

# **Interviews with Sue Brackenbury and Amy Brackenbury Larson August 5 and September 2, 2015**



## **Index:**

- **How a gal from Chicago got to a ranch in Colorado; p. 1**
- **A legacy of musicians, miners, ranchers – and adventurers; p. 3**
- **A life-changing decision; p. 6**
- **Raising sheep in cattle country; p. 8**
- **Family life at Chimney Rock Ranch; p. 11**
- **The big flood of June 1965; p. 13**
- **Memories of Livermore School; p. 15**
- **End of an era for the sheep industry; p. 18**
- **Extended family ties; p. 20**
- **Ghost stories from Trail Creek Ranch; p. 21**
- **The story of the Elephant Barn; p. 26**

## **Appendix:**

- **Brackenbury Family Tree**
- **Brackenbury Photo Addendum – A Family Album**

**Interview with  
Amy Brackenburg Larson and Sue Nolde Brackenburg,  
daughter and wife of Richard John Brackenburg,  
August 5 and September 2, 2015  
at Sue Brackenburg's home in Fort Collins**

**Interview and transcription by Linda Bell**

\* \* \*

**How a gal from Chicago got to a ranch in Colorado**

**Sue:** When I was a little girl I wanted to be a cowboy and someone gave me a book called *Star, an Indian Pony*. I read that. It was about a girl whose father was the chief and she had her own pony, and I think that started my love of horses. I had barely ever seen a horse. But reading about that horse and the Indian story, and the fact that the horse and the girl had a relationship... .

**Amy:** So that was in Deerfield, Illinois?

**Sue:** Yes. We moved to Deerfield in 1936, I believe. I was born January 5, 1930, in Chicago. My maiden name was Nolde. It's German. My first names are Sue Mary. I went to Highland Park High School which was three miles away, just on the edge of Lake Michigan. I graduated from there. I played the violin in the orchestra, was the concert mistress there, and I came out to Boulder to college. I didn't know much about it. I'd never seen it, just heard about it, and barely heard about it. People back there then didn't know that Colorado had a university, because everything in Chicago focuses on New York. Chicago wants to be New York!

I went to Boulder because I had a friend going there for summer school. She wrote to me such glowing tales about the fun she was having in summer school. She was going to stay on. So we both got to go and be in Boulder. We stayed on through our college years. We both met our husbands-to-be there. I was majoring in all kinds of things. I think I started in journalism – no, I started in art, and then went into journalism, and then to English literature. It wasn't a degree of any value. I still played (the violin), this was right after World War II. It was 1947 and I was 17. I met (Dick) in the orchestra. He was back from the War. He was in the

Navy. He went in and he was stationed at Pearl Harbor. This is after the attack and he was wiring rockets onto the wings of fighter planes. It was very precise work. He was an electrician's mate. That was his technical title. While he was there – he was there a couple of years – the head of the Naval base, Admiral 'who-ever-he-was' put out a call. He said, "I want to have dinner dances for my officers and their wives to keep up the morale here." So he asked, "Does anyone play an instrument?" Well, my husband played many, many instruments. He didn't have any with him, but they provided instruments for these people. He probably auditioned. He played oboe as a classical instrument in symphony for 30 years, in the Fort Collins Symphony. He also played saxophone in jazz bands and in the Navy. It was the big band era, the era of Glen Miller and the big bands.

They would play half the night and sometimes they would fly to the other Hawaiian Islands and back after the gig.

**Amy:** So basically he became a musician and he wasn't doing the electrical work ... he just got to play music all night.

**Sue:** Everybody loved it when the band came in. During the day – they were near Pearl Harbor – he said he fought the battle of "Waikiki Beach". During the day, the band guys were all on the beach.

**Amy:** I don't know how he really felt about all these other guys who were fighting at Guadalcanal and all those big battles.

**Sue:** I think he was very glad he wasn't there. Everybody was glad not to be in the South Pacific.

**Amy:** He came back from the war and went to CU and that's where you met him, in the orchestra.

**Sue:** Right. Yes. He played the oboe in the orchestra. He was going to be a professional musician. He was a music major. He was not really interested in musical education, he didn't want to be a teacher.

**Amy:** He worked for my grandfather on the ranch once in a while, but the family didn't live on the ranch. They actually lived here in Fort Collins.

**Sue:** At 701 Elizabeth Street. It's a pretty house across from the Methodist Church at Stover and Elizabeth. They built that house. In those days, if a house

was being built – unless you lived in a city – people would take Sunday drives and they would go and see, keep track of any new house that was being built because it was a novelty. Not like today.

His parents married in 1920, I believe.

### **A legacy of musicians, miners, ranchers – and adventurers**

**Amy:** I have the old mandolin that my grandfather bought in 1909 that he used to serenade my grandmother. He was also a musician. He played the flute, and he played the piano, and a bunch of other instruments. He played honky-tonk on the piano.

**Sue:** He wasn't really very good, but he had no qualms, he didn't care. That was Richard A. Brackenbury; A. for Atholstan. Then there was a great-grandfather that homesteaded in Medicine Bow in Wyoming.

**Amy:** Did he play music? My great-grandfather?

**Sue:** Yes, he played the flute. Somewhere I have a picture of the four generations. He also was educated. He went to the School of Mines in Golden. My mother in law, Flora Belle Raddatz, Richard Atholstan's wife, came from Salt Lake City where her father, a German immigrant – I think she was one of five, six children – was a miner. He worked at Leadville. He'd worked his way across the west, just as my husband's grandfather had worked his way west, ending up in Medicine Bow. They didn't know each other of course until they both those men retired to La Jolla, California. That's where my in-laws met each other.

**Amy:** But my grandfather Raddatz, who was my grandmother's father, had a gold and silver mine in Utah called the Tintic Mine.

**Sue:** That was the name of an area. That was the "Tintic" area and his mine was the Tintic Standard. Gold and Silver. But he was a poor man until he bought the claim and sold shares of his Tintic Standard Mine so he would have investors money with which to develop this piece of land that he felt was a possibility for a strike. My mother-in-law said that as a little girl she remembered her father every night reading into the late night, reading his mining books. Mining and engineering and geology. So he was self-educated. These people did not have what we think of as college educations.

His father-in-law, the miner, from Salt Lake City, invited his new son-in-law, Richard Atholstan to work for him in the mine, in the mining field. That's why he promptly sent him to the School of Mines in Golden.

**Amy:** It turned out he hated that.

**Sue:** He hated being underground.

**Amy:** He didn't like any of it.

**Sue:** He really should have been a coach, or a teacher because my father-in-law was a man dedicated to children. He was a "pied piper." Anywhere he went ...

**Amy:** ... dinner parties, anything. If there were kids ... We called my grandfather Pawsie.

**Sue:** ... he was not talking to the adults, he was with the children.

**Amy:** He would do gymnastics tricks, human pyramids.

**Sue:** He was a born teacher. He taught half the town of Fort Collins, as Dick and his two sisters grew up here. Their father taught all their friends how to ski, how to water ski, how to swim, diving – he was the diving coach at CSU.

**Amy:** Ice-skating.

**Sue:** He was a great athlete himself.

**Amy:** But the thing was ... You know, he was this athletic man and mom had said he was talking about when he was 66 he was having this pain in his arm. He thought he had bursitis in his elbow or his shoulder, and what it turned out to be was a heart attack.

**Sue:** It was the left arm that was bothering him. He died young at 66.

**Sue:** My in-laws bought the ranch in 1925 from a number of people. And as adjacent properties came on the market my father-in-law would buy them.

**Amy:** So all these people had these little homesteads that they couldn't make a living on. In the east they could have made a living out of ... what is a homestead?

A hundred and sixty acres? Back there they could put ten cows on an acre. Here you need, for each cow/calf unit, you need 45 acres. Or for each sheep you need 35 acres if you don't want to feed them year-round. So they came out here and there was nothing they could farm. Especially up in that area.

