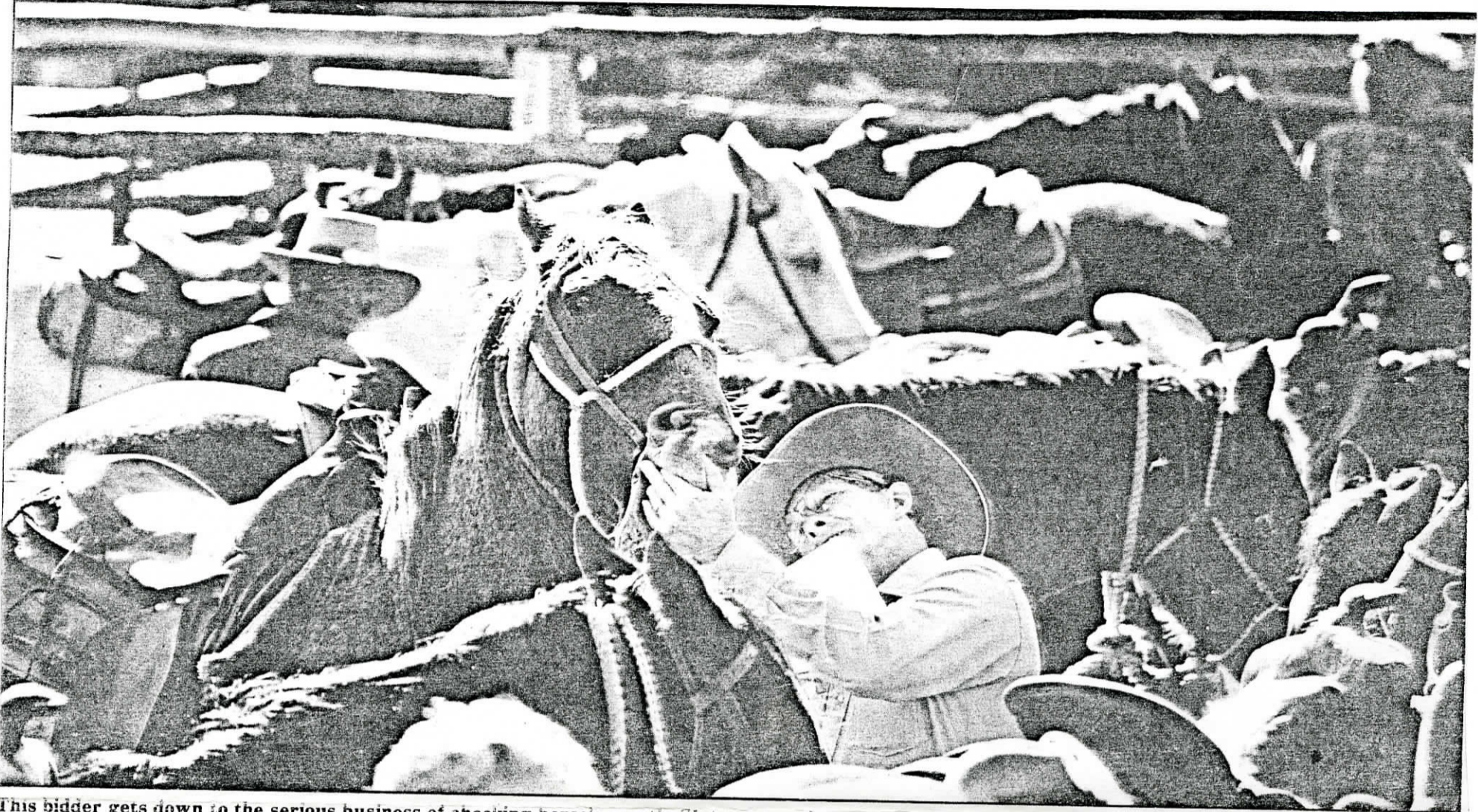


# BUSINESS & Sports

Wednesday,  
September 18, 1985



This bidder gets down to the serious business of checking horse's mouth. Sixty mature horses were offered for sale.

