

ALUMNI

At Home on the Range

EVERY DAY Hustace “Stacey” Scott ’70 rises early and walks into the kitchen to pour two large pancakes on the griddle: a carbohydrate jump-start for a day of manual labor on the Wyoming plains that begins, and often ends, in the dark. “I go out in my truck when there’s no hint of light,” he explains. “It’s a matter of dodging the deer and the mud puddles from irrigation.”

Stacey is in the cattle-ranching business—a seven-day-a-week occupation still based on buckets of sweat, patience with land-management bureaucrats, and skillful handling of a rope. Of his six days off last year, Scott spent two indulging his passion for bird-watching, and four more at a conference on environmentally sound ranching techniques. “I try not to work too hard on Sundays,” he says, “but the hay dries at its own rate and the irrigation has to be done every day” or the fields dry out. At least the 400 cows can pretty much fend for themselves.

Stacey’s workplace, the 35-square-mile Eagle Ridge Ranch Co., outside of Casper, is one of two adjacent spreads he owns with his brothers—Cliff, George ’72, and Charles ’67, M.B.A. ’69 (who is also a state senator). Together, the Eagle Ridge and the bigger, 1400-cow Two Bar, cover 95,000 acres—more than twice the size of the cities of Boston and Cambridge combined. This is desert land, stretching across mile-high plains and mountainous terrain where the peak elevations hit 7,800 feet. The vast landscape is home to black



Facing a drought and unpredictable global markets, George, Charles, and Hustace Scott nevertheless find joy working outside on their two Wyoming cattle ranches.

bear, mountain lion, deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, beaver, fox, coyote, and—a dream for Stacey—more than 140 bird species (and 50 other species use the ranch as a migratory route). “It’s a different world out here,” he says.

In a region dominated by old-time ranching families, the Scotts were late, atypical arrivals. The brothers’ father, Oliver Scott, S.B. ’37, M.D. ’41, grew up on a part-time dairy farm in Framingham, Massachusetts. (The Scotts have a five-generation tie to Harvard, dating back to Henry Bruce Scott, class of 1860.) Rugged Wyoming seemed to Oliver Scott the last frontier, so he moved west in 1948 to open his pediatrics practice. Eight years later he bought the Eagle Ridge ranch, where the family lived, and ran it with the help of hired hands while he continued to practice medicine. In 1971, as an investment, he added the Two Bar.

As they grew up, his sons worked on the ranch in their free time but George, Charles, and Stacey also attended eastern

preparatory schools before heading to Harvard; not one of the brothers necessarily thought they’d call home “on the range.” “This is not something ‘B-Schoolers’ are supposed to do,” Charles says. “They are supposed to go to Wall Street and earn a pile.” Following graduation, Charles spent a successful five years in the federal government before leaving the energy office (where he helped devise the gasoline rationing plan during the oil embargo) in

1974 to help save the family business at Two Bar. No one had anticipated how much work the much larger ranch would be. “When my father bought it, the bunkhouse sewer drained into the bunkhouse water well. There were no fences for the cows—they were losing five or six cows a year to the nearby highway,” Charles explains. “We did find a plow. It had a tree growing through it and had not been moved for 20 years. But I chose working at the ranch and have never regretted it.”

Owning a small business partly controlled by federal regulations (half of the Two Bar ranch land is owned by the Bureau of Land Management), an unpredictable, increasingly global market, and erratic weather conditions “is a challenge I enjoy,” says Charles. “It’s physical, outdoor work. I like being my own boss. And it’s a good place to bring up kids. I met my wife in Washington, D.C., and we got married out here. We had two kids who spent their summers riding horses and swimming in beaver ponds and the creek, collecting

frogs, and playing with children on the ranch. And they went to a one-room country school house, which is an education you can't beat. There are whole lot of things you don't have to worry about."

Stacey, too, loved growing up on the ranch. After concentrating in biology at Harvard, he returned briefly to help run the Two Bar, but then became a certified public accountant. He also moved to Alaska, where for 17 years he audited major oil companies for the state. ("For someone like me, who loves looking at numbers, getting to see the books of the world's largest oil companies was a lot of fun," he notes.) But ranching, he adds, "gets in your blood, like any other addiction." He had been reading books by holistic management expert Alan Savory, and the notion of returning to Wyoming to manage the business in new ways "really intrigued me," he says. "I enjoy hard physical labor and I enjoyed the idea of helping the environment—those were the driving reasons to come back." So in 1996, as his father was in the last stages of prostate cancer, Stacey took early retirement from the State of Alaska and moved back to run Eagle Ridge.

