

# CONFESIONS OF RED MEAT SURVIVORS

**S**ome of ranching's old-timers admit to ignoring the problems of cholesterol and other unnamed and often unsubstantiated handicaps. They believe that red meat is good, which is proven here, simply by age and attitude.

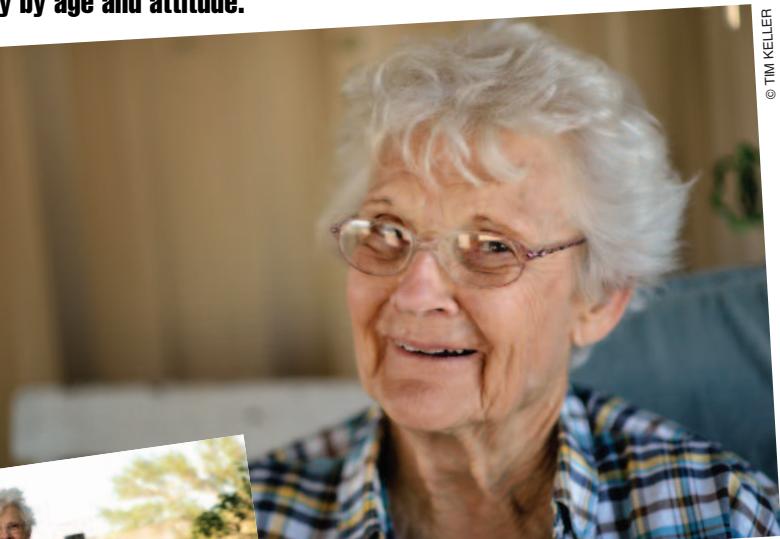
## NEW MEXICO Sadie Renfro, 90

The long way.

The dirt roads went on and on in New Mexico. Sadie Brown didn't care for them. During school years, she lodged with town families far from her own on the remote Brown Ranch in Long Canyon, 30 miles northeast of Folsom. "Winters were hell," she says, "and summers at home were heaven."

She spent her first four school years across the border in Branson, Colo., 20 miles from home. Then she spent six at Folsom School, and another year with an aunt and uncle at Otto, near Clayton where the Dust Bowl had recently changed everything. Just before her 17th birthday, she graduated with the class of 1940 from Des Moines School, 38 miles of dirt road from home.

"My grandfather, Texas cowboy John Thomas Brown, moved to Long Canyon and built the rock ranch house in the mid-



© TIM KELLER



© TIM KELLER

1880s, where I grew up," Sadie says. Today she lives a quarter mile up the road and her daughter Margaret lives in the rock house with husband Danny. Nephew Henry



COURTESY SADIE RENFRO

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
At 90, Sadie still loves her ranch life.  
► With husband Kenneth in 1957.  
► First birthday, 1924. ► Sadie is a passionate gardener.



Sadie attended business school in Albuquerque and in 1941 was working at Jordan's Clothing Store. That's where she met Kenneth Renfro. "He'd ride by on his motorcycle and whistle at me. I'd whistle back." They married in February 1942. They lived in the city and raised two daughters, Gloria and Margaret, but they all enjoyed extended stays at the ranch.

Sadie was vice president of a bank before retiring in 1980 to move with Ken back home to the Brown Ranch. They set their house beyond the rock house where they could see the whole valley. Together, they built up the cattle operation, winning awards

for their conservation and grazing management practices. Since Ken's passing in 1999, Sadie has continued with the help of her nephew and, more recently, daughter and son-in-law Margaret and Danny O'Quinn.

"I had the most wonderful childhood out here," Sadie says from her lush lawn. "We raised red shorthorns. Mom raised chickens and the garden. She canned, and we traded butter and eggs for groceries. Dad would hire hands to help with the hay crop. Mom and I cooked for the crews. We raised hay with just rain and flooding, opening the dams, and we used the team and wagon."

Last summer, the only green was Sadie's lawn. "Since 2000, it's been heck here, it's been so dry." She feeds her 50 cow-calf pairs daily. "I go out with Henry once a week to check them all. He has his cows and I have mine but we buy together and ship together. I order my own hay, do all my own business management. I've never missed a

branding or shipping. I've always been proud of my cattle. They're my life."

At 90, she's still pretty independent. She does her own grocery shopping and cooking and is a passionate gardener. Last year she canned a bumper crop of apricots. When Margaret tried once to take an armload of firewood from her, Sadie rebelled, saying: "What are you trying to do, kill me? I need my exercise."