## White Grass Ranch auction big event

By George Gladney

It was one of the major events, and maybe *the* event, of the season, if numbers are used in determining such things.

As you drove into the large meadow temporarily marked as a "parking area," you would have thought Bruce Springsteen was preparing to do a concert. There were people whose only job was to flag their arms to point motorists down an aisle among rows and rows of cars and trucks. A quick sampling showed that roughly a fourth of the vehicles were from out of state.

The focus of all this attention was the liquidation auction of the business assets of the historic White Grass Ranch, which closed down this month following the death of rancher Frank Galey last July 6. As the valley's oldest operating dude ranch, tracing its history to 1913, Saturday and Sunday's activity took on some hefty historical significance.

Auctioneer L.D. Frome of Frome Auction Ser-

vice in Afton estimated at the end of the busy weekend that more than 1,500 persons stopped in at the ranch, either to buy or just to get one last glimpse of the White Grass. Blue sky and warm sun helped, too. "There's no question a lot of former guests were here," said Frome. "And there were a lot of former guests who couldn't be here but who had others bidding for them—for a saddle they once had ridden, or a bed they had slept on," he said.

Fully 760 bidders registered at the auction and people came from 15 states, said Frome, who was commissioned by Galey's widow, Nona, to sell all assets except the log cabins and other structures. "It was a very big auction—not in terms of gross (revenue) but in terms of a lot of items scattered around and different," Frome remarked.

The items on the block were so numerous and varied that Frome said he was lucky to get the job done in a weekend. "We had to go exceptionally

fast," the auctioneer explained. "It should have been a three-day auction but we didn't feel we could get people back for the third day," he said.

Saturday was devoted to sale of items in the buildings, as well as mechanical items and farm implements. For the most part, Frome said, the prices bid were roughly equal to market value and much of it was salvage.

Not so, however, with the ranch's abundant lodgepole pine furniture, which Frome said represents "real Western antiques, if there is such a thing." Some onlookers were amazed at the prices for some of the furniture, with one lodgepole chaise lounge going for \$1,350. On another item, one observer exclaimed, "I looked at this little pine table—nothing really special about it, just nails pounded in at the joints—and figured I'd be willing to pay \$10, maybe \$15, \$25 at most. It finally sold for \$300. I couldn't believe it!"

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## Sale marks end of colorful era in Jackson Hole

At last weekend's big auction at the White Grass Ranch, many of the items fetched above-market prices because buyers felt they were taking home more than just objects—they were taking home a piece of the valley's history.

