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HISTORY of the Schwends!

The Schwend Brothers; Ed, 1890-1958, and Claude, 1883-1937, were the youngest sons of a family of nine, born in the Louisiana Territory to Gregor and Catherine Schwend. In 1888 the Schwend family followed the national trend to migrate west to new land and unlimited opportunities. Mr. Schwend with his large family, leased and boarded an immigrant car and headed west and settled on homesteaded land about 4 miles south of Race Track (a small town between Deer Lodge and Anaconda, Montana). The elder of the Schwend boys and girls eventually left the ranch and migrated to Butte, Anaconda and elsewhere. Ed and Claude met and married the Bennett sisters, Biddie and Blanche. The families lived as one



(together) for several years. It was during this period of time that the Anaconda smelter was built. Due to its structure, poisonous gasses in the form of arsenic were spread over the valley. The arsenic affected the crops and livestock, and many of the livestock went crazy or were worthless or died, which caused the brothers to look for a new location.

The Schwend Brothers came to Bridger in the spring of 1906 and purchased a farm 4 miles south of Bridger. A log house and barn were the main buildings at that time. Shortly after they came to Bridger they bought a steam threshing rig and also a saw mill on the Pryor Mountain. The didn't have much time left for farming with the threshing and saw mill, so they sold part of the farm. Threshing took up much of their time from early fall till late in January, from south of Belfry to north of Fromberg. The farmer where the threshing was done furnished the coal and fed the crew noon and evening meals. This was a great time for the farmers wives, as several of



her friends and neighbors came to help, and what a meal they would put on as each didn't want her neighbor to out do her. Threshing time was the one time of the year most every one looked forward, especially those involved.

After a few years the Schwend Brothers purchased a second steam rig and it didn't take so long to get the threshing done. Their saw mill operation on Pryor Mountain was a full time summer business that they operated for several years until the mill burned down, which was never replaced.

Each brother and his wife started their own family before coming to Bridger. Ed had two daughters (Violet and Beulah), and a son Carl.

Claude and Blanche had Jess, Albert, Walt, Evelyn, Gladys, Betty, Edward (Bill) and Jack.



After each family had three or four children it was time to split the living quarters. Claude filed on 160 acres adjoining the land that was kept back from the original land purchased in 1906. Due to the filing law, Claude and Blanche had to live on the 160 acres. They first built a frame house 24 X 24 that was sawed from the mill on Pryor Mountain. The house had three rooms, two small ones, one was used for a grain bin, it was also used as a bedroom, the other small room was used as a bedroom and the rest of the house was living room and kitchen. After three or four years, Claude added more to the house, four rooms downstairs and two upstairs. A log barn with a large hay loft was built about 1913, which still stands and is used today. The house burned down in 1980.

As the Claude Schwend family grew up, their ranch became the gathering place on Sundays for the younger generations. Blanche always managed to have plenty to eat regardless of how many were there. The Schwend place was called "home" by many of the younger groups. Many nights the boys would sleep over night in the barn loft in the hay.



This was the beginning of what today is know as "THE LONESOME SPUR GUEST RANCH ". Little did Blanche and Claude ever dream their "welcoming arms" would carry on through five generations of Schwends.

Lonnie, (only son of Bill and Mary Schwend) and wife Darlene Bent, (whose family also homesteaded in the valley and at the foot of the Pryor Mountains at Bowler), with their children, Wes, Stephanie and Catherine (Cathy), purchased the Schwend Ranch after the death of Lonnie's father Bill. Bill died in a farming accident on February 16, 1976.

After raising their three children on the ranch, Lonnie and Darlene decided to diversify the ranch by taking in guests, the summer of 1993.

Wes and his wife Tara and grandson Stetson were living in Fromberg, where Wes was selling insurance, Tara teaching dancing lessons and Stetson being the GREATEST Grandson possible! Stephanie was making plans for her wedding to Hank, who would be teaching elementary school at the St. Labre Mission in Ashland, Montana and Cathy was about to graduate from Billings West High School and proceed on with her education at the University of Montana in Missoula. This would leave the Schwend ranch the emptiest since its commencement!

After much thought it was decided to take in guests, this would help with college fees and provide summer employment for Cathy, Tara and Darlene. At first day rides were going to be the main activity. Very soon it was evident that day rides were being replaced by guests who were requesting 24 hour to three week accommodations for extended ranch vacations.

Having begun our 9th Year of the guest ranching business in July, 2000, many things have changed and many have stayed the same. Our family is still most important and we enjoy sharing with our guests the Schwend family life style. Wes Tara 8 year old Stetson and 4 year old Shaniah are still living in Fromberg. Wes is still selling insurance, but in Bridger and Tara is still dividing her time between teaching dance lessons in Bridger and Columbus and being a wife and mother of two. This does not leave her much time to help on the ranch but they help out when they can.



Stephanie and Hank are still living in Ashland and Hank is teaching at the St. Labre Mission. Stephanie, mother of 5 year old Jessica and 4 year old Cliff, is undertaking the huge responsibility of opening a licensed day care and pre-school in Bridger.

Our youngest granddaughter "Savvy" Savvanah was born November 8 of 1998 and is growing up fast and rapidly becoming the youngest "wrangler" for Grandpa! Cathy, Kevin and Savvy have moved to the ranch to help out when they can.





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