There are no other concessions to her age. She's loved to dance. "I learned all the steps from my Uncle Charlie at the country dances in the basement of the Luna Theater in Clayton when I was a schoolgirl."

Mail's delivered three times a week and she reaches her mailbox at six miles. It's 83 miles to Clayton. She could take the short cut, just 63 miles, but that's dirt road all the way and there's no cell-phone service anywhere.

At home in Long Canyon, she takes her evening walk. Deer, elk, and wild turkeys share the trails. Bears and rattlesnakes are more common than she'd like. A bobcat recently killed seven of eight kittens so now she and Margaret keep a new litter sheltered at night. Cats help keep the rattlesnake population down, but other wildlife keeps the cat population down.

Gloria and her husband Jim have always run cattle near Clayton. Asked about the future, Margaret says, "Both daughters will make sure this ranch keeps going. It's been in the family too long not to." And they'll have plenty of help. Sadie has six grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-granddaughter.

Last June five generations helped celebrate Sadie's 90th birthday at Freedom Outpost in Folsom. Friends came from near and far. Eloy Gonzales' band provided the music. The dancing went deep into the night where, more often than not, there was Sadie, in the middle of the dance floor, cuttin' the rug.—*Tim Keller*

## OREGON Bernard Joseph Ruda, 85

Things were different then.

Bernard Joseph Ruda was born Aug. 20, 1928, in San Luis Obispo on the south-central California coast. His great-grandfather Antone Ruda pioneered See Canyon, building a home and ranch there.

"Things were different then," says Bernard, who rode a horse to school until fifth grade. He has two brothers and two sisters. "Dad didn't let us ride with a saddle—he thought we would get hurt. He didn't know that when we got out of his sight we would race all the way to school."

He attended school in Perfuma Canyon, See Canyon, then junior high in San Luis Obispo.

He left school at 15 to work for a cattle buyer in Salinas. His job was to drive a little truck around to pick up cattle. After that, he drove a tractor for California Farms. That lasted until he was 20 and the rodeo trail led him and a bull-rider friend, Sonny Adams, to Texas.

They went to four or five rodeos and Bernard won or placed at all of them. Mesquite was their last stop and he won the bareback riding. Shortly after the rodeo was over, a man brought a letter to Bernard, saying, "Uncle Sam wants you."

Bernard caught a bus back to California and while waiting for his draft papers to be processed he worked for the railroad in San Luis Obispo, then spent 18 months in Germany in the infantry.

In 1952, he returned home



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bob at Squaw Creek Ranch, 1942. ▶Bob (right) with sister Joy and brother Paul in 1927 in Riggins, Idaho. ▶Bob in service uniform, 1944. ▶Bob standing in f

PHOTOS COURTESY RUDA FAMILY

and married the love of his life, Faye Moore. When their children were small, Bernard built and sold houses in See Canyon and San Luis Obispo.

Bernard was an all-around hand and when the kids—Benny, Joe and Rhonda—were older, he took them to rodeos, teaching them the sport. All three became champions at both the local and professional levels.

During their marriage, Bernard and Faye lived on many ranches from Days Creek, Ore., to Modesto, Calif. While working for the Grange Company in Snelling, Bernard roped a coyote and put him in the tack room. One of the men who worked there was a dog trainer so Bernard told him: "I've got a dog that won't look at a cow. He just needs some training. He is right

in there." The man went into the tack room where he found the coyote bouncing off the walls and the door shut behind him. After realizing the "dog" was untrainable, Bernard opened the door, and man and coyote escaped. (The man is still a friend.)

After a lot of moving, Bernard and Faye found "home" in Baker County, Ore. They ran cow/calf pairs and a herd of nice horses.

Bernard enjoyed being horseback and helping his neighbors brand, gather or move pastures. Whenever anyone needed help, Bernard was there with his dog Cindy and his horse Yeller.

Later in life, he and Faye liked spending summers at cow camp on the Minam River with their good friends Mike and Ann Trindle.

They've worked hard to make their home a place where anyone is welcome at any time. It is a haven for children, grandchildren or friends who need an ear to listen, a place to rest, or a yummy meal.

I am thankful to be one of those grandkids who had an ear to listen and a meal made with love.—*Camie Painter*