Family-owned ranches still dominate the Wyoming cattle industry. "But you aren't going to get rich," Charles says. "The prices are dictated to you by the marketplace; no ranch is big enough to offset that. In the fall of 1973, when I managed the cattle sale, I got 73 cents a pound. But by the next fall, the price had collapsed and it was 30 cents a pound. So the same animal, even 300 pounds heavier, was worth less than the year before. It is predictable that the prices will go up and down, but if you can predict *when*, you'd make a fortune in the cattle-futures market. Nobody has been able to do that. It's essential to get squared with your banker in the good years so you can survive the bad ones." Business was already off seven percent this past fall—due, in part, to several cases of mad-cow disease in Japan, which caused many peo-

ple there to stop eating beef and so, according to Charles, affected American beef exports. Also at fault is the three-year drought, which has affected Midwestern corn crops, the Scotts' own hay production, and the general supply of water for irrigation and livestock.

Together, a mother and calf need to consume 20 gallons of water a day. Without it, exposed to a few days of summer heat, they will dehydrate. At Eagle Ridge, Stacey buys water from a federal irrigation project for his crops, but depends on wells, streams, and creeks—many of which dried up last year—to water the cows. When checking the ranch's higher elevations for flowing water last spring, he kicked the ground and a cloud of dust flew up. "This might be the thing that puts me out of business," he said then. "The water table has just dropped so much," he explains. "Things don't look good. If we get a wet March, we're okay. If we don't, we're in real trouble." Two Bar depends primarily on direct-flow water rights from creeks, so when "the water's gone, it's gone," says Charles.

While Stacey spends much of his time hauling miles of irrigation pipes (each 30 feet long and weighing 77 to 150 pounds), Charles shovels out irrigation ditches to reroute water and has been forced to buy a lot more hay to feed his cows. "The lack of water is a real serious situation; it's on a

par with 1934 and the Dust Bowl years," he

says. Instead of 12 inches of annual moisture, in recent years the ranches have been getting seven inches or less. When it finally did rain in 2001, it poured. Two inches of water and hail fell in 20 minutes—too fast to soak into the parched ground, and the precious liquid ran off. Its force also destroyed \$20,000-worth of alfalfa Stacey was growing for winter cattle feed.

As a result of the drought, many Wyoming ranchers have had to sell off a portion of their breeding stock; they simply could not grow enough food for their animals. The Scotts have not gone that far, but they did have to sell virtually all their calves in November (ordinarily they would have held back 40 percent of the stock until they grew into yearlings) to offset losses. "It's been a survivable problem for us," Charles notes. "So far."

One major innovation the brothers have introduced is a rotation-grazing system espoused by Alan Savory. The grass evolved alongside the buffalo, which arrived en masse at a pasture, grazed heavily, then moved on and did not return until the grass had recovered. "It turns out that overgrazing the land is less a factor of the number of cattle and more a phenomenon of individual plants, and of time," Charles explains. "The key is giving the plants time to rejuvenate before grazing again." To mimic this system, the brothers more closely monitor the cattle, moving them frequently to new pastures and investing in additional heavy fencing so the cows don't wander



Above: Hustace monitors irrigation ditches on Eagle Ridge. **Right:** Vast ranch lands amid mountains and desert.





Farm equipment from days gone by lies abandoned in a pasture.

back to overgraze. The environmentally sound practice prevents erosion, fosters healthy grass (which can also withstand drier conditions), and spurs growth of leafy plants favored by wildlife, like the sage grouse. The bird, which some consider an endangered species in other regions, is thriving on Eagle Ridge because, Stacey believes, rotation grazing creates more new grass that the chicks can easily maneuver through in the spring.

