

A History of Lost Mine Ranch and Airpark

By Mary Newton

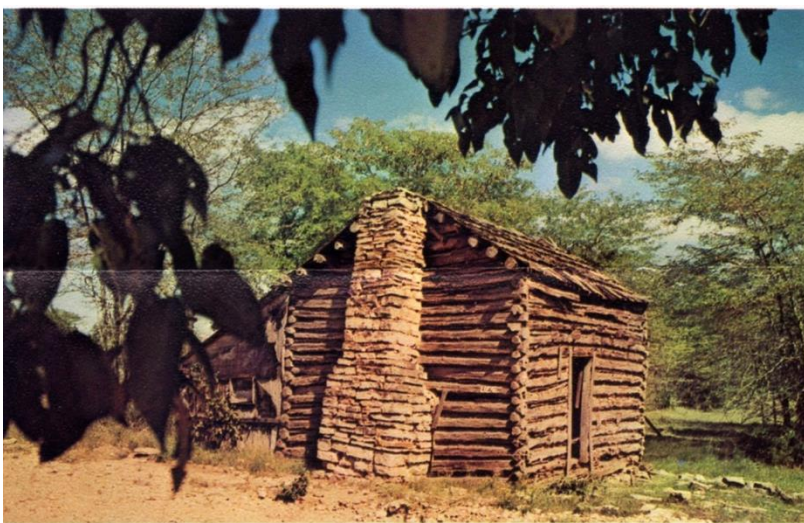
Before Don and I moved to Iowa, someone asked me if I would write a history of Lost Mine Ranch, and how it came to be. In thinking it over, I was torn as to how to present it, and decided that since none of you knew my late husband, Grant Finley, the story had to be about him

Grant grew up in Harlan, Iowa. His grandparents had survived the depression years on a nearby farm, and his dad worked through some tough years to create a successful bridge building business, which evolved into a company known as Western Engineering Co. Based in Harlan, it expanded to an asphalt paving company that contracted for work not only in the immediate area, but into most of the surrounding states. Grant and his brother were integrated into all aspects of the business as soon as they could hold a shovel; soon learning to operate and maintain any and all of the heavy equipment, spending summers working out on the jobs, and also quickly being introduced to the management and bidding process. Of course, it was assumed that they would carry on the business. After graduating from Iowa State in 1956, Grant and I were married. Grant had an ROTC commission, so we spent 6 months at Ft. Belvoir, VA., expecting a 2 year stint in the Army. As it turned out, there wasn't much need for newly minted 2nd Lieutenants at that point, so he was discharged. We returned to Iowa and spent the next year "on the job" with Western. This meant supervising road projects around the state, living in our 40' house trailer. We then took up residence in Harlan. Grant began taking over much of the oversight of the paving jobs, scattered throughout Iowa as well as Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas and Minnesota. Seeing another related opportunity, he expanded the business by adding a number of sand and gravel producing sites around the state. At this point, he got a private pilot license in order to manage distances between projects.

By now there were 4 children in the family, and the airplane made for some very memorable family vacations,... and the opportunity to explore a dream to find a remote area to build a vacation getaway and future retirement home. Grant really visioned a quiet pristine lake where we could enjoy boating and all its amenities as well as space to pursue a lifelong dream to own, raise and train quarter horses.

With this in mind he flew with a couple of Iowa pilot buddies to the Bull Shoals area, sometime during 1971. He had heard of the old "Theodosia Hills" development. This was still operating in the early 70's as a country club and active golf course, with a large real estate inventory, and sales staff at the old Holiday Inn across the lake at





the Theodosia marina. There was a private airport where visiting pilots could hangar their planes and have a tour of the area.

A local realtor showed them a rather remote peninsula near "point 13" on the lake across from the Pontiac marina. This was known as the "Jake Nave" estate. An early settler, Jake had raised a large family in the region, farming the fertile land along the White River bottom. After the Corps of Engineers took what land they needed to build Bull Shoals Lake in the 50's, the Nave family was left with 465 acres, located in Ozark County, Sections 7 and 8, Twp 21N, Range 15W. In the legal opinions regarding the purchase of the property, it was noted that there was an 99 year mining lease, dated May 17, 1900,

that was on record in the court house. Nobody knew who owned the lease, but since there hadn't been mining that anyone could remember in that area, the attorneys suggested that it wasn't much of a risk. But, if you've ever wondered how Lost Mine Ranch got its name, there you have it! Grant loved the mystery!!

I've often wondered what it all looked like when the river was still visible. Many of the old timers never thought they were fairly compensated for their farmland. Apparently, they were paid whatever the appraisal was, without recourse. We heard that the Nave family was told that their homestead, which was somewhere near the end of Co. 640 would never be inundated. They stayed until they were frightened off by the snakes that came with the rising waters.

