just add on to our crew and most of the guys don't care whether they come early or not. In the spring we have a few guys that leave a little early because they do have their farming to get to and their cows to calve out. Most of us don't start calving until April. I have to be there, so I don't start calving until the mountain closes. I usually start about the 15th of April. I should have a little over a hundred calves this year.

"In the fall, after we get the hay up, before we start feeding and work at the ski hill, I usually take a few days of vacation. The last three years, I've skied Merchant Cup. So, I ski at least once every other week. This year since Merchant Cup started it's been every week. Some of the guys just don't seem to want to get up there and race. And I like to do it. Once a week is the maximum I get to do it, and that's only for just a few hours. The Merchant Cup is pleasure for me, I don't take it very seriously, I go to have fun."

Rusty and Jerry Nay have lived in Steamboat all their lives, and have been involved in ranching that whole time. With so many farmers and ranchers going under, their future looks dim. After interviewing Rusty and Jerry, Troy and I have become more aware of their situation. They just want a fair deal.

