

# PERLY GREEN



**'I STILL  
USE THE  
OLD PITCH  
FORK'**

## **RUSS SNOWDEN AND TAMI CASTLE**

Perly Green is a rancher who has lived here for forty-five years. He has ranched on Trout, Middle and Foidel Creeks. He is a local figure that may be found in the CO-OP talking to fellow ranchers, in the El Rancho exchanging hunting tales with buddies or in the woods trapping and rousing wild game in the summer. Perly runs a guiding and outfitting business during hunting season and has horses to rent during the spring and fall. His tales of life in the mountains and adventurous escapades are always exciting and interesting.

"Although an elk is not very big, you want to give him the benefit of the doubt. Once a fellow hunter claimed an old cow elk came out of the bushes and took right for him and chased him for an hour. I think she was probably sick, but all the fellows got a big bang out of that. A cow elk and her calf bedded down in one of my haystacks one winter, but we never messed with them.

"I also have a great respect for beavers because they work so hard. They can be a nuisance in ditches, but they can be a blessing too. I've been blessed a couple of times, because I would have been clear out of water if it hadn't been for a beaver. They sure can build dams, but their hides aren't worth much any more.

"Bobcats and fox hides are the big thing now. Once we had a pair of bobcats that came around every ten days and killed lambs. They kind of traveled in circles over a certain area...I've got a

big bobcat hide that I had tanned, but we didn't trap 'em. Coyotes are the biggest lamb eaters. We used to never go out without seeing a coyote, and they're quite an animal to see. Sometimes we'd see coyotes as high as six in a bunch. They're smarter than they used to be, so you don't see them as much.

"I used to trap on horseback when they didn't keep the roads open. Back then you'd trap anything and you didn't have to have a license. I'd skin anything that got into a trap. I've made my living since I was thirteen trapping. Those black and white tail rabbits were a good source of money. The white tails would bring as high as a dollar and a quarter a pound. The black tails would bring a little less, but there were plenty of them available."

Perly told us a funny story about a fellow who came up hunting two or three years ago from New York. "This fellow was a little bit accident prone. The Steamboat hospital called me up about six in the morning to come get a hunter that was ready to be released. He and the cook had come out the day before and had gone down to the bar, I guess, and got some beer to take up. Anyhow this fellow forgot to tighten up his saddle and the saddle turned underneath the horse and lost him. He hit his head on a rock, scattered beer all the way up and down the trail, but he was alright. I thought it was funny!

"It comes hunting season and you got a whole





### **"PERLY AND HIS DUDE HORSES"**

lot of friends ya' didn't know ya' had, and you get new ones every year. That's how I got started. Since the hunters are going to come I might as well charge them. Besides ranching and farming has been pretty tough, and it added income, helping pay the taxes and such. It's been fifteen to eighteen years ago that I first started charging. The first few guys I took out I charged ten dollars a day. I'm still cheaper than most, even though I've been getting four hundred and fifty dollars for a five day hunt. That's with a guide, and we do the cooking and furnish the grub, and furnish transportation in and out.

"When I first started I had a camp on the Flat Tops. Then we moved over to the Service Creek area and I've been right there ever since. You've got to go through the forest service to get permits, and they would rather that you stay in the same area every year. It saves confusion. You have to buy new permits each time you move. The guiders and outfitters are at a little disadvantage, I think. The general public can camp right along a stream or lake, but a guide and outfitter has to camp back from the water a mile or so, so as to not contaminate the lake. I don't know why a guider and outfitter would contaminate any more than anybody else, but that's the way it's set up.

"We don't try to overload or take more than we can handle. We have ten hunters in a camp at the same time. That's about the most we want.

We've really been very fortunate. Usually our customers pay in cash or traveler's checks. The business is a success.

"When I first came here it was haying season. I got this job haying, then my folks came up that same fall and bought 400 acres that's now hooked onto 1400 acres. Nobody had any money, but they bought it by contract for \$1600. That was about \$4 an acre. The next place I bought was the home place where I live now (southwest of Steamboat). That cost me \$8500 for 320 acres, and that's irrigated, meadows and everything. So you can see prices are vastly different. There's no way an ordinary fellow can buy land anymore, no way.

"My family helped me hay. I also had some Mexican fellows help me, but mostly my family did it. We only hayed about 250 acres here last year, and some of that was custom haying. That's when you hay for someone else.

"When I first came to this part of the country haying was different. We used all horses, and every bit of it was hard work. I went to work haying on a ranch at the bottom of Rabbit Ears. That was my first job. They ran two sweeps, two mowers, a sulky rake and two men on the stack and one on the plunger. We still have the plunger we used to use. I don't know where it originated, but it's a homemade stacker. They took poles and made a big rack that we could slide the hay up on. The fingers came clear to the ground and the plunger had a kind of a rack on the end. A forty foot pole on rollers is pushed by a team of horses. They push the hay to the top of the stacker. Now, they use a truck or tractor instead of horses.

"We put up quite a bit of hay with horses if we had fellows that knew how to handle themselves. Of course it's not as fast, but I imagine we put up five-hundred tons of hay out here a summer. I never figured it out, but we'd put up 30 or 40 tons



### **MODERN-DAY HORSEPOWER**

a day. That was all loose hay.

"After I worked for awhile, I got a raise. I think I got a dollar-fifty a day for running the sulkey rake, and room and board. Then we had to milk a whole bunch of cows before we went to work, and after we got home. It was a pretty steady job. I worked for Ernest Arnold and he and I milked twice a day by hand, and that takes a little while. Everybody around here used to have a dairy herd. The last one in the county was down in Hayden four or five years ago, and I think they had a cheese factory and creamery here in Steamboat at one time. That's where they'd handle the milk.