**Sue:** They would try to farm where winters were long and summers were short.

**Amy:** So places like Trail Creek Ranch, where we live now, were lost to the bank about ten times because people would come up and think, "oh, I can make a living doing this." But it was pretty impossible on a small acreage.

**Sue:** My father-in-law amassed the acreage for the ranch. He had given up the mining early and was running sheep. He would buy sheep, lease land, and they were up in Twin Falls, Idaho. That's where my husband was born. That was Richard Atholstan Brackenbury. Then, my husband is Richard John. The grandfather was Richard ... just Richard.

**Amy:** My father was born in Salt Lake City. A twin.

**Sue:** In Salt Lake City because they were on their way to somewhere.

**Amy:** Idaho probably.

**Sue:** No, they were in Idaho. She didn't know she was having twins, but she began to have labor pains. They got on the train immediately because her brother-in-law was an obstetrician in Salt Lake City. So they get down there, and she has these twins prematurely in 1925. They each weighed only three pounds. The other one never breathed.

**Sue:** He was in an incubator in the Salt Lake City hospital. He was born in the hospital. They had incubators in those days and they were giving the preemies pure oxygen. By some miracle he didn't go blind. Maybe that had just been discovered or he was just lucky. He was in an incubator for a couple of months. 1925, April 16<sup>th</sup> he was born. Yesterday was the anniversary of his death, 11 years ago. He would have been 80 at his next birthday which I always thought was pretty good for somebody born preemie in 1925.

## **A life-changing decision**

**Sue:** When he proposed to me at Boulder, he was going to be a professional musician and he was going to go to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. (Eastman Kodak.)

**Sue:** He didn't know about Julliard. But he didn't go either place, because in that interim summer I was back in Illinois, at my home, working, and he was working on the ranch. Well, what's more ideal than doing ranch work in Colorado in the summer? And my husband's sister and her husband were already living on the ranch. They were a lot of fun, they were a little older than we were. We had a good time together. That was Barbara and Rob Fullerton. Then my husband decided it made his father so happy that he decided he would work on the ranch. He liked it.

**Sue:** He was always a musician by nature but he was a rancher by trade. And he learned the craft. That's when we had sheep.

**Amy:** And he was a little man. He was only 5'...

**Sue:** ... 5'8", maybe when I met him.

**Amy:** Really? He was always lifting heavy things. Then he weighed ... like, what was his highest weight that you knew.

**Sue:** Probably about 130 lbs. And I weighed more than that when I had you.

**Amy:** There are four of us. I'm the oldest. Then my sister Ann was four years younger, and then my sister Alyssa is five years younger, then my brother Chris is six years younger. Ann died a couple of years ago. Alyssa lives here in Fort Collins and Chris lives in San Diego and he's a musician as well. He's a drummer and does sound systems for bands, then he also does apartment renovations. Actually, my sister is kind of doing that too. She buys mobile homes and then renovates them and rents them out. She sings with the Choice City Singers. I made my career as an artist, but it looks like we're making more money playing music now. We play two nights a week at the two dude ranches, Cherokee Park Ranch and Sundance Trails at Red Feather. And then we play other gigs with friends of ours who have a band called "Balance and Swing". They play ... they actually have a music festival up the road from us called Moose Fest at their cabin.

So we play with them. They play at the D.A. Russell Days in Cheyenne and they play vintage, turn-of-the-century music. We play with them when we're lucky. Then we play for weddings and things like that. Musical Zoo down here in Fort Collins, we play for them.

**Sue:** To her benefit, she sells a number of paintings during the summer to guests at Cherokee Park Guest Ranch. And they come from all over the world, and many of them are repeat customers because it's a wonderful experience and then these people buy paintings. They come again and buy more paintings. Then they invite Amy and Lars to come visit them, which they are always too busy to do. Or too poor, I'm not sure which.

**Sue:** We lived at the ranch and so did Dick's sister and her husband, Barbara and Rob Fullerton, but Dick's father commuted from Fort Collins to the ranch – 30 miles to the lower ranch. The upper ranch, now the Trail Creek Ranch, is where Amy and Lars have lived for almost all of their married life.

My husband would come down when he had to play in the orchestra.

**Amy:** And then he would bring us down to music lessons. We all took music lessons, all the siblings. On Wednesday we would go to our various music lessons.

**Sue:** Everybody had to have piano lessons. It was just ...

**Amy:** ... like learning to read. It was a gift. Mom always said, "Someday you'll thank me for this." So, thank you Mom. I'm thanking you now.

**Sue:** I was right, wasn't I? She's glad now that she practiced.

**Amy:** We lived at what we called "Chimney Rock Ranch," on the south side of (CR) 80C, the Cherokee Park Road.

**Sue:** (The rock) looks like a man's head. You can see his nose and it looks like he's wearing a big fur hat, not a brimmed hat. Looks like a man really.

**Amy:** It looks like a mountain man with his fur hat. The reason they called it "chimney rock" is because you can climb just about to the top, but the cap then, you can't get up the cap but you can crawl through a hole and go up straight through the middle, which I never had the guts to do.



**Sue:** You can stand on the top. And I never did, either!

**Amy:** You walk along a skinny little ledge and then you have to make a step that's a leap of faith three feet across where you step across to the other side of the ledge to keep going. And I can't do that. I still can't. Maybe I'll put that on my bucket list.

### **Raising sheep in cattle country**

**Sue:** The majority of our ranching was sheep. The theory – I'm sure it wasn't original – but my father-in-law said the sheep will graze the hills and the cattle will graze the meadows.

**Amy:** Sheep are browsers. And cattle are grazers. As it turned out ... but at first it was only sheep.

**Sue:** We ran 150 cows.

**Amy:** Then 350 when you got rid of the sheep.

**Sue:** We used to run 2000 ewes and I'm not sure how many bucks we had. Then when summer came and the lambs were big enough to walk, we walked them four days to the top of the Mummy Range.

**Amy:** The first night they spent on Prairie Divide, the second night they spent at the dump in Red Feather, which – there's a story for that.

**Sue:** We were friends of the people who had the general store (in Red Feather Lakes) and they told us one day a woman, one of the local campers up there, came in running and said, "there are gypsies camped at the dump." It was us.

**Amy:** There were tents. There were sheep herders.

**Sue:** Everybody slept in a tepee tent.

**Amy:** When Ann and I went, we slept on the ground. We slept under the stars. We had a sleeping bag and we were both in the same one, which was good because it was going to be too cold. I do remember doing (the drive). My dad had said, "now put your clothes under your sleeping bag", which we didn't do, and we woke

in the morning and our clothes were frozen stiff. And our boots were icy. We were cold all day, riding along. The might have been the end of August.

**Amy:** I think we were bringing them down. What month did you take them up?

**Sue:** July. They were up there six or seven weeks every year. There was constant water on the pass. The water was coming out of the glaciers and snow drifts there. It was wonderful. There were bears up there. There were coyotes. And they were the predators. We'd lose 100 sheep a year to predators up there.

**Amy:** Up there on the Mummies, you would. The sheep herders would shoot the bears or anything else that was out there.

**Sue:** If they could.

**Amy:** We do have a bear skin that one of the sheep herders had shot down on the ranch. But we never saw a bear down on the ranch – only one that was down by our ranch house.

**Sue:** It was kind of a small one.

**Amy:** The bears would run through the sheep flock, knock over the sheep and tear off the udder and lap the milk. Then they would run to the next one. It was just a blood bath.

**Sue:** That was if they got loose up there. The sheep were divided into two bands and we'd try to keep them separate making the trip. It made it a little less a problem for traffic. We had a herder with each band and then for the trip we hired extra people, most of them of Mexican descent from downtown, a place called ... the Pines Hotel. That's where the herders stayed. It was two-story on the funny little one block street ... the building is still there.

