

In November of 1936, construction began on the lodge of what would become the “World Famous Paradise Ranch”. This dude ranch was the idea of Mr. Roscoe C. Cox, formerly of Kansas City. The site was one mile south of Woodland Park on the new highway 24. The highway was known as Highway 40 until realignment in 1935.

PARADISE RANCH IN THE SHADOW OF PIKES’S PEAK

- For the sport lover there is Riding, Fishing, Tennis, with a complete athletic field. Swimming and golf, too, can be enjoyed within a short distance.
- Delightful entertaining in the quaint and original “INDIO LOUNGE” with Louis Sines and his “Birds of Paradise” orchestra. Glamorous nights for dancing. Soda fountain, cocktail lounge, tea room in connection.
- Each cottage is equipped with a private bath, hot and cold running water, gas stove, garage, fireplace, and each bed is equipped with Spring Air mattresses and a Simmons Ace spring.

Come enjoy the hospitality of this completely NEW playground in the mountains. Whet your appetite for a delicious cuisine that is without peer in the mountains.

- Write today for our rates.

MR. R.C. COX, Manager and Director

PARADISE RANCH IN THE SHADOW OF PIKES’S PEAK

Box 120 Woodland Park, Colorado *May 23, 1937 ad for Paradise*

In June of 1937 the construction was almost completed which included the beautiful main lodge with a soda fountain, dining room, dance floor and cocktail lounge called “The Paddock”. There were also 18 modern cottages completely furnished.

The formal opening was on Saturday night, the 19th of June, 1937. Admission was by guest card only (issued by Mr. Cox) and over three hundred guests showed up and according to news reports they all had a “wonderful time”.

In late 1944, Cox ended up selling to partners Joseph G. Shabouh and Frank Snell, Jr. At the time, Frank and Joseph also ran an automobile livery business in Manitou, taking tourist to the top of Pikes Peak and other area tourist destinations. When WWII broke out and gasoline was rationed, Shabouh and Snell together started the Pikes Peak Stage Company. In that business they ran four and six horse tallyhos and stagecoaches up and down Ute Pass. Here in Woodland Park at their Paradise Guest

Ranch, they accommodated many tourist from many different states who were attracted by the numerous activities, modern cabins, good entertainment and lots of Western hospitality. But it wasn’t until Joseph sold his share of the resort to Frank in early June of 1949 (for \$200,000) that it became one of the finest “dude” ranches in America.

With Frank now the sole owner, the Snell’s made it a unique operation that attracted guests from all over the United States and from many foreign countries. They actually made the Woodland Park dude ranch “world famous”.

Frank Seymour Snell, Jr. was born on June 14, 1895 in Denver. His father, Frank, Sr. was a well-respected designer, architect and builder in Denver.



The Historic “Delos Allen Chappell House” in Denver was designed in 1895 by the senior Snell and is on the National Historic Register. As a bit of trivia, the Delos Allen Chappell House was used as the rectory in the filming of the Father Dowling Mysteries TV series from 1987 - 1991.

Frank Jr. was inducted and served with the Army during WWI but stayed stateside. After the army, Frank was a limo driver taking tourist from Los Angeles to the resort area of Big Bear Lake. Frank told the Cripple Creek Gold Rush that

he had been a stagecoach driver back when it was the main mode of transportation. He also claimed that he drove mule trains that carried ore from Cripple Creek to the mill in Colorado Springs. That was when he married Laurette in 1921 and a daughter Gayle was born on December 16, 1923 in Pasadena. Sadly, Laurette died at the early age of 49 on June 13, 1943 when the Paradise Ranch was just getting a good foothold in the tourist industry.

Frank remarried to LaVera Davis on the 30th of April, 1944 in Colorado Springs with his good friend Joseph G. Shabouh serving as best man and witness. Together, Frank and LaVera operated the Paradise Guest Ranch and built the ranch into a world class resort, right here in Woodland Park. One thing unique to Paradise was that Frank was a stagecoach collector, in fact, one of the foremost in the country. He bought every coach he could find in the United States and Canada and even purchased one from England that was shipped over here. By 1949 he had 18 coaches and tallyho’s that were all absolutely authentic and in pristine condition. He had them painted and varnished every year to keep them from deteriorating. His idiosyncrasy was that no one anywhere would have a better collection then he. Whenever he found another, he bought it and brought it to the ranch where they were all put into actual use every day. Another thing unique to Paradise was that a horse was assigned to every guest for their own personal use throughout their stay. This included children who were given pony’s. Frank would load up stagecoaches, horses and guests and go down to the Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo so all the guests could participate in that annual parade. Snell would also buy a block of seats for them at that big rodeo. The annual Ute Trail Stampede rodeo parade also had Paradise guests and coaches going down main street.