The original purchase included land on the south side at the top of the Co. 642 hill (you can see a stone pillar on each side, where there was an OCE sign), also along 642 past the "Y" with 640, about 1/4 mile. (There is an old quarry and some stock gates along that road). An iconic old log cabin stood at that "y" intersection. It lasted several years but was vandalized just as we had begun a restoration plan.

Grant and his 2 partners, Don Tweedy and Ray Tredway, decided to develop the property as a residential air park offering homesites near an airstrip, and including access to the surrounding lake. This meant getting permission from the Corps of Engineers to build a boat launching ramp on the property. In exchange for this permission, we were required to make it available to the public, providing a road across our land and adequate parking for public use. They also set about incorporating as "Ozark Country Estates". Even back then, there was lots of red tape. They had to file with HUD, also something called Interstate Land Sales Registration where all our preliminary plats had to be approved. Then there were the covenants to approve, as well as roads and an airstrip to build. Two areas were platted at first. Ozark Country Estates overlooking the cove known as "Cowpens". The lots ranged from 5/8 to almost an acre in size, each zoned as one homesite, with a minimum square footage. The other side of the peninsula facing Heck Hollow was platted as Ozark Country Estates, 1st Addition. These parcels were zoned for modular or manufactured homes as well as a few house trailer slots. Grant and I still owned our original "honeymoon house", the old Spartan house trailer. It was installed in 1st addition on the lot where Rob Gaugh's home now stands. We enjoyed it as a vacation home until we built the A frame where the Schroeder's now reside. The trailer passed through several owners prior to the Gaugh's but was in continuous use until





Rob finished his new home and sold it to a sportsman who managed to tow it out on the original tires and turn it into a hunting hideaway.

The next few months saw the construction of the roads through the platted properties and the plans for the airstrip unfold after some relocation of the county road. I remember a muddy spring that made for many delays and frustration! We cleared all the small trees and brush on the platted areas and drilled a few wells that could be shared by prospective owners. A modular house was installed on Co. 640, at the corner of what is now Eagle Wing Dr. It was a home for a full-time employee, hired to manage and

maintain the property. (Morrison's now live there). All the platted lots were cleared of brush and small trees, and the entire acreage was kept mowed. Once the runway was completed the partners began marketing the property.

Several homes were built in the ensuing years, and, as priorities changed, the property was divided between 2 of the original partners. Don Tweedy took over most of the western half, in Section 7, while Grant retained the runway, plus the land in Section 8, He subsequently renamed that portion "Lost Mine Ranch".

After a few more years of fly-in vacationing, Grant felt that he was in a position to take an early retirement, so we moved to Missouri with the family. This was in 1980, when we were both 46. We moved to the A frame we had built on OCE, lot 26. Later, we built the house overlooking the lake on OCE lot 1. By now, our 2 older children were in college, the younger 2 went to Gainesville High School.

A couple of horse barns were soon built and Grant began to realize his goal of raising registered quarter horses, using the unplatted acres as pastures and training arenas. We also started a cattle ranching enterprise that gave him the opportunity to really put his horses to work! At this point some local ranch hands introduced him to the sport of "cutting horses". This was a bit of a game changer, as he embraced this new hobby with great energy and determination. Seeking the guidance of many trainers, and others in the industry, he learned the techniques of the sport, and began competing in area National Cutting Horse Association shows. Soon, most weekends were spent traveling to events, first around the state, then all over the country! He studied pedigrees and began breeding his mares to famous bloodlines. His lifelong love of horses was never more evident than when he could interact with a new foal. His competition skills did not come easily, but he made many friends and found status among his colleagues as his hard work and dedication took him to the national level, where he was recognized by NCHA for his winnings as a non-pro. His untimely death occurred while he was engaged in a show arena "run" at the 1997 NCHA Summer Spectacular at Will Rogers Coliseum, in Fort Worth, TX. He was 63 years old.

Consoled somewhat by the knowledge that his early retirement had enabled him to live his dream, I now faced a myriad of decisions. I was blessed to have a supportive family, and dear friends here at Lost Mine, who helped me focus on the future of Lost Mine Ranch. In compliance with the covenants and Grant's original intent we set up the framework for an owner's association, and then platted Eagle Wing addition, providing larger lots where owners could build hangars adjacent to their home. We were also able to divide other unplatted areas into custom size lots, hangar lots, and pasture areas that have continued to accommodate the retirement dreams of other pilots-- whether it includes building personal planes, boating, waterskiing, shooting, fishing, hunting, antique cars, dragsters, or yes, even horses! I think Grant would be as proud as I am of the community we created.

