

I

# REMEMBER

# THE

# BELL

BY CAROL NELSON

I have always thought my life began in 1968. Although I was 28 at that time, divorced and raising my six year old son on my own. I was working as a secretary in Denver and commuting from the farm house I was renting in Parker. Having a Morgan horse of my own, I had often seen the Bell Mountain Ranch while driving past on the highway. Coming from Denver, and just before Castle Rock, the panoramic view always took my breath away. Finally, one day, I got up my nerve to stop and see their Morgan horses. My life changed that day. Up until then, I had always felt I was viewing life from the outside looking in. Little did I know what fate had in store for me.

I stopped at Bell Mountain Ranch and met the owner Ed Young. He was just a typical cowboy in jeans and an old beat up cowboy hat, but he had the most angelic face and winning smile I had ever seen. He showed me his horses and his old rundown ranch that day. He was in the process of building a new barn around the old one, and explained to me that this was being done this way to avoid the taxes of building a completely new barn. We sat around and discussed horses and got acquainted with each other. He invited me to come and ride around his ranch with him the following weekend, which I accepted.

When I arrived at the ranch the following Saturday, Ed was riding a beautiful chestnut gelding that I couldn't take my eyes off of. However, the horse I was given to ride, was lazy and slow, and I spent the entire ride kicking it to go. Later, he told me, since he didn't know if I could ride or not, he had one of the boys ride the horse to tire it out, so I wouldn't get hurt. He was always the consummate gentleman. We discussed organizing the morgan owners. He wanted me to organize a ride and dinner on the ranch. I was quite taken aback by this since I was really an introverted person, who had trouble meeting people. I never knew how to carry on a conversation with others. I told him, I was the wrong person for the job. He just gave me another drink and a sweet smile, and with his select hearing, ignored my objections. I was to learn that when Ed Young wanted something, he got it. He never acknowledged the word no. He told me that from this day on, my life would change.

A few days later, he called me at work, and took me to lunch. He took me to the Cherry Creek Inn. I certainly was not used to dining in such an elegant place. I felt out of place and looked for the cheapest item on the menu, because I knew he was just a dirt poor rancher, trying to impress me. He excused himself and went to talk to someone. When my meal was served, it was a prime rib. That is when he told me he owned the place. He then drove me around and showed me the South Denver Bank, The Young Towers, the Galleria Complex, and the Martin Marietta Bldg. He explained how he convinced that company to move to Denver, and built the building

for them. Of course, after seeing his rundown ranch, I didn't believe any of this, and decided I would give this man a wide berth in the future. He must live in a fantasy world.

Again, Ed Young did not understand NO. He continued to call me at work, and finally convinced me to do his private secretarial work. This led to him wanting me to show his horses. Never having ridden English before, he introduced me to his trainer, who was to teach me to ride a show horse. It took me about three months to realize just who Ed Young was, and believe what he was telling me.

On my way home from my secretarial job in Denver, I would stop by the trainers for a lesson. His place was even more of a dump, than Ed's place. I was afraid to go into the barn, thinking it could cave in at anytime. He had every kind of farm animal you can imagine on his place. And junk everywhere. He even had a training pen made entirely out of old salvaged doors. He called this his indoor arena, said with tongue in cheek. After about a month, I gave up the lessons, as he would keep me waiting, while he fed his animals before giving me a lesson. Time I was paying a babysitter for, and wasting money I didn't have. He spent more time hitting on me and bragging about himself, than giving me lessons. Besides, I couldn't avoid getting chicken and duck crap on my boots, no matter how carefully I watched where I walked. It would get into my car, and the smell was just awful.

After that I started going to the ranch and training the horses I wanted to show. Ed had a caretaker who seldom came out of his house, two young men, who apparently did nothing but feed the animals, and a full time veterinarian who looked at the cows on occasion. I was in awe, to see the wages Ed was paying these men, and the ranch getting worse and worse. Finally one day, I arrived to see a horror scene.