**Amy:** It was downtown near the Silver Grill. My grandfather would go and walk around downtown and see who wanted to come up and herd sheep. Everyone loved my grandfather. He was so nice to everybody. He treated everyone just like ...

**Sue:** ... an old friend.

**Amy:** Yeah, an old friend. As a result everyone was...

**Sue:** Who knows if they knew what they were getting into.

**Sue:** I'm sure my father-in-law built the cabin up on the Mummies with the sheepherders. We had a camp tender and he was herd employee up there and he lived in the cabin. It was anybody ...

**Amy:** ... who could cook.

**Sue:** And he had the mules. Every week the herders would make a list of groceries that they needed. They would give it to the camp tender who came to get the list. The camp tender would ride down to Sky Ranch, the Lutheran Camp. Then my husband, or originally my father-in-law, would meet them with the groceries from town.

**Amy:** I remember the groceries ... corn flakes, Spam, Crisco, sugar of course and pinto beans – lots of pinto beans. I'm sure they shot their own fresh meat.

**Sue:** Then the herders would have relatives who would come up to visit them and probably go home with a couple sheep.

**Sue:** Another hazard was – on the trail there would be timber cutters around Red Feather, you know, loggers. And their children would happen to make friends with a little lamb, and .... (Sue swipes her throat with her hand)

**Amy:** Yeah, and rams were always disappearing. The sheepherders -- if they didn't have anything else to do, always kept a rifle so they could shoot a deer.

**Sue:** ... or any ewes the bears attacked or killed. They probably did have fresh meat and butchered their own.

**Amy:** But not fruits and vegetables, but course maybe they ate native plants. Who knows if they knew anything about native plants.

**Sue:** The sheepherders' lists were interesting. You know, they spoke broken English of course and they probably never went to school, and so they would ... their lists were always interesting and you'd have to figure out what they meant.

**Amy:** I remember they would pack up boxes of groceries. When they weren't up on the Mummy, we had some herders who stayed year `round and one was Frank Cordova who stayed with the sheep down on the ranch all year.

**Sue:** We probably didn't know how to spell his name. He probably didn't know how to read or write.

**Amy:** But he was a great guy. He was friendly and he was so nice. He had a dog that helped him herd the sheep. He used a whistle.

**Sue:** A little guy. The dogs were wonderful. They would do the trail work. These were not fancy dogs but most of them were some kind of shepherd breeds that all herd naturally.

**Amy:** So who was the sheep herder that ...? I heard a story about one of the sheep herders that would collect wool out of the fence, he would spin it by hand, and then he'd knit it with bailing wire.

**Sue:** Those were the Basques herders. That was up in Idaho. There were no Basques around here. Southern Wyoming, just at the border, there was a big ranch that was Basque. But we didn't ever employ Basques. There was only one other fellow raising sheep when I came here in 1951, the last day of 1950. And there was only one other fellow raising a lot of sheep. That was .... Ed Monroe. He was north of Owl Canyon, or up that way. Box Elder?

**Amy:** You can still see the trails the sheep made on the hills.

### **Family life at Chimney Rock Ranch**

**Sue:** When we were married, we were in the sheep business, and the cattle too. Ever since – that was 1950. And they'd been doing that. He was raising both.

**Amy:** We had a big shed for lambs. A big long shed that had a fiberglass roof and low log walls. The light could shine in.

**Amy:** Yeah, they put that (fiberglass) on the lambing shed.

**Sue:** Oh, the little lambing shed? The sides were about as high as that cabinet (pointing to a low cabinet in the room). When they wanted to graft a lamb on to a ewe, they would put the two of them in there, in a small confined space. I thought you were talking about the big sheep shearing shed which still stands. It has a long sloping roof. That's at the lower ranch. The horse corral there is in good shape, I guess.

**Sue:** I must tell you one funny story. I was relatively new to the ranch. And this stranger came into the ranch yard there, and I was the only one out in the yard there. And he said, “Where’s Bosman?” I said, “Bosman? There aren’t any Bosmans around here.” I said, “there’s Sloan, and Wickersham ...” “No,” he said, “Bosman.” He was from Texas and he wanted the “boss man.” I had no idea what a “Bosman” was. But I truly loved it and my husband loved the fact that he was his own boss. I should have called him “Bosman” ....

**Amy:** The way the ranch looked when we lived there and when Chet Wahl and Dot Wahl had moved there with their son, they lived there and they were – well, cleanliness was next to Godliness.

**Sue:** Neatness.

**Amy:** Everything was painted. There was not one bit of peeling paint, not one piece of junk...

**Sue:** No piece of trash, no rusting equipment.

**Amy:** Never in sight. We might have had rusting equipment on the property, but it was all back, actually behind Chimney Rock. The implements were all put away in barns so you didn’t see any of that. It was trim and neat and not a speck of trash anywhere on that place. It was beautiful. We have pictures of the lower ranch, right?

**Sue:** There’s a story about the little ranch house. That was the bunk house until we – my husband decided – until we decided, to live there. He actually made the decision: “You know what? I’m not going to be a musician; I’m going to be a rancher.” So ... but you’re young, you’re flexible, and that’s good. I like that too.

**Amy:** So they moved that house from the corner of (CR) 82E. I think the northwest corner of 82E down there. I don’t know if they hooked some ropes on it and dragged it down the road.

**Sue:** It had been a post office. That’s the one which was moved. (Likely the old Cherokee Park Post Office.) That’s the house now closest to 80C – the Cherokee Park Road. The bunk house, which was remodeled by Louie Roberts who lived in LaPorte ... my father-in-law paid Louie to go up and remodel it so we had a bathroom and a kitchen. There was a big wood stove in there for the herders. There was a pump house. Our telephone was a party line in 1950.

**Amy:** Our number was 315. What else about the little house. It was three rooms. The kitchen, the living room and a bedroom. So I was born there. Where did I sleep?

**Sue:** We moved out of the bedroom. Well, we were there for a while, about six months, and then we decided, we had a Simons hide-a-bed that would fold up, and we decided we're sleeping in there and Amy had the bedroom because you want to keep the baby asleep at all cost.

**Amy:** They put an addition on.

**Sue:** We put an addition on in the front. That was for Amy and Ann, and I was pregnant.

**Amy:** They added a bedroom that was to the east, and my sister Ann and I stayed there. In bunks. And then in the little old bedroom, Alyssa and Chris stayed there. Then there was another addition on the west side...

**Sue:** And a larger living room because the living room became the dining room, which we needed by then. Then there was a pump house. Every now and then ...

**Amy:** ... everyone would get diarrhea.

**Sue:** The water would have kind of metallic taste and that meant a rodent had fallen into the well.

**Amy:** So the men would go fish out the mice. But the well wasn't very deep at all. Maybe about 10 feet deep.

**Sue:** The creek was right there.

**Amy:** So on the west side of the house there was a sunken-in place. What was that from – was that where they had the water come? I think that may have been where the spring was? They had the water come there and then stored it in where the well was.

### **The big flood of June 1965**

**Amy:** In 1969 ...

**Sue:** No, it couldn't have been '69 because we weren't there in '69.

**Amy:** Maybe it was '66.

**Sue:** Wahls were there.

**Amy:** We'd gotten a call in the middle of the night from the Sloans. They lived on 82E. They said a flood was coming.

**Sue:** They lived nearer to Prairie Divide. That was Art Sloan.

**Amy:** Let's see. So the Wahls came down the hill – they lived up on the hill. They came down the hill and said, “you kids, get out of bed, there's a flood coming.” And I was raising a German shepherd puppy. I had it in a box and I was feeding it a bottle. It had been an orphan. So I said, “well can I take my dog?” “Sure, bring your dog.” So we all put on our rubber boots and raincoats and go out and we had to wade between the two houses because the house was completely surrounded with water by then.