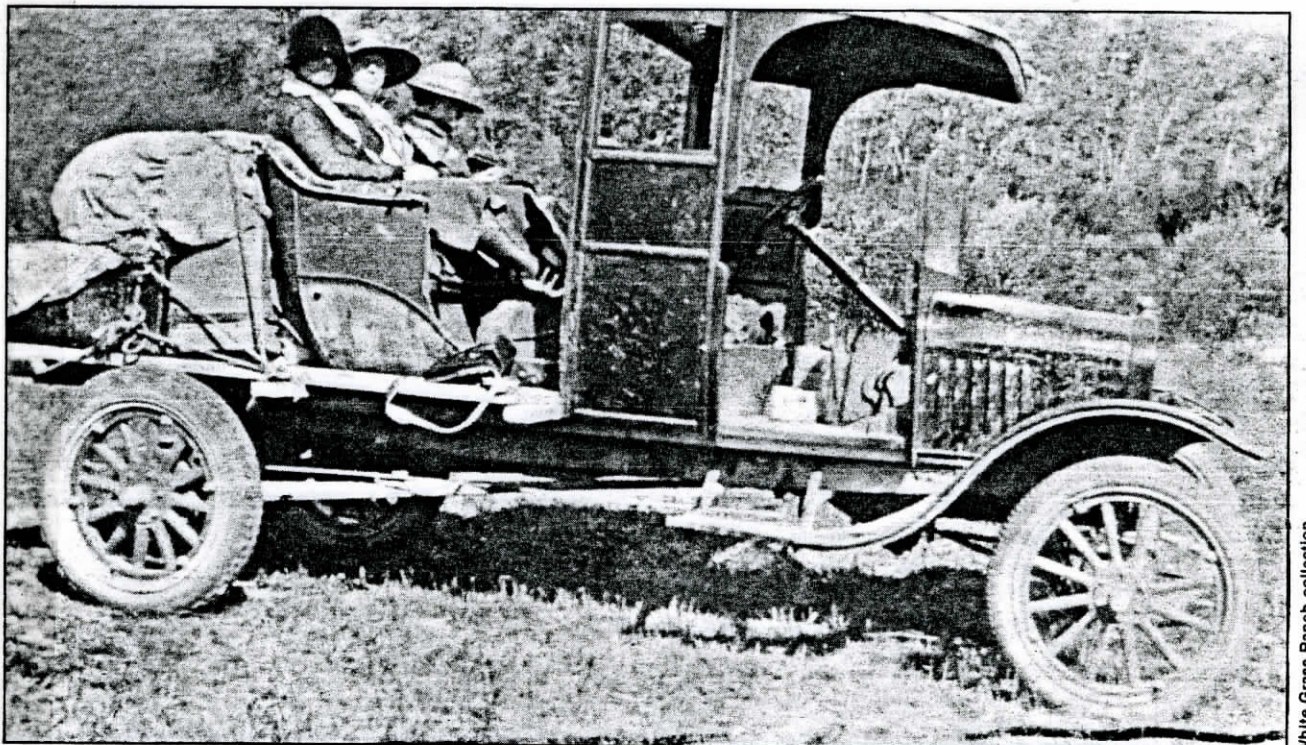
Indeed, the White Grass Ranch represents a significant chapter in the history of Jackson Hole. It was, after all, the oldest operating dude ranch in the valley.

To trace its beginning one must go back to the year 1913 when Harold Hammond and Tucker Bispham registered adjoining 160-acre homesteads to form a ranching partnership named "White Grass," a term used by the Indians to describe the sage that covered the ranch's meadowlands at the base of the Teton Range.

Hammond and Bispham were an unlikely pair. Hammond was a native of Blackfoot, Idaho, and was well acquainted with ranch life, hunting and guiding; Bispham was a Rhodes scholar and a dude from Philadelphia when he first came to the valley to visit fellow Philadelphian Struthers Burt, who was operating the Bar BC Ranch.

The first dudes didn't come to the White

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Dudes of another era arrive at White Grass Ranch.