The cowboys had tied a colt in back of the pickup to lead him and the horse herd up to the pasture. The herd took off running, so the cowboys floored the truck to cut them off, completely forgetting about the colt tied to the back of the truck. They were dragging him across the pasture by his neck. I went berserk, and the fight was on. I told them to pack up and get off the ranch. We were having a real scream fest in the barn, when Ed showed up. I explained what had happened and that I had fired them. They were mad that I would have the audacity to fire them, when I didn't even work there. As it ended up, they left. Ed turned to me and said, now who is going to run the ranch. Without hesitation, I said I would. As I have said, that was the year my life began.

The old farm house hadn't been lived in for years and the front porch

had caved in. I set to work fixing that up while living upstairs. Then my little son and I started ripping and tearing down the ranch, and rebuilding. The first thing I did was buy a manure spreader, and clean out the barn. All the doors and windows were boarded up, so the barn was just a black hole. The stalls were so filthy, you had to step up on hard packed manure to get into the stall, and the horses had to keep their heads down, because there was no room for them to raise them up. It took me three months with a pick axe and pitchfork, to clean out the barn. I dropped twenty pounds, and haven't looked that good since. But I don't recommend this as a way to diet. I would be so tired at night, I would fall asleep at the dinner table, or even in the middle of the floor. But the barn was finally cleaned.

I attended shows to learn what I needed to know about the horse show world. I quickly learned that none of the trainers wanted to help me or even tell me anything useful, so I learned by a lot by trial and errors. Lots of errors! But I discovered I loved training horses and had a real knack for it.

Ed lived in Denver, and would often come down to the ranch to ride. Both of us discovered how soothing it was for the soul. He had lots of friends and would bring them to the ranch to ride, eat and drink. Ed was from the old school, a true old fashioned gentleman, and so were most of his friends. Now they all seem to be gone, and with them, a wonderful old gentle way of life.

I started having a ladies ride in the fall, when the leaves were changing colors, and everything was so beautiful. We had access to the neighboring Ditmar ranch, which had a spectacular canyon in it. The perfect place for a ride. We were so fortunate to have good neighbors who allowed us to enjoy their ranches also. I could ride all day and never see another human being.

One of my friends was an elderly lady who rode Arab horses. Now, Arab's are notorious for not liking water. We had all ridden across the creek below the barn, all except Irene's Arab. We tried everything to get that horse across the creek, but to no avail. Ed was watching this from the barn, and finally rode down on his big gelding called the Viking. He reached down and put a halter on the Arab, and dallied him off to his saddle horn. He told Irene to hang on, and then proceeded to drag them across the creek. The Arab laid back on the halter rope, with his legs as stiff as boards, but Ed's gelding just drug him through the water. After the ride, and on the way back, there was no more hesitation from the Arab. Guess he didn't want to be drug anymore. Shortly thereafter, Ed had a good bridge built across the creek to get machinery across. I told my friend, that Ed had a \$65,000 bridge built so she wouldn't have any trouble

on the next ride. After that it was affectionately called "Irene's Bridge" and got a lot of laughs at the parties. Not everybody would build a bridge like that to accommodate an Arab on a Morgan ranch.

Ed's grandfather came to America from England, and started the Cambridge Dairy on a farm south of Denver, when the land was still just large farms and dirt roads. The farm then passed to Ed senior, and was a thriving business. While still in school, Ed, junior as he was called, started playing music, and put together a band, that he toured with. He had dance music and a great singing voice for the Golden Oldies. He later married his lead singer, and had two daughters. Ed never really liked the dairy business, and used every excuse possible to get out of working there. During the war, when milk was rationed, he boot-legged milk from the farmers in Larkspur, in his band truck. Larkspur had some kind of minerals in the land, that caused the cows there to produce milk that made excellent cheese, which the Young family sold to the army. While touring around the country with his band, Ed learned to fly and bought his own plane, much to the consternation of his mother, who completely doted on her only son. Throughout his lifetime, Ed owned several planes.