Blaze Burns Down Main Lodge at Paradise Ranch

~ Colorado Springs Free Press, Sept 13, 1952



At 5 a.m. on September 13, 1952 disaster struck the ranch when the main lodge at Paradise caught on fire. By 8 a.m. everything was burnt to the ground and the only thing remaining was the big chimney. The lodge contained offices, lounge, dance floor and bar, kitchen and dining rooms. The blaze was believed to have been started in the kitchen due to faulty wiring and was fanned by estimated 25 mile per hour winds. It was an estimated \$300,000 loss and nothing was able to be saved. Insurance covered some of the loss but all personal items, records and other items were irreplaceable. None of the other buildings on the ranch were damaged and Frank Snell said on the morning of the fire that he would start rebuilding “bigger and

better” immediately.

And rebuild he did. By early 1953 a new magnificent \$500,000 lodge with four large fireplaces was put up as fast as possible which Snell claimed was now fireproof. Every small detail of the new building was of the most luxurious quality in true western atmosphere. It was complete with a bar and cocktail lounge, dining rooms and a dance floor. Additional guest apartments were also built that allowed up to 150 guests. Those apartments were adjacent to the patio at the rear of the new main lodge that included a large outdoor fireplace and barbecue pit.

In 1960 another extensive remodeling project was happening at the ranch. A new guest wing was added and was decorated by LaVera Snell herself. The biggest addition however was the brand new \$160,000 outdoor heated swimming pool. The new area also had a wading



1953 photo of new lodge

pool for the children and a separate room for children’s activities. Two full time teachers kept the kids occupied while their parents were out enjoying the different ranch happenings.

A typical day at Paradise Ranch included swimming, stage coach sightseeing trips, a chuckwagon dinner, horseback riding lessons, movies, special parties, dancing and of course horseback riding. Special activities included things like overnight pack trips, a fish fry in the mountains. There were many types of games too, like tennis, badminton, shuffleboard, archery, ping pong, horseshoes, croquet and softball. There was even a library at the ranch.



1953 photo of the new dining room



Every Sunday guests were transported by stagecoach and tallyhoes to the church of their choice in Woodland Park. On Sunday afternoon was the weekly rodeo held right at the ranch. The rodeo began with the grand entry which involved two chuck wagons and a few of the wranglers on horses who galloped around the arena following a rider carrying the American flag. They lined up in the center of the arena and then the Star-Spangled Banner was played over the P.A. system.

Even though Snell proclaimed his rodeo stock as some of the best in the country, it was really quite the opposite as a lot of his stock was old and wore out that was sold off by big name rodeo stock companies. But, it provided the tourist and passerby's on highway 24 good entertainment. As far as the eating at Paradise, it was always top quality gourmet food prepared by world renowned chef Antoine St. De Ives and his wife Kathy. The super large portion meals were served in the beautiful dining room that was decorated in a Western thyme with a huge view of Pikes Peak.



After dinner you were treated to Baked Alaska presented by Snell's pastry chef. you could relax in the lavish cocktail bar with the drinks of your choice. The menus at Paradise included 26 entrees and that many appetizers. There was always an all you can eat Sunday Smorgasbord.

parking lot for the new Safeway store that was contaminated with asbestos and was also torn down in 2015 except the large dining room chimney remained until 2017 when it was cleared out to erect another box store on that site.