**Sue:** It was just almost coming into that bunkhouse.

**Amy:** Your house... . So we waded across there, water is pouring in my boots, we get up to the Wahls and we sat up there. Dad and Chet were down there trying to get vehicles on both sides of that bridge because they knew ... well, it was a culvert and I think the culvert had gotten dammed up with the flood.

**Sue:** Oh yeah. They knew it would break through.

**Amy:** So they were getting vehicles all set and eventually the water did break through.

**Sue:** We couldn't get over to the barns with the vehicles.

**Amy:** How did you get over to the barns? Couldn't get over for a long time.

**Sue:** Maybe there was one vehicle over there.

**Amy:** The culvert was on our land. It was right there next to the bunkhouse. This was the North Fork of the Rabbit Creek.

**Sue:** It was a storm that just didn't move.

**Amy:** We had nine inches of rain in one night. It washed out the main road, it washed out everybody's roads. Our well – we had to boil water for a long time because it just poured in the well.

**Sue:** Ora Sivers is the one who called me. She was the schoolteacher who lived with the Sloans. She called and said, "Sue, get out of your house, there is a flood coming." I said, "you're kidding." We'd had a nice sunset, the rain was over, it was getting dark – I said, "you're kidding." "No I'm not kidding – get out of your house," she said. It moved their house off its foundation. They had a large house. That's where Boxer Ranch is now. So we knew it was coming.

The Big Thompson Flood was bad too. That was horrible. But I don't think in the Big Thompson we were as badly affected. That might have just been local, where we were. The Big Thompson Flood came later. (July, 1976)

**Amy:** We were living at the Upper Ranch then. From our house it was constant lightning. The sky was lit up the entire time. Lightning flashing, and constant thunder. But we didn't get much of anything up there. Parts of 80C were flooded out. The one in the 60s happened on June 9<sup>th</sup>. I think. Somewhere around there. It washed out a bunch of places on the Cherokee Park Road. My dog lived.

### **Memories of Livermore School**

**Amy:** I went to Livermore School. There were three schoolrooms.

**Amy:** They eventually got to the point where they used the downstairs basement and the two rooms upstairs as well. Thirty-five kids was the max when I went there. Mike Ashby and I were the two that were always ... from first grade through sixth grade, always in the same grade. Red's kid. (The Ashbys) drove the school bus which was a station wagon. No seatbelts. They had like a little sign they strapped on to the top that said School Bus.

**Sue:** They were paid to drive.

**Amy:** She and Red would take turns driving it. It was a blast. We had so much fun. All the kids. The Wickershams, the Ashbys, Ron Krizan ... I don't think he



rode our bus, I think he rode the Red Feather bus. The Rouses – they lived down there at the Lower Unit of Cherokee Park for a time (State wildlife unit).

**Sue:** Anyway, I have to tell you one story about the teachers. They had a parents day and invited any parents to come down. And so I wanted to show my interest in their education. I sat there a while. The teacher, Mrs. ... was teaching them history, no, geography. She was teaching them about the South, and plantations and so forth. She said, “Now children, what do you call those big white posts in front of the houses, the plantation houses?” Nobody could remember. She said, “Now those are pillars – they’re not sofa ‘pillas’, these are the ‘pillas’ that hold up the roof.” She was part hillbilly I think. That was a stretch.

**Amy:** Speaking of funny stories. I have to tell this story. I don’t know if it matters, but at Livermore Hall they would have the big Christmas event. It was a party for the whole community and everybody smoked. The place was just filled with smoke. Anyway, my brother and sister ... my sister might have been a first-grader, or maybe it was my brother. They are standing up and they are a year apart, five and six, or six and seven, they’re standing there in front of the group, and they are supposed to sing their song.

**Sue:** The two of them had rehearsed.

**Amy:** They’d practiced “Jingle Bells” hadn’t they?

**Sue:** No, it was “I’ve been Working on the Railroad.”

**Amy:** No, no, they’d practiced “Jingle Bells.” And they are supposed to sing “Jingle Bells” and they start out together singing “Jingle Bells”, but then my brother – he’s a year younger – he decides he’s going to start singing “I’ve been Working on the Railroad.” My sister is trying to sing, and she’s looking at him, glaring. She stops singing and turns and faces him. She just gives him the worse look with her fists clenched, but just keeps singing. He’s really in with the crowd now. It was just such a statement on sexuality, brother-sister, man-woman.

**Amy:** The Livermore School in those days was just a cube – a cube of brick. And the playground at that time were two big swing sets and two slides – two stainless steel slides with the hump in the middle – and a merry-go-round, but people were always falling off it and getting hit in the back of the head. It was a disaster. We did have a baseball diamond in the back. Colin Crim did teach us how to play baseball. That makes me think. He taught some classes to us when we were

probably fifth, sixth grade – I think in third grade the entire school had hunter safety classes. We all got hunter safety at that time. I thought that was brilliant. Seriously, I think everyone should be able to know how to safely handle a gun. I think it's crazy not to.

**Sue:** Especially country kids.

**Amy:** Then he also taught us an agricultural class. All the breeds of domestic animals, what they there used for, how they were raised, how you did it right, what they were fed. That was a wonderful class for an agricultural school. And, he taught an entire unit on automotive and engine work. It's why I understand how vehicles work and tractors work and all that sort of thing. It was a great thing. He really taught the kids things they needed to know, not just the classics.

**Amy:** I was in 4-H. I raised that puppy for the dog obedience class. It got champion at the Larimer County Fair. I've loved training dogs and have had dogs. I don't think our folks wanted us to do big livestock and I didn't want my kids to do it either. Because you have to go down there and stay, you have to be there every day, clean their pens, and all that. They are so big and a bigger problem. My girls were in 4-H as well. Sierra took her dog to 4-H and did well with him. Her dog "Howdy." Then Delaney ... I did entomology as well in my 4-H class so Delaney did entomology the first year and got a blue ribbon at the county fair. Then the second year she got a blue ribbon. She worked with Boris Kondratieff up at CSU and she got a blue ribbon at the county fair and went to state and won champion at the State Fair. She had to do a big bug collection, and insect collection.

**Sue:** A live insect collection....

**Amy:** The first year you do a small insect collection. Then the next year you do a bigger collection and you also do a project. Her project working with Boris was a forensic project where she learned that if – they don't call it a body, they call it the "subject" – has been dead out in the environment for a certain number of days at certain temperatures, you can collect insects off the body and find out how long it's been there by what stage the insects are in during their life cycle. Forensic science. That's what she did for the Colorado State 4-H.

**Amy:** The girls should be musical. took violin clear through high school and Sierra took piano all though high school.

## **End of an era for the sheep industry**

**Sue:** ... there was more and more government scrutiny of everything as CSU got bigger and agencies got bigger. We had a lot of Forest Service leases. Without that six weeks for 4000 sheep (on Forest Service land) it was not profitable to be in the sheep business. They cut us off from that Mummy Range saying ... We were taking the same number that we always had, but they said it was hard on the grass. It seemed – my husband’s theory was – that these experts, either in college and out of college, they maybe came from back east and not realized how it was supposed to look. Anyway, it looked to them after (the sheep) had grazed there for six weeks, it looked to this expert as though it was hard on the grass and (the sheep) shouldn’t be up there. That was the end of the grazing. That was the end of the sheep business.

**Amy:** There is, or was, a cabin up there at Brown’s Lake.

**Sue:** It’s on the map as “Brackenbury cabin.” I think it’s fallen in.

**Amy:** They demolished it. I think so... . There may have been some troughs to feed the sheep rock salt. They put the salt in bunks because otherwise it would get into the grass and kill it. They put cake on the ground, but they put salt in ... remember, down in the buck pasture, they had troughs for salt?

**Sue:** I don’t know because I never saw one up there. Those herders lived in a canvas teepee tent. That’s what we’d use on the trail going up and back.