One year while Ed was still young, the Castlewood dam broke, sending floodwater rampaging towards Denver. Advance phone warnings allowed the Youngs to move their dairy herd to a neighbors on higher ground without losing a single cow. After the flood, they bought that land. After Ed senior's passings, the land he had bought was later to become the prominent site on Coloarado Blvd. where Ed built the Cherry Creek Inn. It was an elite hotel, with fine dining, and a honky-tonk bar called the Red Slipper Room. Outside was a gigantic revolving red slipper, that was to become a renowned landmark. With the building of the Cherry Creek Inn, Ed wanted to keep his agriculture status, so with the help of a good friend from Morrison, who raised registered polled Herefords, a beautiful piece of property was located just south of Castle Rock. The ranch was run down, but the location off Highway I-25 was excellent. The only problem was, the owner did not want to sell. Later that fall, the rancher was killed in a hunting accident. The wife promptly called Ed to see if he still had an interest in purchasing the ranch. Which of course he did. It seems the couple had a rocky marriage and didn't always get along, and the husband moved out of the big house and built himself the little house next door to live in. Ed bough a herd of registered polled show Herefords, and hired a vet to take care of them. Their constant winnings in the show ring, was bringing a hefty \$30,000 for young bulls, which was a lot of money in those days.

Bad luck seems to have a way of repeating its self. In 1965, shortly after buying his ranch, the big flood hit the Castle Rock area, washing out



the entire highway in front of the ranch. The lower meadow was completely under water, clear up to the barn. Ed's prize bull disappeared in the raging waters. He was later located north of Castle Rock after the waters receded. In the meadows below the barn, were dozens of A-frame hog houses, left over from the former owner. Before Ed could figure out what to do with them, mother nature solved the problem, by awweeping them away in the flood.

Shortly after I moved to the ranch, we had a heavy snow storm hit. I had just gotten home from the grocery store, when the hired man came to tell me that a young cow was acting strange, and he thought she was bloated, so he put her in a stall in the outside barn. I pulled on my boots and went out to check. She was a yearling heifer unmistakably in labor, and having a hard time of it. Knowing nothing about cows, I immediately called the vet. The roads were all closed, so I was on my own. He would talk me through it. He told me to find the calf puller in a big bag in the vet room, hook it around the calf's legs and pull it out. I found the bag, dumped it out, and there were all these strange pieces that I had no idea on how to put them together. Of course there were no instructions included. I went back to the laboring cow. The snow was blowing in the open side of the stall to make matters worse. I had no idea where my hired man had disappeared to. I gathered up several horse blankets, and hung them in the stall to block the snow, and hung a heat lamp to keep her warm. Then I drug in several bales of straw for more added protection. One hoof of the calf was starting out a little ways, I reached in the cow to locate the other hoof, and her contraction almost broke my arm. She was a little cow, with a big calf, and no room for my arm in there. Another trip inside, another call to the vet. No answer. By this time my teeth were chattering, so I went to the house for some coffee. No time to leave her alone, so I grabbed a bottle of brandy instead, and trudged out into the cold again. The vet had said that cows have some kind of buttons that would be harmed and paralyze her if I didn't pull the calf downward. Too much time was passing, and the heifer was getting weaker, so I decided to try pulling the calf out. I sat in the straw, put my feet against her backside and started pulling. I pulled and pulled, and wasn't making much progress, and I was getting awfully tired. I was dripping sweat in the middle of a snow storm. I dropped my coveralls to my waist and continued to pull. Finally my efforts were rewarded and this huge wet sloppy body hit me in the chest and dropped in my lap. I rubbed him off with straw and got some towels to finish the job. The cow was still breathing, but had not moved. Now I was concerned I had paralyzed her by doing something wrong. Ol lordly why me? I didn't know if cows were like horses and need their mommys

coliseum immediately to ward off infection. I milked the cow into a pop bottle, put a nipple on it, and fed baby his first meal. He was absolutely beautiful, with bright red hair, a white face and huge eyes. A strong little sucker too, as he was immediately on his feet. I on the other hand was exhausted. I sat on the cows hip and took a long pull on the brandy bottle. I heard a noise behind me, and turned to see the vet sitting there grinning at me. I asked him how long he had been there, and he answered, long enough to see you do good work. We sat together in the straw and finished the bottle of brandy, then he left, but not before giving me a large bill for an emergency call in a snow storm. I named the calf Sammy, after the hired hand who had abandoned me, and he became a wonderful herd bull. I also informed Edward T, "I don't do cows"!!!

