

Talk by Alan McNeil

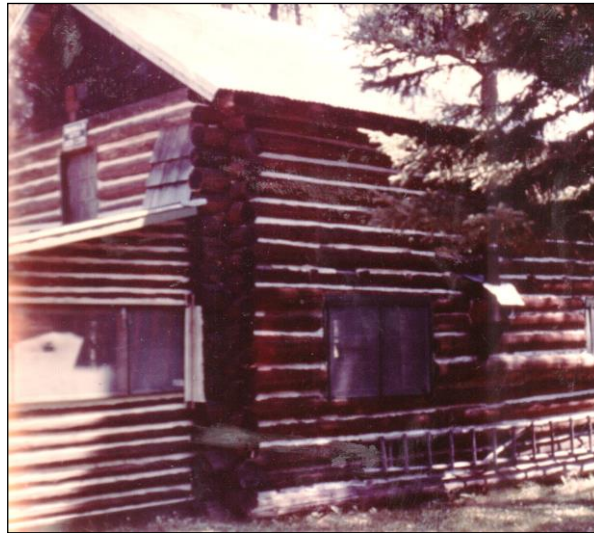
NFLA Meeting, September 5, 2015

I am going to talk about Dutch Creek Cabin, which was the first place we lived in, and its history. The cabin was built by a lightweight champ Kid Fredericks. I actually found a photograph of him, and it's teeny, from *Boxing History*.

Audience question: Where is Dutch Creek?

Dutch Creek is inside of the Park, on the North Fork truck trail. As you're going north you go over Camas Creek and then you come to Dutch Creek, and then the next one is Anaconda Creek, and the next one after that is Logging Creek, and then Quartz. We've got washouts all through there now, so you can't get to any of it, right? So anyways, our first place was Dutch Creek, and the Kid had a boxing camp there. The Kid lived down the road, over to the west in a small two-story cabin. (He was gone by the time we were there.) The Kid's real name was George Johnson. He was born February 15, 1863 in Buffalo, New York. He started professionally boxing at 15 in Buffalo. In January of 1903 he fought his first match in Montana. By March, he was the Montana lightweight champ.

On May 8, 1903 the Kid fought Aurelio Herrera, the first Latino boxer, sometimes known as "The Mexican Greaser." Aurelio was from San Jose, California, actually. The Kid had a long winning streak going.



**Dutch Creek cabin on the Inside North Fork Road,
purchased by the McNeil family in 1958.**

Audience question: Where was it at?

It was in Butte. The crowd wanted the white boy to clobber the greaser. Aurelio KO'd the Kid in the third round, and the crowd was not happy. They stormed the ring, and someone hit Aurelio over the head with a chair. The ref counted him out and awarded the match to the Kid. Later,

when things were calmer, the sheriff restored the record. The Kid continued to win most of his fights through 1904. By March of 1905, the Fergus County Argus newspaper reported, “The Kid from Buffalo, New York, appears to have lost much of the form he showed in his early Montana fights.

A quote from the *Buffalo Courier*, December 19, 1918—this is quite a while later—“Kid Fredericks, who will be remembered by fans of some 15 years ago as the Buffalo lad who came out of the west with a great reputation for knockouts, but who disappeared from the ring suddenly after a bout with Stanley Ketchell, is in town for a few days visiting his mother at 338 Breckenridge Street. George Johnson is the Kid’s right name, and he is now a prosperous and well-to-do ranch owner.” Here’s the part that’s really funny. “He has 58 acres near Glacier National Park, and besides producing much material, caters to thousands of tourists every year.” This would be 1918. I find it really hard to believe he was catering to thousands of tourists in 1918. “It’s 14 years since Johnson or Fredericks was last in Buffalo. He is the brother of Chick Johnson.”



Alan and Bruce exploring the original Kid Fredericks cabin.

The Kid died in November of 1957, the winter before we arrived. His own cabin was still the way he left it. His privy was the most interesting feature for kids. The inside was lined with cartoons ripped from newspapers and magazines. The top layer included color cartoons from *Playboy*.

An old phone book hung on a string for toilet paper. The Kid had sold the boxing cabin to Ira Proudfoot. Ira was a one-armed Great Northern railway brakeman. There were many railroad lanterns and tools in the cabin. Ira was a practical joker. The desk was filled with novelty items from Johnson Smith, like snapping gum, a joy buzzer, fake cigarette pack, alum gum, and an X-ray vision telescope. The last was simply a cardboard tube with a feather glued at the end. Remember those things?

Ira had a practical side too. He had typewritten a list of ten things to do when closing up the cabin. Included on the list was “set wood in the stove.” Very practical when you or a neighbor arrived at your place half-frozen. “Lock the door” was not on the list. Back in those days people

left their places unlocked in case a neighbor got caught at night. The Davalls bought the place from Ira Proudfoot. Don, their son, had his honeymoon with Charmaine at the cabin. The Davalls decided to sell the cabin because the Park had locked them out of the truck trail in the fall. They figured it was now a summer road only. Kind of prophetic; it's now not a road, period, and it's kind of gone away.