**Amy:** We still have one of the tents.

**Sue:** There were bears up there. How those herders... you could not get a sheep wagon up there. When they were down lower or at the ranch , they lived in sheep wagons. Actually, where we are sitting used to be part of the Lindenmeier Farm. For a couple of winters – I didn’t know it at the time – but we grazed, wintered our sheep on this farm, right here. Across the lake from this house there was an old cottonwood that was huge and old then, and it is still there now.

**Amy:** Dad said sometimes they would bring the sheep down to the flatlands in the winter, and when they ate beet-tops during the breeding season they would tend to have more triplets. I think usually they would have twins, but if they brought them down and they ate beet-tops, then ... maybe higher protein.

My grandfather told a story about the sheep on the Mummy Range and one year the snow came early. He went up to find the sheep. It had been feet of snow – like chest-deep snow. He gets up to a high point and he's looking around and he sees a depression in the snow with steam coming up. He walked down there and he gets to the spot. It has covered the sheep with snow but they had walked around underneath the snow. He walked up to the depression and made a little trail and they followed him one by one back down the trail. They stick really close together for warmth. Herd-bound.

**Amy:** The grass benefits from grazing. It keeps the weeds down, fertilizes the land. Even in our area, and on the Front Range, where they don't allow grazing anymore, I think it is so unhealthy. There were buffalo, there were elk, there were big herbivores that kept everything from becoming such a mass.

**Sue:** After we could no longer graze on the Mummies, we went to cattle. All cattle.

**Amy:** When we started out we had Herefords, just Herefords. That was sort of the ideal at the time for beef cattle. Then it became a mixture. We realized there were benefits from each different breed – Angus, Charolais, Brahman ...

**Sue:** The reason it was good to stop Herefords was they had a lot of white hair around their eyes and they would get cancer-eye because the eye got sunburned.

**Amy:** The same with horses. Horses with pale eyes – we had several horses that had gotten cancer-eye.

**Sue:** So then, you cannot market those, you cannot sell even for dog food. A cancer-eye cow, the whole cow is lost.

**Amy:** Not any more, I don't think.... That would be interesting to look into.

**Amy:** Where we live is the last remnant of Brackenbury ranch land. Now the front end of that is for sale, 200 acres. My brother and sister and niece are selling their portion and we're keeping our portion. We bought out the other two cousins. So we'll still have a piece of Trail Creek Ranch.

**Extended family ties**

**Amy:** ... We would go to California sometimes for at least a couple of weeks. We would go down to La Jolla. But that was the one vacation.

**Sue:** The whole family went because Dick's mother's sisters and brother from Salt Lake migrated to La Jolla. So that side of the family were all there. Both families ended up there. Both of my husband's grandparents had retired there but they didn't know each other right away, but then through the marriage – the son of the Englishman and the daughter of the German, they married and my husband was one of the three children of that marriage. So, anyway....

**Amy:** So what did the Fullertons teach you? What did you get from having the Fullertons there? This is my dad's sister and her family that lived in the house by the road.

**Sue:** They had two children, two little children at the time, Keith and Gail Fullerton. I think Keith is going to be 70 now.... Little Keith! What did they teach us? Well, Barbara loved to cook – till her dying day she loved to cook. And she loved games. She just was a teacher, a born teacher.

**Amy:** She became a teacher after her divorce. She needed something to support these two kids.

**Sue:** They were in junior high.

**Amy:** She went back to school and taught. Then she had a preschool here in town.

**Sue:** She married again.

**Amy:** Is there anything you can think of she told you that was an epiphany for you?

**Sue:** Not an epiphany, but the thing I see of her in you, she refused to use a clothes dryer. She hung everything outside.

**Amy:** Environmentally conscious, my whole life.

**Sue:** And the games. We had more fun playing games up at their house.

**Amy:** And she played the piano – oh my gosh. She was a great piano player.

**Sue:** And there were two musical kids in that family.

**Sue:** Livermore was a great community, with a number of family ranches – most of these have been developed now. We always had friends in Red Feather Lakes. I remember on 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade where my husband Dick and I, and Amy and Lars, and one other couple played music on a flat-bed trailer pulled by someone's truck. Lots of good memories and fun events too numerous to recall – thanks for the memories.

### **Ghost stories from Trail Creek Ranch**

**Amy:** Lars and I had been living at Trail Creek Ranch for several years and we were sleeping in the bedrooms downstairs and we sealed off the upstairs. It was so cold. It had no insulation in the house. Actually it was balloon framing with no fire breaks anywhere. If there had ever been a fire it would have enveloped the house. It is illegal now to build them like that and since then it has been insulated, but while we were there it was freezing.

We were sleeping in the end bedroom on the southwest corner of the house – it would have been built in the '30s – and in the middle of the night I wake up. It was October. I hear footsteps coming down the hall. Boom Boom, BOOM! – and I thought, do I have enough time to get around and get the gun? I better not wake up Lars, he'll make too much noise. No, I thought, I better just lie here and be quiet.

So the steps came and stopped right at the doorway. I thought, oh, my God. Our bedroom door was open, and I thought, *oooh*. So I just lay there and after about a half an hour I thought, well, if this was a real person they would have done something. Who knows what the heck.... So I went back to sleep and I didn't tell Lars about it.

But a month later he said, "I had a terrible dream last night. No, it wasn't a dream. I heard these steps coming down the hall. Boom, Boom, BOOM." And he thought, do I have enough time to get the gun, no I'll just lie here. After 15 minutes he thought, that's nothing. So he got up to go to the bathroom and he heard BOOM, Boom, boom back down the hall.

Well, we thought that's unusual. At that point we didn't have dogs or cats in the house ever. Being naturalists – Lars is a fishery biologist – we thought, 'there's an explanation for this.' And there were lots of things that happened there that we thought, oh the wind, or that it's an old house, that would explain it, but the next year we hear something coming down the hall at about 4:30 in the morning. And we hear, "dum, dum, da-dum-dum" and our dog comes flying into our bedroom, jumps up on our bed – a German shepherd – licking our faces, and we couldn't imagine what .... We thought maybe someone had left the door open, or someone had tried to break in, or broke a window, or something. We jumped up and ran through the house. All the doors and windows were shut and locked and the dog was all cold and frosted from being outside. That was a weird thing.

So – let's see. We had in 1982 and she was about a year and a half. Lars's parents had come up during hunting season and Lars's mom was giving a bath in the bathtub downstairs. There was about four or five inches of water in the tub and she goes into the kitchen and she hears a crash. She goes back into the bathroom and Delaney is pointing up at the medicine cabinet. Everything in the medicine cabinet has been pulled out and it's all down in the sink. Is the medicine cabinet loose and tipped forward, was there a quake? But all the stuff was in the sink. And that bathtub is so big. Lars and I were taking a bath in that tub one night and again, points over at the toothbrush holder that's just above that sink and one of the toothbrushes is swinging back and forth, back and forth, it keeps swinging back and forth. We thought, well, if there was an earthquake or something, other things would be moving not just that one toothbrush. We looked around. Well, maybe if a bat got in or a big moth or something, but it keeps swinging. That was weird too.

One morning Lars gets up and he goes into the kitchen and there are four slices of bread laid out on the counter. And it's fresh like they'd just taken it out of the bag. So he comes in – I'm fast asleep – and he says, "Why did you get that bread out?" I said, "I didn't get any bread out." You know, if bread sits out even 15 minutes in Colorado it's dry, but no, this was perfectly fresh. So that was another incident.