# White Grass auction major event

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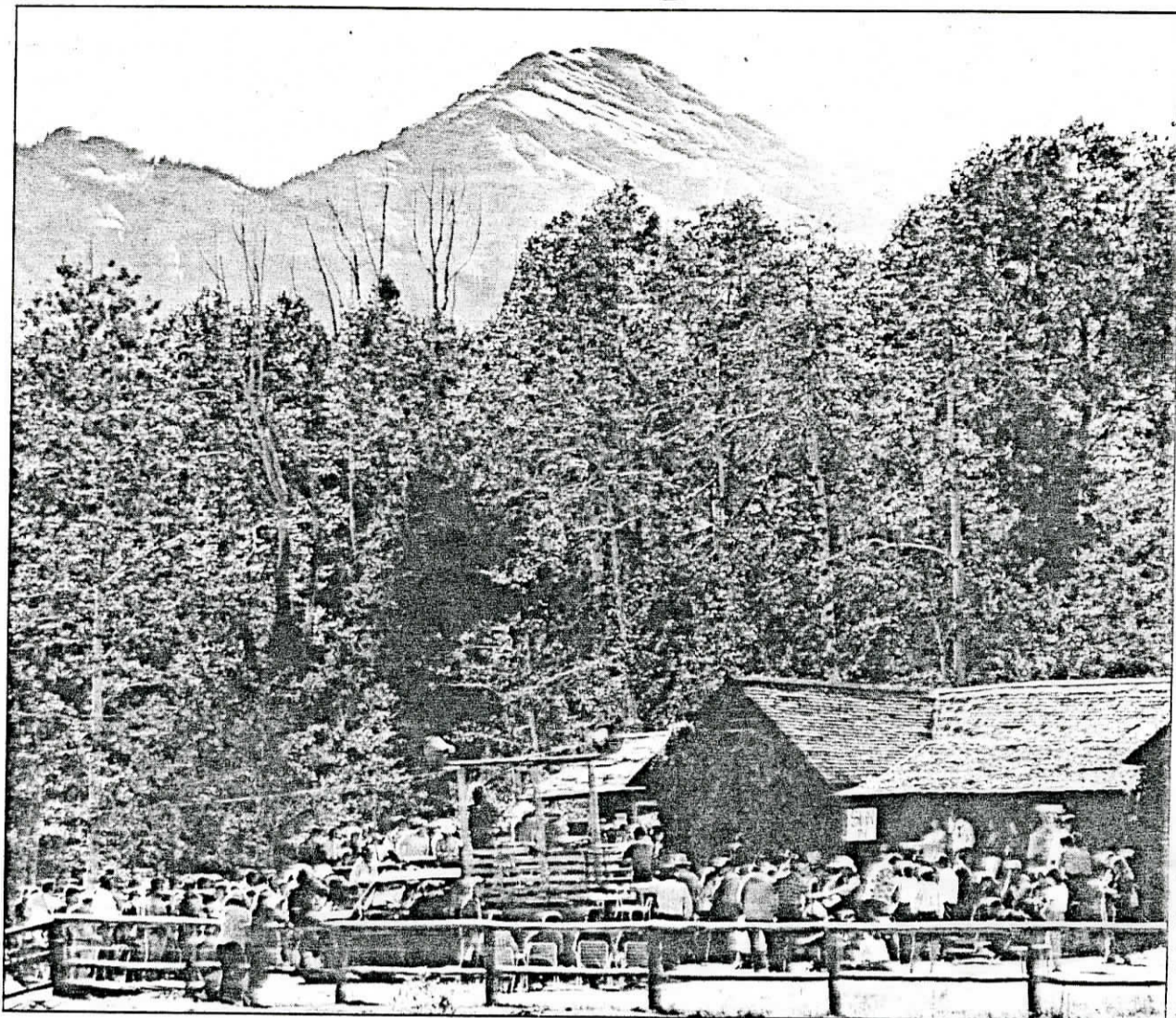
Other items that did especially well bringing top prices were antique guns, or guns with sentimental value, Frome said. A heavily sought prize for other bidders were fireplace iron screens adorned with cowboy or big game scenes.

Frome took charge perched on the top of a truck which made the rounds to each of the more than a dozen cabins. Helpers (there were 15 in all to assist Frome, including a crew to serve chuckwagon-style lunch from a covered wagon) hauled items that could be moved out of cabins; the heavy, bulkier items stayed in the cabins while Frome called out for bids.

The auction also offered an abundance of the commercial kitchen equipment, including a bakery with Wolf gas range, stacked pizza ovens, walk-in freezer and a big assortment of kitchen appliances, equipment and fixtures. Frome said these items did not sell particularly well—about as well as you would expect at any auction.

On Sunday attention turned to livestock and related equipment, starting with saddles, tack, camping and pack gear and several horse trailers. More than 70 Western saddles as well as bridles and halters went on the block; some of these items were purchased by former guests who wanted a piece of the ranch, while much of it was bought by outfitters. Frome said he sent out notices of the auction to all licensed dude ranchers in the United States and all outfitters in Wyoming.

Later on Sunday Frome took bids on 67 mature horses, 10 2-3 year olds, five yearlings, a stallion, two colts, two miniature mules, one registered Longhorn bull and miscellaneous cattle. He said, "Anything to do with the horses" brought good prices—the rest was about average.



A large crowd of bidders and onlookers circles around auctioneer's truck at headquarters cabin at White Grass Ranch last week. Sunny sky and the ranch's historic offerings attracted an estimated 1,500 people.

News photo: Mary Gerly

## Sale marks end of colorful era in Jackson Hole

Continued from cover

Grass until 1919. Back then the White Grass promoted itself with a typewritten brochure which was distributed mostly in the Philadelphia area. It boasted of three cabins and a large tent to accommodate a maximum of 10 dudes. The brochure said the ranch offered a good cook, a woman to look after the cabins, a wrangler, a good library, and accommodations "quite separate from the ranch buildings where the owners and workmen live."