Oliver Scott, who founded the Wyoming Audubon Society, also passed on to his sons a love of birds. As head of the local Audubon chapter, Stacey is developing a conservation plan for the sage grouse. The ranch hands have come to expect him to stop suddenly in the midst of mending fences (Eagle Ridge has 40 miles of barbed wire), moving irrigation pipes, or herding cattle on horseback, and whip out his binoculars to pinpoint a bird. "You're birding all the time when you're outside like this," he says, "and every now and then, if you know what you're looking for and you're paying attention, you can see something really good," like the saw-whet owl he came within a foot of, or the ruby-throated hummingbird (uncommon in the West) that perched on one of his feeders. Mostly he enjoys watching the more common species: "A cheerful chickadee," he says, "improves anyone's day."

Much of the Scott property is also an eagle flyway: from Thanksgiving to March, bald and golden eagles appear over the canyon and ridges around Casper Mountain. After some fatally poisoned ea-

gles were found on their property in the early 1970s, the family worked to pass legislation banning various poisons that had been used to control the coyotes and other wildlife. The Scotts have further protected Eagle Ridge's wildlife by granting a permanent scenic easement to the Nature Conservancy that bars development even if the property is sold.

Yet glorious bird-watching, wildlife, and the appealing lifestyle cannot

hide the fact that ranching is a tough business. "If you didn't have to make a living," Stacey acknowledges, "the job would be a lot more fun." But he and his brothers are optimists. They hope that with rotation grazing, constant re-routing of pipes and shoveling of irrigation ditches, and other steady changes, any short-term losses will turn to profits in the future. "If you're not an optimist, you'd go crazy," Stacey says.

A "portion of the People"

A Harvard couple help showcase the rich history of South Carolina's Jews.

WHEN Dale and Theodore Rosengarten sent out the invitations to their son's bar mitzvah in 1993, their northern friends and family members barely concealed their surprise, according to Dale (Rosen) '69, Ph.D. '97. "How could we raise a good Jewish boy in a small Southern town where everyone goes to church on Sunday? Where in the wilderness of South Carolina had we managed to find a Hebrew

"Every rancher I know says, 'This year was a disaster, but next year we're going to do it. Prices will be up, we'll get the hay in, there won't be disease in the herd, the water will come. Everything will go well next year.' Always 'next year.' But I do think we're making improvements and if we get the moisture, we'll be all right next year." The brothers are usually too busy—or too exhausted—to worry that much.

And the future is alluring enough that the next generation of Scotts is already following in their footsteps. Charles's son, Daniel, and George's son, Christopher, have joined the family business. Stacey's younger son, Joseph, a Harvard sophomore, has not decided what he will do, but his brother, Benjamin, is studying horseshoeing at Montana State University. Whether he'll return to the ranches is unclear. Adds Charles, with a small laugh, "We are trying to recruit him."

—DOUG MCINNIS AND NELL PORTER BROWN

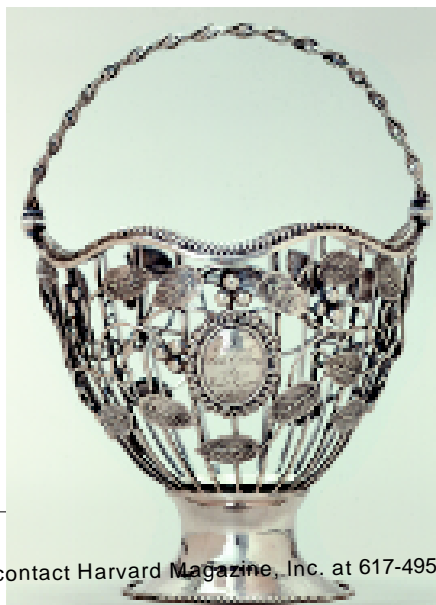
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teacher?" The answers, wrapped in 300 years of little-known history, had only recently been revealed to the Rosengartens themselves.

In 1800, they learned, South Carolina had more Jews than any other place in North America. The state also claims the first professing Jew elected to public office in the Western world—farmer Francis Salvador (who later became the first Jew-

ish soldier to die in the American Revolution when his militia troop was ambushed by Indians and Tories); and the first group (led by the playwright and journalist Isaac Harby) to have introduced Reform Judaism into the

Sugar or sweetmeat bowl presented to Congregation Beth Elohim in 1841



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