Then, let me think, what else. We had a milk cow. This is before we had, pre-1982, we had this milk cow and we had this German shepherd, but the milk cow was fenced out of the yard. The middle of the night the dog starts barking and Lars jumps up, he thinks the cow is in the yard. As he gets to the back door, there are all these little glass panes, he's just about to jerk the door open and run out there, in the nude with his cowboy boots on, and just as he grabs the door handle the light switch goes on in the kitchen. Now the light switch is clear at the other end and

around the corner from where he was standing. He grabs the door handle and the light switches on and he sees a black bear standing right there on the porch eating the dog food. It's about waist high. He would have run right out into that bear had that light not switched on. That was funny.

When we moved up to our new house, Lars wanted to be up there on Christmas Eve that year. is three and a half years old; we're packing up all the stuff in the living room. We'd always had the upstairs sealed off with plastic because of the cold air coming downstairs and we never used the upstairs. Delaney says, "what's that sound?" I turn my head and I hear something upstairs, and it's going "ah ha, ha, ha, ha" (like crying). I thought, oh, I don't know what that is. I'm sorting through in my mind thinking what kind of animal makes a sound like that. This is mid-winter. It's sobbing, sobbing. People say to me, "you mean you didn't go upstairs and look?" No.... I didn't go upstairs. We just packed up our stuff and left.

What was the next thing that happened? When the Princes moved there, they had a car out that was parked on the side (of the house), between the house and the barn. But the lights would turn on at night. Dickey Prince would come in and he was mad as ... you guys have to turn off the lights in the car when you come in. So he would go out and turn them off and the next night they would switch on again. Then he locked the car doors and they were still turning on at night. That could have been humidity and a short, but who knows, and that was funny.

Just recently we had some people staying there from Texas that were hysterically funny. They were wonderful. The Hardens – Bubba and Leroy came and stayed and they were packing up their stuff after they'd been there for a week. They were so funny and so much fun. So they were packing up all their stuff and we hadn't told them any ghost stories. So Bubba is in the living room putting stuff away and he hears this hysterical laughter. Somebody just laughing like crazy. And he says, "what's so funny?" assuming it's Leroy. He doesn't say anything, so he gets up and he goes into the kitchen, and no Leroy, and he looks up and Leroy is across the creek and doing something with the horses. So he leans out the door and says, "what's so funny?" Leroy said, "what?" He said, "what were you laughing at?" Leroy says, "I wasn't laughing." So he comes back over, and Leroy says, "you know what it is – it's ghosts!" He's making a joke. And he said, "you know where the ghosts are, they're in the basement." So they go, "let's look in the basement." They open up the basement door and they're looking down in the basement, and just about then, somebody throws the back door open and says, "hey, where are you guys?" They about leaped into each others' arms. It scared



the heck out of them. It was the game warden that had showed up wanting to know how their hunting had gone. This was a couple of years ago.

And then, we had some German ladies – well, some people from the dude ranch ... on Thursday nights we always do a gallery tour, house tour, and one family said they wanted to go see the old house afterwards. So we drive them by and we take them into the house and there were some other guests that happened to be in the van, so they came in too. We give them the tour and we come out and there are the two German ladies standing out in the yard. I said, “did you have a chance to come in and look at the house?” They said, “oh no – there’s no way. We came in that door ....” And they said, “... the energy was swirling and confused in that house, so we just backed out of there. We didn’t go in.” So they said, “we don’t feel that in your house, we don’t feel that anywhere at the dude ranch.” But they said here there was some kind of energy that was extremely disturbed.

I’ve talked to people that lived in that house. And I’ve talked to the people who had relatives that in the house. I asked Ruby Swan if anything weird ever happened, and she said, “no, nothing ever happened.” The Princes had four kids and it was such a loud, boisterous atmosphere, I doubt they would have heard anything.

My sister did go up with a friend. When we had moved out and she was with a friend and they were sleeping in front of the fireplace, when it was a wood fireplace. She tells her friend all the early stories of what had happened when Lars and I were there. And she says, “of course, nothing ever happened when I was here.” And at that moment she said there was a tiny hole that opened up in one of the logs and it started whistling. It got louder and louder and this flame was shooting three feet up this tiny, thin – like a piece of string – this flame shooting up into the fireplace until it was just shrieking and the two of them .... They said “there was shrieking out of the fireplace.” Finally after a while it died back down, and her friend said, “well, that was interesting.”

Lars renovated the bathroom upstairs. He said that ... he had tools in both bedrooms on either side of the bathroom and he walked into the one bedroom, and he thought, gosh, somebody left a door or a window open, there was a cold draft coming from the corner of that door. He was angry about something and this blew on him and he said he turned around and looked in a mirror in the bathroom and he said the hair just stood up on the back of his neck. He said it was the eeriest feeling. He said nothing moved, nothing happened, he said, but he just felt like there was a presence there. He’s not a ... he’s a scientist.

Who knows? Indian burial ground, maybe. Same story about the footsteps.... There was a girl who had come over from the guest ranch and she was staying there in the off season, she was taking care of two kids and her boyfriend was gone. In the middle of the night, she wakes up in this smaller cabin, the one that has the kitchen. She hears – actually, you’re going to have to believe this – she hears footsteps coming from the front door across the kitchen. She thought, “oh good, John’s home.” The footsteps stop at her bedroom door and she wonders why he doesn’t come in. She sits up and looks and he’s not there. She gets up and walks through the house and he’s not there.

This is my hypothesis. This might have been like an Indian campground or something. There were people of course who had maybe died in the area, or whatever. There’s death in life.

The square part of the house on our ranch was built in 1879 by Clarin Woods. It was added on to in 1938 when my grandfather acquired it. I believe that’s the date. It was white clapboard when they bought it. It is still standing and it is sided with logs now. At one point the family said, “oh let’s take the old house apart and sell the logs off of it.” Well, it’s not logs, for one thing. When I went to paint the dining room and the living room it was just white, and you’d walk in there and it felt like a walk-in cooler. So everybody thought the house was made out of logs, so when I went to paint the dining room and living room, I thought, I am going to paint them like logs so it looks like logs. People come in now, and they still think it’s logs!

When Lars and I lived there we had a fire in the fireplace every day of the year except July. It was so cold. I think this must have been a southern construction method to keep a house cool. Our electric blankets wouldn’t work in the bedroom because it was so cold. We took two of them back in and we said, “why are these not working?” The guy said, “they won’t work below a certain temperature.” Oh yeah. always had a onesy on under her clothes for the first three years of her life that she lived down at the old house because it was so cold. That was underneath everything else.

I think there is a picture of Clarin Woods holding a baby up with all his family on the east side of the house. No trees. There’s a strawberry garden. He looks just like Lars. People have said, “Lars, when did you have this taken?” He looks identical. I thought that was uncanny.

## **The story of the elephant barn**

We have sold the old barn. The horse barn at our place, at Trail Creek Ranch. We sold it to a man named Manu Kunz and he took just the barn. He lives up the road just four miles and he's going to rebuild it. He loves the history of it. So he's going to reconstruct it. Did we tell you the story about it being the elephant barn?

It's sad to see it go, but at the same time, it was falling down and the rest of the family didn't want to put money into having it fixed and we couldn't afford to put in all the money to having it fixed. We couldn't put all our time into it at this point. So it was a good deal. He's from Switzerland. He has other cabins that he's gotten from other areas and he's put together his house from all these cabins. It is really cool. He's an interesting guy.

Some guy came in, about ten years ago, and he said, "oh the old elephant barn. I can't believe I finally found the old elephant barn." He'd been looking for it. He said that Ringling Bros. had a ranch (they used) up in Wyoming at certain times of the year. They would take the animals on a train and the train only went so far. I don't know if it only went to Fort Collins, or Owl Canyon, or someplace, and they had to ... I don't know, maybe they were bringing them down from Wyoming. They would trail them for a distance but then they ended up stopping at the ranch there and put the elephants in that barn. The corrals and the barn were there. They used that for a stop-over.

