

34. “SANDY” OSKAMP (1930-2019)

The clock was ticking. Along with the challenges of incorporating the Ferree Place in our operation, Jeanne and I had one year to raise the money to make the mortgage payments to the Ferrees and Travelers Insurance Company and come up with the down payment on the Koch Place. (Chapter 23).

We found ourselves running on more than one track. The ranch operations track was the familiar, attractive one and dangerously seductive. The critical fund-raising track was bewildering and uninviting – we didn’t know how to get on it. We didn’t have a clue or know who to ask.

But wait, there’s more...we didn’t have the sense to stop. After closing on the Ferree Place, we shook our heads (still dazed from our fall off the turnip truck) and looked around to see what other kind of trouble we could get into. Among the options were Halligan Reservoir¹ and the old Brackenburg Place.

The part of the Brackenburg Ranch north of the Cherokee Park Road, now known as the *Cherokee State Wildlife Area – Middle Unit* was purchased by the Colorado Division of Wildlife in the mid 70s. At the same time, the ~6200 acres south of the Cherokee Park Road, including the ranch headquarters and the area now known as *Cherokee Meadows* had been bought by a 35-acre developer, Partnership Investments of Minnesota, Inc. (PIM).

As Jeanne and I were gathering our wits, the developer was starting to sell 35-acre parcels. I tried to get hold of the developer on the off chance that there might be some way to do something...

What I got was Alexander McLeod Oskamp, Jr. “Sandy”, as he was known, was a Minnesota transplant with some loose connection to the owners of PIM. In his early fifties and divorced, a Minnesota insurance agent in his past life, reincarnated as a sometime Colorado real estate broker and PIM’s local representative, Sandy was hanging around the edges

of the action looking for a piece of some passing deal. He had a ‘home run’ business perspective and was always waiting for just the right pitch.

Although I stand by the above characterization, it does shortchange Sandy considerably. He was smart, well educated (Northwestern), articulate (English major), savvy, charming, funny and an avid outdoorsman. Tall, fair and handsome, too, according to some.

Sandy took an immediate and enthusiastic interest in what we were doing. He agreed to convey my open-ended query to a Mr. Robert Larson, the mover behind PIM, and came back with a ‘how about...’ involving cows that PIM had acquired with the Brackenburg land.

With Sandy’s help, the deal we ended up striking included the purchase of the cattle to facilitate a transfer of the George Creek Permit (Chapter 10), our purchase of the Brackenburg brand λ^2 and a lease for the old Brackenburg Ranch headquarters with about 1000 acres of pasture.

With Sandy’s shepherding, as the deal progressed, it was lubricated with a continual flow of Sandy’s stories, ranging from the secret lives of small-town Minnesota bank presidents to how the Brackenburg’s foreman, Chet Wahl (Chapter 13), got his walking papers, and likely thereby became even ornerier.

When the Brackenburg cows were transferred to PIM, Sandy had been there as PIM’s representative. According to Sandy, Chet put on a prolonged show, strutting around, shouting and swearing, presumably for Sandy’s benefit as the new dude boss. While the cows were being worked in the corrals, Sandy noted that the man doing most of the work was going about it quietly and earnestly. That was Bob Webb (Chapter 10). At the end of the day, Sandy had fired Chet and offered the PIM foreman job to Bob.³

One of our immediate concerns involved pieces of Brackenburg land that bordered what we had assembled. The market for 35-acre parcels was hot and the

cat was out of the bag with respect to our ~13,000 acre acquisition. Jeanne and I were not going to be able to buy any adjoining land without being taken to the cleaners.

Sandy, scheming for us, advised that what we needed were some ‘beards’. It took three transactions with Sandy’s bewhiskered flimflammy to acquire control of ~300 acres that are now *Wills Gulch* and part of *Alford Spring*. When the smoke cleared, Sandy and our old friend Will White (1945-2019)⁴ removed their beards, turned over the deeds⁵ and became partners in our venture.

It was clear to Sandy that we were swimming in the deep end and could use some help (he probably also thought that he could just see his favorite slider coming across the outside corner). We structured a handshake deal that involved him with our yet to be defined fund-raising efforts.

In the hard times that Jeanne and I had no idea were ahead of us, Sandy was to be a good companion and unflagging cheerleader.

Thanks to Amy Brackenburg Larson and her mother, Sue Brackenburg, for their kind help with this chapter.