I was not happy with some of the Morgans that Ed's former trainer has purchased for him, at high dollar for inferior animals. They had some conformation faults that I did not want to propagate, so being unable to sell these horses, I tore the papers up and gave them to 4 H kids that wanted a horse. Ed would ride out in the pasture, and say, didn't I have more horses than these? I told him, "that is all I see here". It wasn't until 30 yrs. later that I finally told him the truth. There was a breeder in Sadalia that had two outstanding stallions. She wouldn't even talk to me about selling them. I was grumping around the ranch one day when Ed drove in. I told him why I was unhappy. He left and a couple of hours later he told me to go over to that farm the next day with the big trucks, and pick up the stallions I had wanted, along with all 23 head of her herd. He had bought them all and put her out of business. Then the rodeo began. Some of those horses were thirteen years old and had never had a halter on. There were several really good mares in that herd, that I did halter break, but that's all, just so I could hand breed them. Those were the beginning of the select Cambridge Morgan Ranch's breeding program. I then proceeded to train the rest of the young stock. One unhappy six year old mare, did break my back in the process. Paybacks are really tough, especially when the horse wins.

I spent the next thirty five years, breeding, foaling, training, showing, buying and selling, all towards the goal of making Cambridge in to the top breeding farm in the United States. Our horses won fourteen World Championships, including the coveted Grand Champion mare. Anything you can do with a horse, our horses could do with style. One thing on my bucket list, was to have a World Champion Reining horse, and that goal was accomplished. Our horses were sold all over the States, and one even went to Venezuela as a breeding stud. Ed always commented that I didn't just sell horses, I collected friends. That was not always the case. I remember one particular case, when I was taking some potential buyers up the mountain to see the stock, and the man started telling me, if horses

didn't obey him, he'd just shot them. I turned the truck around and took them back to the ranch and told them none of my horses were for sale to him. He got angry and told me I couldn't talk to him that way. He called Ed. After Ed listened to what had been said, he told the man, if Carol said you can't buy a horse, you can't buy a horse. It was nice to have a boss that backed me up.

I once went to a farm dispersal to buy a breaking cart. That was my only intention. I made the mistake of walking through the barn, and falling in love with a glorious mare. I stayed for the sale and was bidding on her. Another prominent trainer was at the other end of the area bidding on her. The price just kept going up. I walked around the arena and told the trainer, I wanted that mare, and I had more money than you do so you better quit bidding. He did. I bought the mare. She was the bell ringer of the sale. Not having a horse trailer there, I told the trainer, I would give him the honor of hauling her home for me. When I talked to Ed on the phone that night, he was really angry, saying we didn't need any more horses. I told him my girlfriend and I would go in partnership on the mare and pay for her. He said to forget it since I had already written the check on his account. The next day it had snowed and blocked the driveway closed. I unloaded the mare on the highway and jumped her through the snow banks to the barn. Ed looked her over, and didn't have anything to say except that was a lot of money for an unbroken horse. After I trained the horse and started showing her, she knew God had put her on this earth to showoff and bring home the blues and trophies. After that, when Ed would have any company at the ranch, he would call me to bring out his good mare to show them.

Since the ranch was so run down, it seems it was an ideal breeding place for rattle snakes. I immediately killed thirty six of them around the barn area, some even in the stalls. I went out and bought three pigs and turned them loose around the buildings. All the laughter and teasing I had to put up with over that, soon died out when they saw the pigs doing their job. After the pigs got used to being around the horses, I moved them up to the base of Bell Mountain. A long time ago, the government mined copper off the Bell, and it was honeycombed with holes. This was the ideal place for the snakes to hibernate in the winter. I built a pen by the pond and fed the pigs there, and they were waiting for the snakes when they came down. In order to hurt anything, a snake must hit a blood stream. When they bit the pigs, if they could get through the tough hide, all they hit was fat, so they couldn't hurt the pigs. And the pigs sure did enjoy eating them. When spring would come, we would ride up to the top of the Bell and kill as many of the rattlers as we could find, as they were laying in the



rocks sunning themselves. We found one huge ball of snakes. All different kinds of snakes, so we had to be careful we only killed the rattlers and not the good snakes.