"We didn't go to town too often except to go to the show and to get haircuts. I never got to town much, but the show was the big thing. I can remember my first winter in Steamboat. I sold some potatoes in town. I had to bring them in with a team and sleigh. I would come in one day and leave the next. I used to sell a lot of potatoes in Oak Creek too. Then the laws were different. You could sell produce direct, and the stores would trade groceries. We would sell cream to the creameries and the store would take eggs and potatoes or any other produce we might have.

"I worked for my dad on the farm and got odd jobs to kind of help out. Then they had a lot of farm sales every spring. I never missed one of those sales if within fifty miles. I'd tie my lunch and bed roll behind my saddlehorse and go. I never failed to get a job driving somebody's stock home for 'em. The pay wasn't much in 1934. Of course, that was right during the depression. That was when I went to work for twenty dollars a month out on Arnold's place. My folks sold what we had in Eastern Colorado and moved to Foidel Canyon. I started that place going good and worked for other people, a small operation. We did a little farming and Dad was getting a veteran's pension. We only ran five or six cows and that turned into a herd. Our farm land was real dry, all adobe. It made it a little tough.



**"PERLY AND HIS WIFE, BONNIE"**

"In that same year I met Bonnie at the Fourth of July rodeo. She rode with me in the parade, and we married in 1948 and have been here ever since. The old log house that we lived in then was down where the chicken house is now. Since then it has burned down."

Perly talked about some of his other job experiences. "The cattle business has always been the same, there are boom years and bad years, but always a boom or bust. If a fellow stays with it long enough, he'll come out alright. It's no easy way. Our brand is a CY/, and I've been quite fortunate in not having any of my cattle stolen. There were some sheepmen when I came, but it was mostly farming. Now I still farm about eight hundred acres. The problems of the cattlemen are the same as now. The long winters' feed is too long, longer here than most places. I can remember when I sold a three-year-old street for thirty-three dollars. Now they're getting just sixty cents a pound for them."

After hearing Perly talk of his life experiences we wanted to hear of his beginnings. "I was born in a dugout sod house in 1915 on the eastern plains of Colorado. That's where I spent the first nineteen years of my life. My folks had come in on an immigrant train from Nebraska. Immigrant trains gave certain rates if the riders loaded their belongings themselves. I went to grade school on the corner of our place. We walked back and forth all the time and went all eight years to the same school. The same teacher taught all eight grades. There were only fourteen or fifteen students. What little high schooling I had was at Woodrow High, until a big blizzard came along in the middle of my first year. That kept me from going back.

"I always got along fine with the teacher and the other kids. Maybe I shouldn't tell this one, but I can remember we had kind of a plump lady teacher and old fashioned desks, with a place to put our feet underneath the desk. Pretty soon I looked and saw her knees, so I got the idea I'd tickle her. Ha ha, she sure did jump.

"School was vastly different from now. They didn't have the activities that they do now. We played basketball, but there was no football at the school where I went. They'd have race meets in the spring, but there was no buses so everybody got there and back themselves. It was hard because very few kids had cars of their own. I had an old Model T touring car that I learned to drive in. I usually took that."

We asked Perly about some of the changes in the area. He told us about some of the local communities then. "Oak Creek had a population of two thousand and Steamboat Springs was only eighteen hundred. Oak Creek had thirteen thriving beer joints that went strong every night. All of the pit mines were operating then. They hired lots of men. I went there every now and





### **"THE HOUSE WHERE PERLY WAS BORN"**

then. Some people used to frown on and downgrade Oak Creek all the time. There were a lot of foreigners that lived in Oak Creek, but there were lots of good people. Oak Creek was booming with coal mines.

"I am a farmer; that's what I devote my life to, but also I have mined a little. I worked a little in the wagon mines and at Apex and Middle Creek Mines. I rode back and forth to work on horseback, even in the winter time. I didn't think it was rough then, but I do now. The wagon mines were off the railroad, and that's where the farmers and people came to get their coal. I never got used to the hard work. At Apex Mine you couldn't quite stand up. It was hard on the back; everyone worked hard. We had carbide lights, and would drill by hand. We usually teamed up by noon and had the holes drilled, ready to blast. We would light the fuses when we went to lunch, then the smoke would be cleared out when we came back. We'd then load what coal had come loose, and drill our holes and light the fuses and go home.

"In the summertime we lived in a tent and small trailer, and in the fall of 1948 we bought this old section house from Oak Creek and moved it down here and rebuilt it. We still live in it. I started to run a few sheep which turned into a herd in just a few years, so we had to hire a herder to move around with them. Our haying was strictly a family operation then, too. I got my first model D in '45 before we were married. I still have it, but it is junked. I can remember the first car we had. It was a Model A pick-up. Before that it was a two day trip to town with a team and wagon. We went one day and came back the next. It was 38 miles."



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**"IT WAS A TWO-DAY  
TRIP TO TOWN WITH  
A TEAM AND WAGON."**

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Perly has a fresh outlook on the state of the world today. He sees the changes that have taken place here and in other parts of the country and feels these changes are positive and progressive. "Steamboat has changed a lot since the 30s when I came up here, mostly for the better. Kids today have it easier. I had to work harder. Even when I was 14 I had to get up at six in the morning and sometimes work till ten at night. Actually I think it was good for me. I recommend the hard way of life in the country for anyone."