

Time spent on the Clan Alpine Ranch

It was in 1985, when I was 11 years old, that we went to live in Edwards Creek Valley. My uncle, Dean and his brother Blaine Johnson had bought the Clan Alpine Ranch around 1979 or 1980. I spend my summers there and most every vacation day from school. Looking back it seems like I was there more than at home. In 1985, not having enough cattle to stock the place, Dean and Blaine had leased some of the range and private lands at Shoshone Meadows to Slick Elmer. Slick was good to me, and he'd given me a little two year old mare for Christmas that gentled easily and before long I had her where I could do just about anything I wanted with her.

I really liked living there and I liked the country. At times I would ride off in the hills thinking I was going to catch a mustang or two. The range around the Shoshone Meadows was packed full of mustangs at that time. You could run mustangs everyday off the springs in the area, I knew them by heart. One day when everyone was gone, there was a bunch of young mustang studs came down off the hill, down to where my little mare was, near the corals there at Shoshone Meadows. I guess she was in heat, anyway I was able to get her caught and when I led her into the coral the mustangs followed and I shut the gate behind them. When everyone got home I was so proud I'd caught all those mustangs. But Slick said "why you damn fool, you'll have us all thrown in jail". So he made me turn them loose. He did tell me that I could pick one out to keep. So I picked out a nice big roan horse - but when we put him in the old chute that was there, to trim him up a bit, he jumped out over the top of the chute, and he got away.

I got to do a lot of different things when we were living there in Edwards Creek Valley. My cousin, Reese Johnson and I were about the same age, we helped with the riding and all the things that people do on ranches. Got to know a lot of different country - Dixie Valley, Middle Gate, Bell Flat, Smith Creek Valley and the country around New Pass Summit. That country's a lot like much of the rest of Nevada -most of the time, the only water you'll find is a spring now and then. But then every once in a while, there'll be a creek running out of one of the bigger canyons. And that's where you'll find a ranch headquarters -where they'll be irrigating a little ground and putting up a little hay and so forth. -That's the way the Clan Alpine Ranch is. The headquarters are located on the west side of the valley, right where Cheery Creek empties out of the Clan Alpine Range. I think when we were there; they were probably irrigating about 80 acres -using water from Cherry Creek.

My Cousin Burt Mavity liked to fish and took Reese and I and just about any kid that would want to go fishing when he was out to the ranch. He was and still is quite a guy, always willing to make sure us kids had a good time. He taught Reese and I how to fish by hand and how to spot good hand fishing holes. We would fish Edwards Creek, Campbell Creek, and upper Smith Creek. If I remember right, we were catching rainbow and brookies and browns. Edwards Creek had once been a Stage and Pony Stop back in the Pony Express days. Evidently, at one time they had put up quite a bit of hay there. There was still a lot of the old haying equipment laying around and you could still see the old irrigation ditches.

Starting around 1981 and through 1983 Bert was finishing high school and would come out on weekends to the ranch. His intention was to have a creek stocked full of fish right above the ranch in Cherry Creek where he could fish anytime. He took us along with another cousin Jaime Harris hand fishing the creeks in the area. One of the first fishing trips was right across the valley to Edwards Creek. We'd reach down under the banks and rocks and catch the fish by hand and put them in a big orange water cooler. It seemed that in no time we had the cooler full and we headed for Cherry Creek. Reese and I probably weren't much help catching the fish but held the wet and important job of keeping the compressor hose in the cooler full of fish bouncing back across the valley to Cherry Creek. We did that three or four times as I remember. I'm sure Reese and I were not along with all the fishing that was done but it was quite exiting to be a part of at the time. Anyways, the fish took to Cherry Creek and even survived the floods of 1984 when the creek had to be diverted at the mouth of Cherry Valley to keep the ranch from being flooded. I remember that Spring and amount of water coming out of the canyon was like a river. In the early 90's the Nevada

Division of Wildlife had a piece in one of their publications telling of the good fishing in Cherry Creek in the Clan Alpine Range.

Here, about three or four years ago, my wife Amy and I took a ride out through that country and camped at the mouth of canyon or Edwards Creek. I couldn't believe the changes that had taken place. Where I remember a creek used to be, there was a trickle and the canyon above the corrals was choked with willows. Why, you couldn't get to the creek if you had to. We never saw a fish bigger than a 3 inch minnow. I doubt that a person would be able to irrigate 5 acres there now, when it's obvious that they must have irrigated at least 40 or 50 acres there at one time. Hopefully there will come a day those responsible will realize what a mistake it's been to remove livestock from Nevada's rangelands, and they will restore traditional livestock use upon the rangelands once more.

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