Eventually, Frank decided to retire from the resort industry. He sold the ranch in 1970 to a group of Colorado and Texas businessmen and by 1975 it filed for bankruptcy. In 1978 many of the out buildings and cabins were auctioned off and moved from the site. The massive barn at Paradise that was built in 1944 was razed in 1979 for a

In its heyday Paradise Ranch was the most magnificent and largest dude ranch in the United States. Today its presence is totally unknown to all but older residents. The highway splitting its former site has grown to four lanes. The area around the ranch is now part of a long stretch of fast food restaurants and box stores. The small western Town of Woodland Park is now the City of Woodland Park and is a bustling, progressive suburb of Colorado Springs.

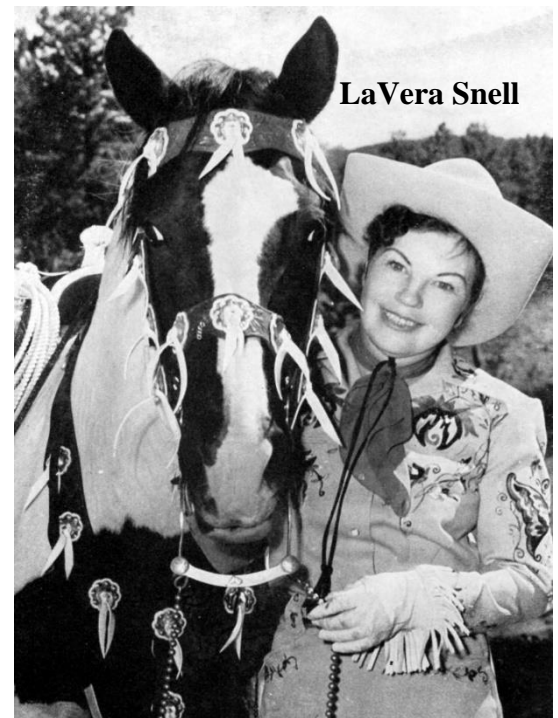




Frank Snell, Jr. died on June 9, 1976 while living in Broward, Florida. LaVera (Davis) Snell died September 10, 1978, also while living in Broward, Florida. Frank and Laurette's daughter Gayle on August 26, 2009 in Colorado Springs.

Here are just a few of many interesting facts about Frank Snell, Jr. and his Paradise Guest Ranch:

- Frank would come into the kitchen every day at noon and sit at his little table by the wall and order a “peanut butter and jelly sandwich, heavy on the jelly” with a cup of coffee and it had to be creamy peanut butter. In the mornings he would have his regular bowl of oatmeal and coffee.
- Frank Jr. worked for Occidental Construction Company in Los Angeles where he was a horse and mule trader. He was arrested on February 16, 1917 for embezzlement of ten mules which he intended to sell to buyers of the French government.
- In the fall of 1944 both Shabouh and Snell were charged with permitting gambling at Paradise. Both were found guilty of operating games of roulette, dice and blackjack as well as slot machines. They both pleaded nolo contendere to the charges and were fined \$500 each and sentenced to three months in jail. However, they were placed on probation and avoided serving the sentences.
- In July of 1949 Snell had an ice house built behind the lodge buildings. He also had a new employee living quarters building built.
- In the summer of 1953 a large black Brahma bull escaped from the Paradise rodeo grounds. It made its way all the way down to the shore of the lake in Green Mountain Falls where it trampled a 7 years old boy and sent a crowd of people running. The bull then made its way back up to highway 24 and charged at motorist. The town marshal of Green Mountain made it to the highway armed with a rifle. He shot the 1200 pound bull one time and it fell to the ground but it rose again and charged at the marshal. He then fired four additional shots but the bull kept charging. Finally an employee from the ranch arrived and killed the bull with another shot.
- July 23, 1954: A 14 year old Ohio girl was killed and 13 other injured when one of the ranches wagons overturned, crushing the girl. The wagon was pulled by six horses when the rear wheel of the wagon slipped off the road. The accident occurred when the guests were returning from a picnic about 4 miles west of Woodland Park.