**Addendum May, 2016**

**Sue:** The sheep were sheared early in spring just weeks before they lambled so they would naturally seek warmth and shelter when it came time to lamb. It was about the only way to protect them. Sometimes the weather was so bad we did lose lambs. The shearers would come in March. The fleece was thrown into a huge canvas sack and someone would have to actually get in the sack to tamp the fleece down inside to make room for more. It was a horrible job what with the dust and all that oily lanolin smelling and ticks and burrs imbedded in the fleece. When the large sack was full it would be stitched shut and a new one begun.

We always had Mexican sheep herders and when Dick's dad was still alive one died up on the summer pasture. There were only two of them and the story was that the one who died fell off his horse and hit his head, but there was always a suspicion that the one killed the other. No one could prove anything one way or the other.

I walked up Dadd Gulch a number of years ago with a group of seniors from Fort Collins. Of course I wanted to see it and recall how we took the sheep up and down that stock drive way. The “seniors” in the group were all lot younger than I was, and in fact, one had been in Amy’s class at school! I was the oldest by far of the people walking that day.

When I came to the ranch in 1950 there was an old schoolhouse just beyond the lower Brackenbury Ranch to the northwest. I can’t remember what it was called. It is gone now.

## **Brackenbury Family Tree**

**Brothers Richard and Cyril Brackenbury arrive in USA from England circa 1888.**

**Richard marries Katherine Gibb in England. They settle in the Medicine Bow Mountains of Wyoming in the late 1880s.**

**They have six sons including Richard Atholstan (Richard A.).**

**Richard A. marries Flora Raddatz and they buy the Brackenbury Ranch in Colorado in 1925.**

**Richard A. and Flora Raddatz Brackenbury have three children;**  
**Richard John Brackenbury (Dick)**  
**Carolyn Brackenbury McCoy**  
**Barbara Brackenbury Fullerton**

**Dick marries Sue Nolde in September 1950.**

**Dick and Sue Nolde Brackenbury have four children;**  
**Amy Brackenbury Larson**  
**Ann Brackenbury**  
**Alyssa Brackenbury**  
**Christopher Brackenbury**

## Brackenbury Photo Addendum – A Family Album



Sue Nolde Brackenbury, age 5, 1935 in Morton Grove, Illinois, presaging her future role out west on the Brackenbury Ranch



Wedding bells and announcements

Home on the Range at the Lower Brackenbury Ranch ... and little lambs



Ranch house where the Fullertons lived



R. A. Brackenbury with a lamb



Sue Brackenbury with a lamb ....



And Sue with her cat, Snowball





Amy Brackenbury Larson, scenes from ranch life



Lower Brackenbury Ranch in winter



Sue's visiting sister Roberta Nolde helps with ranch chores, and Keith Fullerton poses on the jeep, early 1950s. The log house in the background was later covered with white clapboard siding.



Dick Brackenbury with one of the Shetland ponies raised at the Upper Brackenbury Ranch. Behind him is the old chicken house.



Brackenbury siblings, (left to right) Amy, Ann, Alyssa and Chris



Dick and Sue Brackenbury were prominent members of the orchestra. He played oboe and she played violin. They commuted from the ranch in Livermore to attend concerts and rehearsals for many years. Dick's father, R.A. Brackenbury played flute and piccolo in the orchestra. Amy Brackenbury later played violin in the symphony.



Richard A. and Flora Raddatz Brackenbury on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary



Clip from the November 6, 1988, *Coloradoan* about the Fort Collins house Richard A. Brackenbury built in 1938 for his family

MONEY/HOME

SECTION

E

■ Real Estate Q&A/5

■ Transactions/5

■ Classified/6-12

SUNDAY, November 6, 1988



Michael Madrid/The Coloradoan

**END OF THE LANE:** This comfortable but stately home is at the intersection of East Elizabeth and Stover streets, which puts this estate smack in the middle of the city.

## Estate in city is listed at \$375,000

**By J. LEWANDOWSKI**  
*The Coloradoan*

Everyone wants to live in the white house at the end of the lane.

That's the way real estate agent Duane Rasmussen describes the reaction of home shoppers when they first see the stately old mansion in the heart of the city at the corner of East Elizabeth and Stover streets.

The house is, well, sort of for sale. Owners Jean and Wes King put the house up for sale during the summer but officially took it off the market last week. They don't want to take the chance of having to move in the middle of winter.

But Jean King admits they are still undecided if they want to move to another home.

There is something about living in the white house at the end of the lane.

The 50-year-old house is unique in the city.

The 6,000-square-foot home was built in 1938 by Larimer County rancher Richard Brackenbury. He commuted to his ranch near Livermore while his wife and three daughters lived in town. At that time the house was at the far east-

ern edge of Fort Collins and the family kept horses for the kids, said Carolyn McCoy, one of the daughters.

Before Brackenbury bought the property, that parcel was a nationally renowned horse breeding farm known as the Barnhurst Estate. Buffalo Bill Cody, one of the West's most famous showmen, bought horses there for his traveling show.

The corner is still generally known as the Barnhurst Estate.

Apparently Brackenbury did well selling sheep and cattle. The exterior walls are 14 inches thick and the hot-water heating system and all the plumbing still work without problems. All the beams are steel, the window framing is wood and every room has crown molding where wall meets ceiling.

"If you tried to build it now, you probably couldn't," said McCoy.

A builder told the Kings that to build the house in the same way now would cost about \$200 per square foot — that's \$1.2 million.

McCoy bought the house from her parents in 1971 and lived there until 1986.



See ESTATE, Page E4

RELAXING: Jean King settles into a book in her living room.



The “ghost house” at the Upper Brackenbury Ranch after it was log-sided



(Photos courtesy of Pat Clemens)





The “elephant barn” at the Upper Brackenbury Ranch (Pat Clemens)



Hikers having lunch at what was left of the Brackenbury cabin and corrals near Brown’s Lake, 1995 (photo by Linda Bell)





R. Brackenbury (Early Portrait)  
Medicine Bow, Wyoming

### The Days of the Open Range

Where are the lads who rode with me  
When like the wind, the range was free,  
With no barbed wire, not a strand  
From Canada's line to the Rio Grande?

We swept the hills and the western plain,  
As storm clouds sweep the land with rain,  
Our number great beyond belief,  
We branded calves, and gathered beef.

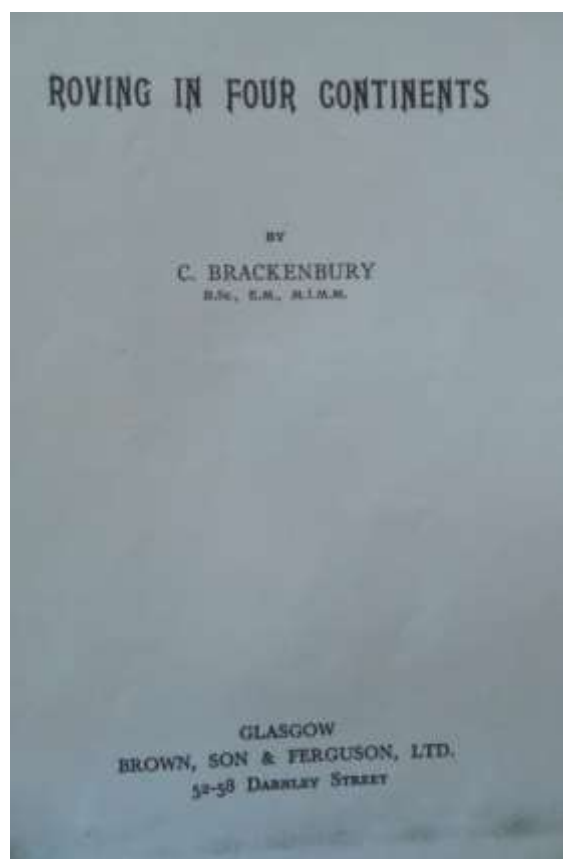
We rode in early dawn of light  
And held the cattle through the night.  
In every weather weeks around  
Our beds . . . unrolled . . . lay on the ground.

