

## Foreword

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**B**ill and Sandra McGee, co-authors of this photo memoir, are well-qualified to chronicle this true story of a special period in Nevada history.

Bill, as young Montana cowboy, worked his way to Nevada in 1947, via Wyoming, and is one of the few dude wranglers “still above ground” (as he puts it) who lived and worked on a leading Nevada dude ranch during the post-World War II era.

Sandra, a native of Southern California, has an enthusiasm for Nevada’s history that is catching. The mammoth photo-research and information-gathering from dude ranch guests and their offspring would have been impossible had it not been for Sandra’s tenacity to follow any and all leads relative to this time—a rather colorful time—in my State’s history.

Aside from exhaustive research, Bill and Sandra have added the words of some old-timers still with us—from dude ranchers and ranch guests to divorce attorneys—who lived and worked in the era. The end result: *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler*.

The book is Bill’s tribute to Emily Pentz Wood and is well-deserved and long overdue. As the proprietor of the famous Flying M F. guest ranch in Washoe Valley, Emmy brought a touch of class to the Nevada dude ranch business. She was loved by locals and guests alike. She introduced an element of “sophistication to the sagebrush,” if you will.

In 1931, the Nevada State Legislature reduced residency requirements for divorce in Nevada to six weeks. The grounds for divorce were “mental cruelty,” which conveniently covered every stretch of the imagination. With such reduced residency requirements and lenient grounds for divorce, compared to other states at the time, Nevada, in a sense, became the only choice. But by the early 1960s, changing attitudes about divorce and, in turn, increasingly more liberal divorce laws in other states put an end to the need for a migratory Nevada “six week cure.”

During the heyday, most divorce attorneys recommended top guest ranches to their more affluent clientele, generally located within twenty to thirty-five miles of Reno, and providing a free and easy lifestyle with a maximum of privacy from the press. Other options included Reno’s better hotels—the Riverside or the Mapes. At nearby Lake Tahoe, the Cal-Neva Lodge and Skywater Lodge catered to the six week guest. Even the established, staid, family-oriented Glenbrook Inn accommodated an occasional guest for a similar period and purpose.

Interesting, glamorous, intriguing, outrageous, sometimes scandalous stories of divorcés and the dude ranches patronized by the rich, the famous, the colorful, the others—divorce seekers all—persist today. Some in legend, some in myth, most in fact.

I have encouraged Bill and Sandra to create this “memoir within a pictorial” as have several other old-time Nevadans. Those of us who lived through the brief but fascinating, often raucous, period of migratory divorce want to be sure it is preserved for future generations and, as far as I know, this is the first book on the subject written *from a dude wrangler’s perspective*.

This pictorial will add to our lore and entertainment and will be consulted by historians, students, and history buffs of the West who want to know how we lived, how we spoke, what our attitudes were—and how we lived through it all. The authors’ dedicated work will surely help keep the day-to-day history of this period from being lost.

Bill McGee, as I have come to know him, tells it like it really was on a dude ranch when Reno was the “divorce capital of the world.”

I’m confident that this photo memoir by one of Nevada’s dude wranglers will help preserve this brief, but special, time in the history of our great Silver State.

—WILLIAM W. BLISS

GLENBROOK, NEVADA