Another interesting fact about the Bell was that the Kodak Company used the side of the Bell as a target when they were perfecting their long range cameras that they were developing for the government.

Everyday when I was working colts, I would carry grain up to the pigs. They would get so excited when they heard me coming. Later when they were no longer in the pen, they would still run to meet me. Ed had a ride one day, and when the pigs heard the men coming, they ran to meet them, squealing excitedly. Most of those horses had never seen pigs, and to see them come charging at them, they came unglued. Many of the old cowboys hit the ground that day. My pigs continued to live with the horses on the mountain all summer, they followed them everywhere. Our snake bites dropped drastically that summer.

In the far corner of the ranch, we developed a spring that was flowing out of the side of the hill. I kept fish in there to keep the tank clean. One day we rode up there and found a bear in the tank, eating my fish. We also kept a case of beer in the tank. There is nothing like a cold beer on a hot day, when your working horses. Luckily for him, the bear didn't touch my beer.

When the government opened up the area for homesteading. William Bell chose that spot, and the ranch was named after him, not because the mountain was shaped like a bell. He build his home and buildings up by the spring. What a beautiful spot for a home. At that same time, the railroad was also laying tracks in the same area. The story we heard was that the railroad workers had a bunch of hounds that killed Bell's calves, and he shot the dogs. The railroad workers were angry and burned him out one night. Some of the original foundations of Bell's farm can still be seen there. My father and I salvaged the stones from his house and build the barbecue grill that is up there, and we had a lot of wonderful parties in that beautiful setting.

Ed belonged to an elite group of horsemen called the Roundup Riders of the Rockies. The 3R for short. Once a year they spent a week riding in the Colorado Rockies. They had great respect for the western tradition, and time spent on good horses, and with good friends. No women allowed. The members of this group were the heads of industry across the U.S. And what a great group of men they were. The camaraderie was so impressive. Most of these men who were the original founders of this group are gone now, but the group is still continuing

today, but it has lost a lot of the style and class that the old gentlemen brought to the group. There were numerous rides on the Bell and catered parties. Several of these men kept their horses on the ranch, and I took care of them. They would come down on Saturday morning and ride, and I usually cooked breakfast for them. They were all jokesters, and I would laugh until I cried.

After one of the rides, Joe Dekker who was one of the original founders of the ride, had attended but was in his 90's at the time. His man had driven him down, so he could have lunch with the riders. He called me and said he had lost his camera at the party area and would I see if I could find it. I had several girls working for me at that time, so we saddled up and rode up to the area. I found the camera with a half of roll of film left. Each of us girls bared a private part, and without showing any of our faces finished off his roll, before returning his camera to him. Later, when I told Ed, he got a great laugh out of that. Joe was always mystified where those pictures came from.

We had the rattlesnake club also. To be a member, you had to catch a rattler by his tail as he was going down a hole, pull him out and kill him. Both Ed and I were the original members. Needless to say, we didn't have too many members.

When Ed decided to drill a big well on the Bell, he was told by the drilling companies and the engineers, there was no water there and that ten dry holes had been drilled around the Bell. Here again, Ed didn't understand NO. I did tell him about an old Well Witcher in Parker, that people always called when they wanted to drill a well. Ed didn't believe in that, but humored me anyway. I brought this man to the ranch, he got out his divining rods and went to work. He found a spot and said there is lots of water here at 62 feet. He couldn't understand when Ed said he was going for deep water. When they started drilling they hit water at 65 feet, then continued on drilling. They hit artesian water at 2800 feet. It pumped 3000 gal a minute. They installed this huge pump, and I put a big stock tank up there. It took about a minute to fill that. That well cost over a million dollars. Ed had the foresight to know that the land would not always be a ranch, and the water would be needed in the future. He offered some of that water to Castle Rock, but they got greedy and tried to take that well away from Ed. I spent a lot of time with Ed's attorney sitting in the water court. He no more than won that case, when the state tried the same thing. They wanted the water also. So back to court we went. Won that case too, and the water remained on the Bell.