Age brings with fleeting years a change  
And we who rode the open range,  
Young, light-hearted, brave and gay,  
Must like the bison pass away.

—Richard Brackenbury.  
La Jolla, California

Richard A. Brackenbury's father, Richard Brackenbury, arrived in the American west from England in about 1888

Cyril Brackenbury, his younger brother, wrote an account of his travels



CONTENTS		PAGE
PREFACE,		v
Chapter I.—CHILDHOOD DAYS,		1
“ II.—RANCHING IN THE ROCKIES,		5
“ III.—		22
IV.—TRAINING FOR A MINING ENGINEER,		33
“ V.—MINING IN AMERICA,		46
“ VI.—IN THE CAUCASUS,		52
“ VII.—BULGARIA, SERBIA AND ITALY,		65
“ VIII.—IN SOUTH AFRICA,		70
“ IX.—THE KHIRGHIZ STEPPES, SIBERIA,		78
“ X.—GREECE,		93
“ XI.—CANADA,		104
“ XII.—THE GREAT WAR,		116
“ XIII.—		129
“ XIV.—SCOUTING AND RANDOM SHOTS,		143

vii

*Dick & Katharine  
with love & greetings  
from Cyril  
Xmas 1933.*

Inscription in the book to his brother and his wife Katharine, on the occasion of the book's publication in 1933.

## PREFACE

---

**H**AVING had a somewhat varied and wide experience of life in many parts of the world, and in four different vocations, as rancher, mining engineer, soldier and scout; it occurred to me that a brief account of my experiences might be of interest to some young men on the threshold of manhood as well as to the members of my own family. In any case, I felt it would interest me to recall and write down some of my reminiscences. So having retired from professional work, I have spent some pleasant hours in writing my little story.

In the first part of the book I have been able to give a description of what a rancher's life was like in the Rocky Mountain country in the early pioneering days forty-five years ago. During my life as a mining engineer I was continually off the beaten track in foreign countries, and was able to gauge something of the real characteristics of the people. My sojourns in different parts of Russia gave me vivid impressions of the vastness, the barbarism, the plotting, counterplotting and uncertainty of life in that great country of mixed races. My feeling then was, that I could scarcely trust anyone when my back was turned. And the history of Russia since that time has not tended to increase my confidence in the people or in the new Soviet Government.

## PREFACE

I have many pleasant recollections of my life in the United States, Canada, and South Africa. In looking back at our experiences of the Great War, it is rather like a dream which sometimes took the form of a nightmare. Since my retirement from active professional work, I have been able to devote much time and energy to the Boy Scout Movement, which I consider one of the finest movements for the good of mankind, and as B. P. might say, for happifying the world.

One of my chief reasons for daring to publish this book has been the hope, that, with good fortune, the sales might bring me in a sum of money, which I could have the pleasure and privilege of handing over to the funds of the Boy Scouts' Association.

I should like to think that, the record which I have given, of one who started to rough it early in life, and made good while roving in many places, together with the few random remarks hazarded in the last chapter, may have been found interesting, and I hope helpful, to some young men starting out to make their own way in the world.

C. B.

*October, 1933.*



# Roving in Four Continents

## CHAPTER I.

### CHILDHOOD DAYS.

**M**Y father, Major-General C. B. Brackenbury, R.A., was a captain quartered at Woolwich when I was born the eighth child, in the year 1869. There were 9 children in the family, 3 daughters and 6 sons. Two of the sons went into the army, three became engineers, and one became a rancher in America.

In our early childhood days we made the Repository our chief playground and also much enjoyed an occasional visit to the Rotunda. About the earliest achievement that I can remember was being able to fasten my own trousers and dress myself, which at the time seemed to be a very definite advance towards manhood.

One of my first adventures was a stroll with my younger brother through the streets of Woolwich about two o'clock in the morning. We had been told that it was a good thing to be early risers, and we acted accordingly. Creeping out of the house we left the front door open so that we should be able to re-enter the house after our walk. We had only proceeded a short distance when the fun of the adventure seemed rapidly to diminish and a feeling of loneliness and desolation began to oppress us. The barking of dogs and squalling of cats added to our dismay and we soon began to think it was time to turn homewards. How-

according to where my father's military appointments took him. Our homes were in Woolwich, Sandhurst, Waltham Abbey, London and Dover.

It was while we were living in Dover that it was decided that I should try my fortune as a rancher in the United States of America with one of my elder brothers, instead of going into the Army as had been the original plan.)

## CHAPTER II.

### RANCHING IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

**I**N March, 1887, my brother R., then twenty-three years of age, set out from England with four rancher pupils including myself, each being seventeen years old, all bound for the Rocky Mountain plateau in Wyoming, U.S.A.)

Our steamer was a wretched little tub of about 2,000 tons; a cargo boat loaded with a valuable consignment of horses for breeding purposes in America. Part of the steamer was fitted up for about twenty passengers in a very third class manner.

We left London on the 16th of March—I think it was—during the evening of a sleeting winter's day, and steamed slowly down the Thames. The next morning

## ROVING IN FOUR CONTINENTS

we were awakened by the ship's steward putting his head in at the cabin door and shouting: "Breakfast time, and if you don't get up, damn it, you'll get nothing to eat." We crawled out not feeling very bright, as we had retired late the previous night, and the sea was rough and choppy. However we managed to stow away some breakfast, and then went and lay down on deck. Soon after breakfast we passed opposite to Dover Castle, and we could clearly see the windows of our house on the cliffs, which caused me to experience a feeling of home-sickness in addition to our common sea-sickness.

We tried to enliven the time by telling yarns to each other as we lay on deck, but found it necessary constantly to interrupt our remarks in order to go and lean over the side-rail and look down at the sea. There was half-a-gale blowing from the west, making our little steamer roll and pitch badly. Indeed by the time we had passed out of sight of Ireland, and the wind had increased to a full gale force, we found it necessary to retire to our respective bunks. And in our bunks we each lay for a week on end.

Although I have sailed the seas many times since, never have I experienced anything approaching the shaking up we received on this my first long voyage. Our steamer of some 2,000 tons was tossed about on the Atlantic billows much like a small fishing smack would be in a storm in the English channel. As I remember it, the yard arms—I think they are called—from the mast occasionally touched the sea on account of the fearful rolling of the ship. Much of the crockery on board was smashed, and horses died daily in their stables, being unable to stand the intensely lively



## RANCHING IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

motion of our vessel. One night on account of the combination of wind and fog, we were told that we had only managed to make about 3 miles headway, and it took us fifteen days to reach New York.

While lying in my bunk, very weak and seasick, I managed to read through the story of "Lorna Doone" with pleasure, which I think speaks well for the charm of this book. After one week's continuous sea-sickness we became inured to the motion of the waves and acquired our sea-legs. Then we began to eat again, and get about the ship in more or less sailor-like fashion. We were now able to enjoy the rough fare provided in spite of the unpleasant mixed smell in the ship below deck arising from the horse stables, tobacco fumes, engine oil, and cooking.

A day or two before reaching New York we had a "grand concert." It was certainly a unique entertainment. The orchestra consisted of one of my brother's pupils playing a violin, my brother performing on the banjo, and I on a zither which I had just begun to learn to play. There was only one woman on board who was called "the lady." She sang in a most doleful voice, much out of tune, a pathetic song the burden of which was. "You needn't come wooing and wooing to me, for my heart, my heart is over the sea." Then there was among the passengers one decrepit old man who sang with a quavering voice: "In days of old, when knights were bold." The singing was accompanied by the blasts of our fog-horn and the crashing of crockery due to the heavy rolling of the steamer.

There were a few Americans on board who quickly demonstrated to us their exquisite skill in the art of spitting. Chewing tobacco as well as smoking is a