Reflecting Bispham's bent for the scholarly life, the brochure further advised: "It is the wish of the owners to make this ranch especially agreeable to men who wish to continue their studies or their reading while leading a ranch life.... The dry climate and easy way of living make the best possible conditions for building up physical and nervous strength."

In those early days one-way train fare from Philadelphia to Victor, Idaho was \$82. From Victor guests were transported in a ranch vehicle over "the new highway" across Teton Pass, a trip that could take a mere three or four hours. Rates, including horse and laundry, were \$60 a week—a fairly high price at the time. Hunting and pack trips were specially arranged. "If and when ranch work permits, Mr. Hammond acts as head guide," the brochure informed prospective dudes.

During that first year of 1919 a young widow named Marian Galey and her four young children, including a two-year-old named Frank, were guests at the Bar BC and in the fall they visited the White Grass to go hunting with Hammond. Instead of returning to Philadelphia after the hunt, the Galeys stayed until Christmas.

The Galeys continued to visit Jackson Hole each summer thereafter, splitting their time between the Bar BC and the White Grass. Then in 1936, when the children were grown, Marian married Harold Hammond. The ranch, meantime, had continued to prosper but the Depression produced hard times and Hammond, to "keep body and soul together," raised silver fox, concentrating on fine breeding stock.

At about the time Marian and Harold married, Bispham sold his interest in the ranch and moved to the Three Rivers Ranch, along with Struthers Burt, who had quit the dude business to devote time to writing.

Harold died in 1938, after less than two



White Grass wranglers worked hard and played hard.

years of marriage to Marian, and one of Marian's sons, Frank, now 21 and a student at Princeton University, took over management of the ranch. When World War II came along Frank joined the Army Air Force and served as a test pilot.

After the war Frank returned to the White Grass with his wife Inge and daughter Cynthia. In 1948 Marian died at her winter home in Jackson and Norman Mellor, a Philadelphian who had been a dude at the White Grass, bought Marian's interest and became a partner for two years. In the early 1950s Frank purchased Mellor's share in the ranch and his sisters' interest, thus taking over sole ownership.

In 1957 Frank sold 301 acres of the ranch to Grand Teton National Park for \$165,000, but

retained six acres and an agreement for life tenancy.

In 1970 Frank married again, this time to Nona Neilson and the two operated the ranch which, in its heyday, was known as one of the finest in the country, with a staff of 25 and accommodations to handle 70 guests. It was noted for retaining the old-fashioned spirit of ranch life, together with modern comforts.

In 1983 the Park paid \$195,000 for the right to own remaining six acres of the White Grass upon Frank's death but agreed that two cabins and five acres could be used by Nona for 10 years after her husband died. It also stipulated that Nona would be able to use the main ranch cabin for the remainder of her life.

Nona has declined to talk with the press, so her plans are not known.

The question on many people's minds last weekend was the fate of the ranch's more than a dozen log cabins, the barn and other structures.

The answer is in the hands of the National Park Service, which has not determined what to do, according to Bill Schenck, assistant superintendent of Grand Teton National Park. Schenck said this week that although the Park has not made a decision and has no definite plans for the ranch, "we've had, over time, discussions about restoring it to natural conditions, so I think our thinking is in that direction."

Schenck said the Park this fall will begin the process of assessing the structural soundness of the buildings and their adaptability for other uses. He said if the buildings are to be sold or removed, that process probably would begin next spring, with actual sale or removal following in the fall.

Any sale of the buildings would be handled by the U.S. General Services Administration, which would accept sealed bids on the structures, Schenck said.

Schenck said another option is to tear down some of the buildings, or disassemble some of them for relocation and use in other Park areas or by Park concessioners.

—George Gladney

(Much of the material on the history of the White Grass Ranch was borrowed from a story by Virginia Huidekoper that appeared in the News in 1973 when the ranch was celebrating its 60th anniversary. —Ed.)

White Grass Ranch collection