Edward T was a hard man to buy a present for, since he had everything. One year on his birthday, I presented him with two longhorn calves. His friends started calling him the cattle baron, with his two steers.

I hand fed those calves and groomed them when they were young, but as they grew older, and had developed the typical long horns, they became feral and ornery. They would spend the hot summer days laying in the cool sand under the bridge, and if anyone dared to cross their bridge, they charged. We got to calling them the trolls. When Ed was in the process of selling the ranch, the tree huggers came to the ranch. They wanted to check along the creek for jumping mice that were on the endangered species. That would have held up the sale of the ranch. I watched them drive down along the creek and was sitting on the fence when my son came out and asked me what I was doing. I patted the top rail and told him to have a seat, and watch the show. It wasn't very long before there was a lot of screaming and those two city fellas burst out of the brush with the longhorns right behind them. They managed to jump into their car and drive away. We never saw them again. If there were jumping mice down there, they are probably still there.

One day a very pleasant lady and her granddaughter slowly cruised into the driveway and were looking around. I went out to meet them, and she told me, her parents built the big house and she and her sister were born in that house. We spent a couple of hours over coffee and she told me about her early life at Bell Mountain Ranch. She was thrilled that other than updating, the ranch was still pretty much the same as when she lived there. Even the plum trees were there, where they picked plums and made jam. I asked her about the ghost that was in the house when I first moved in, but she didn't know anything about that. It must have been a later generation. The ghost never bothered me, but my dogs wouldn't go upstairs and some people after seeing her, wouldn't go back into my house. I think she got a kick out of having all the cupboard doors slamming at once.

I have been so fortunate to have spent over 35 years at Bell Mountain Ranch. It was the ideal time, and the ideal place to raise and train horses. We specialized in producing good using horses, and the terrain there was ideal for raising good mountain horses, that knew where to put their feet. I could ride rough stock in the sandy creek beds to take the snot out of them and use the yucca plants to teach them to move off my legs. They knew how to cross water and avoid holes, and lots of wet saddle blankets made good horses.

With Ed's connections I got to meet a variety of people. Captains of industry, political figures, I even had dinner with Dick Channy, an astronaut that had walked on the moon, movie stars, Betty White was a dear friend of Ed's and visited the ranch many times. I really enjoyed his personal friends the best. Charlie Gates used to fly his helicopter in, land behind the barn, have a drink and fly away.



It was a sad time the day after Christmas in 1997 when Edwart T passed away. He was one of a kind. After he was gone, I bought my own farm and took all the old horses that were left, and let them live out their lives in tall grass. Those years also gave my heart time to heal. Just as Ed was one of a kind, so is the Bell. Though it is changing with the times, it is still enduring and continuing to enrich the lives of those who are enjoying it. As for the hundreds of horses who roamed her pastures, they too are remembered.

Look up into heaven, you'll see them above:

The horses we lost, the horses we loved,

Manes and tails flowing they gallop through time,

They were never yours, they were never mine.

I remember the Bell



## Larkspur Historical Society

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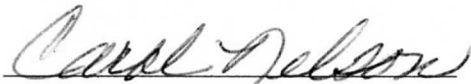
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Carol Nelson, 330 Sutherland Place, Manitou Springs, Colorado, 80829 give to the Larkspur Historical Society, my permission to use photographs, and my story "I Remember the Bell" on the website [larkspurhistoricalsociety.org](http://larkspurhistoricalsociety.org).

With my participation and permission, these items were scanned by the History Research Center of the Philip S. Miller Library located in Castle Rock, Colorado.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Nelson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Carol Nelson