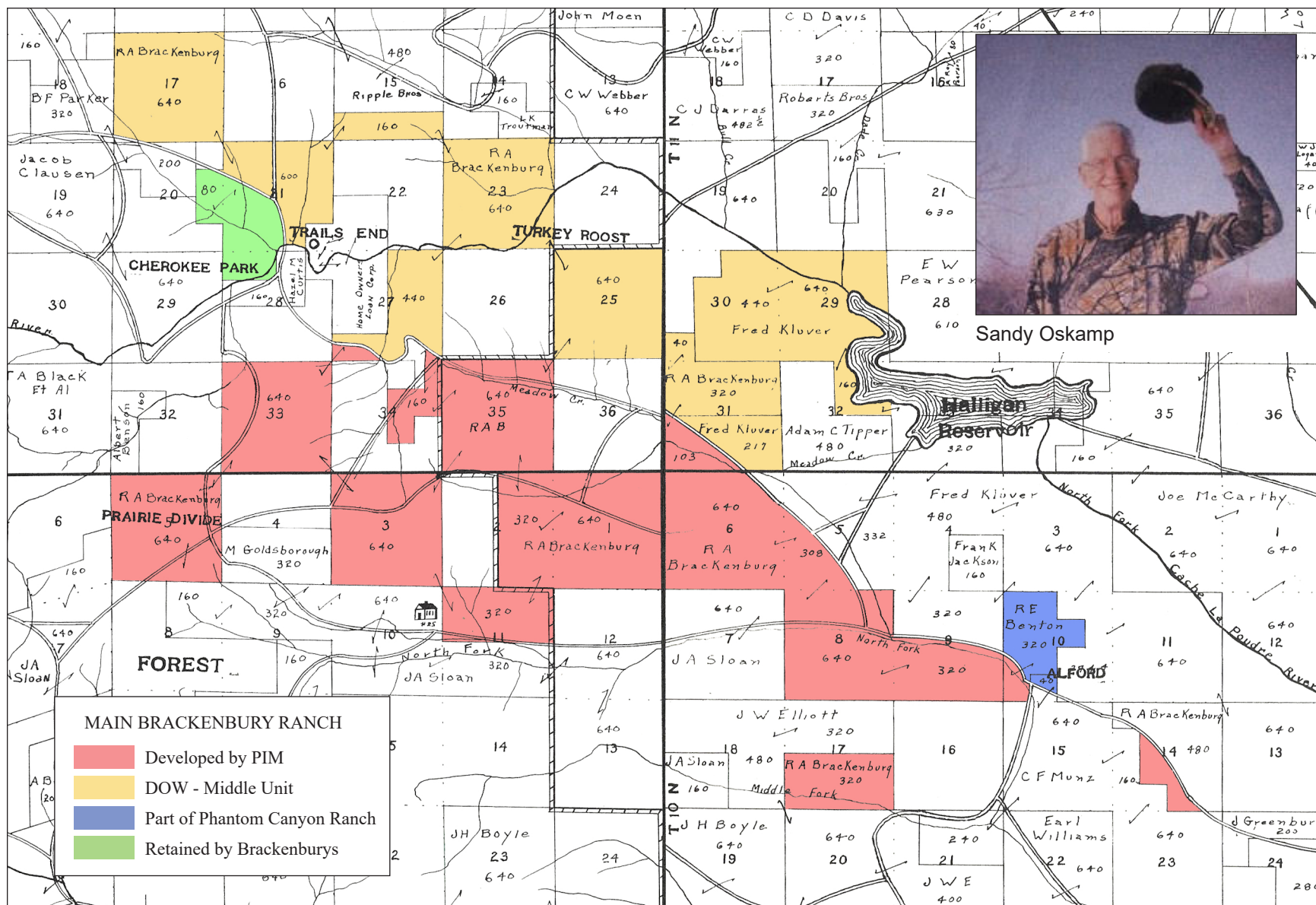
¹ (more about Halligan Reservoir later)

² Called the “V Bar Open A”. Sandy got a big kick out of remembering Dick Brackenburg referring to the brand as the “V Bar *Lambda*”.

³ The story goes that Chet had been abandoned by his parents and/or farmed out to another family at a very young age. In a fragment of the tale we see a seven-year-old Chet (ca. 1923) hitching along the road from Cheyenne to Laramie in a vain search for his mother. He may have been on his own from about the age of twelve.

⁴ (more about Will later)

⁵ It would require more brain damage than I want to expend to unpack the details – suffice to say that we also ended up with deeds to a couple of lots in Glacier View Meadows, in what belonged to an exotic species of real estate deals that Sandy called *trash cansactions*.



Larimer County Atlas - Rocky Mountain Map Co. - Loveland, Colorado - 1940