

The Granberg story [Part three]... Helen Horn

By Sherry Stewart



I look to our early pioneers with admiration for the way they faced difficult situations. They often met these challenges with grit and stamina and problem solved with great

ingenuity, employing humour as a tool in the face of hardship.

All those characteristics are vibrantly alive and well today in the person of Helen (Granberg) Horn.

Now in her early 80's, Helen claims to have slowed down a bit, but it's hard to tell from here. She is a wife, a mother, a rancher, a farmer, a friend to many and a very active champion of the community. She has been quoted as saying, "My life is looking after everybody else," and she does it tirelessly and with a smile. She is known hereabouts as a very classy lady.

Readers of our June issue will remember that Helen is the daughter of Ellis and Bertha Granberg, and that Bertha was the daughter of Bill Holland, one of the first settlers in our area. "I was born two miles west of Lone Butte in a

log cabin on my dad's homestead," Helen told me. "It was a home birth, attended by my Aunt Ivy and a neighbour lady." She is probably the first settler girl, still living, who was born in the South Cariboo and lived all

of her life here.

The family moved from Lone Butte to the Roe Lake property and later her father bought the place from his father-in-law. Helen went to school at Roe Lake and then at Lone Butte. As eldest of five children, she

was the family baby sitter. Barely older than the others, she cared for the children in the house while her mother did chores outside, and she walked them the two miles to the Lone Butte school. Eventually Ellis opened a store in Lone Butte, and beginning at the age of 15, Helen ran Granberg's Store for 10 years, often still caring for her younger siblings at the same time.

I asked Helen how Chris Horn came into the picture, and she laughed, her eyes twinkling in merriment. "His mum, Anna, had the Lone Butte Hotel next door to our store. Chris lived five miles outside of town

with his uncle, Gus Horn, on the what was known then as the Holland Road, now Highway 24." So Chris had some riding to do to court the pretty Granberg girl. "Chris used to tease that he killed a horse chasing me," Helen laughs, "but that was



Helen Granberg and her future mother-in-law, Anna Horn, standing in front of the old Lone Butte Hotel circa 1943.



Norman, Olga and big sister Helen

a joke, of course! We were married in Williams Lake on June 19, which is also Chris' birthday, in 1948."

Helen became a young bride and Olga, Helen's younger sister, took over the store and ran it until her marriage to Charlie Thornsteinson. I asked Helen if it was difficult making the change from storekeeper to rancher's wife, even though she was country born and raised.

"Well, yes, it was," she told me. "We had a small sawmill in the early years, so there was always a crew to cook for, and that took a fair amount of time. Then we had the usual farm animals, a few chickens, a few pigs, and later on we had some sheep, as well as the cattle. The reason we went into the sawmill business was that it was such a bad year in 1948. It was wet all summer, and all we had then was meadow land which was all water, you couldn't even get on it. So, in consequence we had to sell almost the complete herd and invest in the sawmill. A lot of people had small sawmills at that time—the lumber was taken to Lone Butte and sold there."

"Our son Gus came along 10 years after we were married," Helen continues. "We still had the sawmill, and, in addition to all the ranch responsibilities, Chris' father and his wife, who lived two miles up the road, were not well and needed care. That was when Gus was very small, and I can remember putting him in a basket and going over there to

be with them. Mind you, in those days there was no running water in or out, and things were very basic, which made it more difficult. And, of course, there was no one else around to do it. We didn't have home care, we didn't have even a hospital for a while. The hospital was in Ashcroft or Williams Lake."

Helen handled all of those various responsibilities because she had to. She told me, "Today at my age I couldn't even do it. But that was many years ago and you think you are capable of almost anything. Modern conveniences certainly help—just the fact of having electricity, a septic system and running water in the house makes such a big difference. And of course transportation is so much easier today."

Fifteen years after they were married, Chris and Helen moved to their present day location near Horse Lake. Today Chris, Helen and Gus run the farm. Helen is famous for saying, "We are not a family farm, we are a farming family, and there is a difference. As a farming family everybody pitches in and does whatever they are able or capable of doing." They still run cattle, they still raise hay and grain, Helen is still a wife and a mother and a rancher—and more, much more.

Helen has been a Cattlebelle for many years. The Interlakes Cattlebelles are closely connected with the B.C. Farm Women's Network and Helen has held all the offices. "I think that they are one of the best organizations we have," she says. "The organization helps us keep in touch with each other. I think we are in danger of losing our sense of community because big business and corporations want us to run off to Kamloops or Vancouver. We are losing our community, our schools, our post

offices, our community halls—things that bind us together in the country—and it makes me sad. The B.C. Farm Women's Network links people together who are in the agricultural business. And it's all agriculture, regardless of whether we are in beef, other livestock, gardening, orcharding, or even tree farming. The Network is all about communication and education."

One way that Helen works to keep the community together is her support of and participation in our local Farmer's Market. She is a mainstay there, selling

her famous sausages, and chatting with her legion of friends and visitors alike.

She also educates and champions about a new endeavour—growing hemp. "It's a first time effort here," she explains.

"It grows very well and looks very good, but there is a long way to go between planting the seed and harvesting the seed. And harvesting the seed for food purposes is the main thing. Our growing season is short, our altitude is high, and the weather is always variable. So all these things need to be taken into consideration regarding whether it will be a success or not. But, if you don't try you will never know."

And isn't that just like Helen? Still on the leading edge, still willing to try something new because it will benefit people and because, "If you don't try you will never know."

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Bridge Lake Fair...

(donated by Clark Connaty) for Best of Show Wine.

The Student High-Point Trophy, generously donated by Interlakes Cattlebelles, turned into two identical trophies when 14-year-old Amber Kisby and 10-year-old Regan Bishop tied with 19 points each.

Five great gardeners entered the Kitchenware Planter Contest. Elaine Kisby won Lone Butte Garden's \$40 first place gift certificate. Laurie Bishop took second place to win \$25 from the Wilson lake Trading Company and Gail Larson was third, winning \$10 from 100 Mile Ranch & Feed Supply.

Bridge Lake Fair is most grateful to the many who generously donate their time and to the donors of contest prizes and silent auction items. Entrants who kindly donated to the parking lot auction, and those who bought the items, raised a handsome \$301.75 for Roe Lake Rec, in gratitude for free use of their facilities.

Organizers would like to hear from Alberta Macido, who's bid won on a silent auction item. If anyone can help with a phone number or address, please call Kay Buck at 593-0173.

Next year is the 50th anniversary of the Bridge Lake Fair, expected to be held on August 18 and 19, 2007.



Happy courting days for Helen and Chris



Helen and Chris have ranched together nearly 60 years