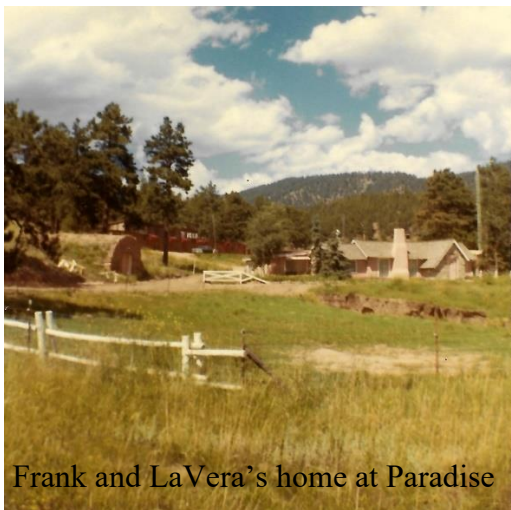
LaVera Snell

- In June of 1955 one of the wranglers lost his thumb in an roping accident. It was tore off at the base of his thumb but doctors in Colorado Springs were able to sew it back on. Amputation still might be necessary.
- In 1958 a Denver couple sued Snell for \$105,000 for alleged injuries suffered in a horseback fall. The woman claimed she suffered injuries when her horse suddenly reared up and threw her. The husband is seeking damages he received when he tried to quiet the horse.
- In May of 1964 two of the summer cabins at Paradise burnt to the ground. The fire was believed to have started from combustion from faint and gas fumes. An employee was literally blown from the one cabin by the explosion. She received first, second and third degree burns on her hand, face and leg.
- July 24, 1964. Two guests at Paradise were killed and six others injured when the horses pulling a tally-ho wagon bolted into a clump of trees.

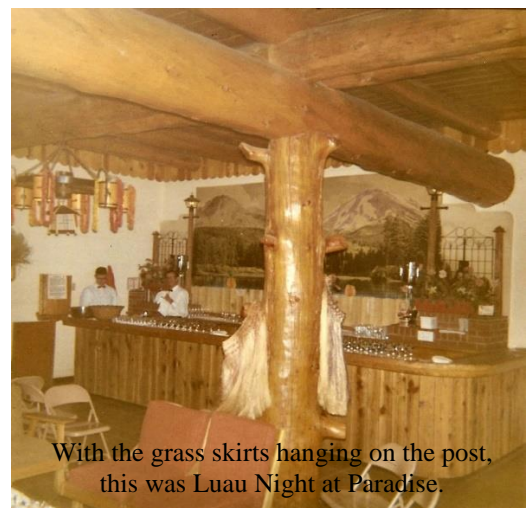


The two dead men died of broken necks, one was the wagon driver who was an employee and the other a visiting guest from Chicago who was seated next to the driver.

- It was said that Snell had tape recorders hidden in the bunkhouse to keep abreast of any dissent among ranch side employees.
- Frank would, in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service of CSU, invite CSU students for a three day stay at Paradise. The first two days the students would work under the supervision of ranch staff learning various skills, all without pay. The third day was a “free” day that the students could participate in ranch activities including horseback riding, swimming etcetera. A pretty good arrangement that provided wage free “employees” to Snell.
- The lodge side employees were not allowed to fraternize with the ranch side employees. Meals for both sides were served at different times so that no intermingling would happen.
- Snell instructed employees on both sides to never refer to the ranch as a “Dude Ranch” or guests as “dudes”. He insisted on “Guest Ranch” and “Guests”.



Frank and LaVera’s home at Paradise



With the grass skirts hanging on the post, this was Luau Night at Paradise.



Paradise Guest Ranch - Woodland Park, CO (1966)

Luau Night - the current staff in front of the infamous fireplace. We called working there 'the revolving employee plan', since some servers couldn't handle the hours, work or felt intimidated, likely by Mr. Snell and/or our demanding Italian chef (who, by the way, ended up running off with one of my guests - I ended up being a note passer between them - you can't make this stuff up)!

The above photo regarding Luau Night was given to me by a friend that worked as a server there in the summer of 1966 and the above remarks are her words musing her time there to me.

---steve

SNELL

Frank S. Snell, 89, of Fort Lauderdale, passed away June 9, 1976. Mr. Snell had been a resident of this area for 11 years coming from Colorado Springs, Co. In that area he was the owner and operator of Paradise Ranch. Mr. Snell is survived by his wife LaVera D. Snell; one daughter Miss Gayle M. Snell of Grenada Hills, Ca.; and one sister Mrs. Steen Parker of Sacramento, Ca. Private services were held in June in Fort Lauderdale.