Dutch Creek cabin was dark brown, a two-story log cabin, twice as long as wide, made from logs about 10 inches in diameter. It was chinked with cement and neat as a pin. The entrance was dead center of the front porch, through a screen door with a gizmo at the top that snapped open and closed with a bang, which I think is some place over there in that pile. I love that thing. It made such a good noise. On the front porch were two large bright green and orange Adirondack chairs, a heavy wooden sofa constructed of 2 x 4s and 2 x 6s, and a Buick bench seat. All were constructed by Moe Davall from *Popular Mechanics* plans, except the one made in Detroit. Bright green, orange, and yellow stripes covered the canvas shades, which could be lowered to block the view of mosquitos. The back of the porch was a solid log wall with a front door in the dead center. The door was fancy, oak with a window on the top half, through which we could watch moose licking mud out in the front, across the road.

Inside was one long room about 20' x 36'. The front room was fairly open with a deck, dining table, and log heating stove. The back had a wood stove and kitchen with cabinets. The back porch was dark and filled with clutter. There were no screens to let light in; just the backscreen door. The most memorable item was a wooden high-back chair with a hole cut in the seat. Underneath the hole was a bucket. [Laughs] You know what that was for. The only view was to the east over the marsh, up the valley to Longfellow Peak with a distinctive guardhouse on the south ridge. The marsh was probably an old beaver pond. There were a few willows growing in it. Moose loved to stand in the water and chew those willows. To the north was a 10-foot strip of lawn with a row of poppies on one side, the two-rut road, and then heavy spruce woods. There was a natural salt lick in a bit of a clearing across from the cabin, with a pipe sticking up to mount a salt block.



Interior of the Dutch Creek cabin.

I'm going to take an aside here, because I remember Kid Fredericks, right outside of his privy door, like 50-feet out, had a salt block on a pole just like that. That's how he got his fall meat. He would just sit there with his gun next to him while he was taking a dump and wait for something to come by and kill it. It was only 20-feet from his door, then, and was easy to dress out.

Audience question: How old were you when your family came there?

Eight.

Audience question: And your brother?

Six. To the west about 10 feet from the cabin was a stream coming off the marsh with a springhouse built above it. There was a short boardwalk from the cabin to the springhouse. The idea of a springhouse was you could drop sealed things into the ice-cold water and have enough of a building around them that the bears would leave them alone. Also, you could float a bowl of just-boiled jello in that water and have it set up in ten minutes.

One of our chores was to dip a bucket of water out of the stream from the boardwalk three times a day. Beyond the springhouse was a small generator shed too short to stand up in. Inside was a 55-gallon drum and a 1,000-watt Onan generator that had come from Charlie Russell's Apgar cabin. It was a cantankerous beast, often requiring pull-starting attempts with a rope, although it was supposed to start with a 12-volt battery. My dad cursed it many times with Navy words, those words that we weren't allowed to use until we had been in the Navy. [Laughs]

Beyond the generator shed the trail continued to the creek about 50 feet away. There was a large tamarack deadfall across that part of the trail. At the end of the trail was a deep pool with a deadfall across it, followed by shallow rapids of a backwater 3 foot wide by 12 foot long. There was a small patch of sandy mud on the edge of that backwater. That's going to be in a story that I haven't written up yet, but we got in some serious mischief there. Dutch Creek was isolated—14 miles to Apgar and 14 miles to Polebridge. No one else was living on the creek anymore. Joe Opalka would come up some weekends, always stopping on the road at the front door for a visit. Our nearest everyday neighbors were the Edwards' [Burt and Thelma and their three boys] at Logging Ranger Station.

There was a little strip of open grass next to the wall of the cabin. The privy trail started there, into fairly dense spruce and lodgepole woods. Along the trail were limbed 4-inch lodgepoles placed on both sides, lying down. The trail was well worn from years of use, because it had been there since 1906, before it was the Park. The Davalls had put up two lights along the trail and one in the privy. Turning those lights on would cause all the others to dim, and occasionally the generator would stop. [Laughs] On the privy door, just below the tiny vent, Ira Proudfoot had hung a clock face with a pointer. The dial said 'Vacant' at the top. Around the face it said, "Taking a dump, Reading the paper, Thinking hard, Enjoying the smell, Looking for buried treasure," and other phrases. He was really a joker. I loved his stuff.

The privy was a single-hole affair with no extra gadgets like Frank Evans' three-hole affair with funnel urinals. It was very dark and stuffy inside, since there was just one hole in the front door for light and air. I can't remember there ever being a good time to visit the privy. Privies are never fun on cold days. Most mornings there would be dew on the seat. In the hot afternoons, it

was best to complete your visit while holding one's breath. In the evening the trail was scary. One night while the generator was on the fritz, as usual, I had to take the trail by flashlight. As I got to the halfway point I saw a big rock in the trail. Funny, that rock hadn't been there before. It was a big dark-colored squarish pillow of a rock about as big as my head. When I got close the rock hopped over the lodgepole edge. I turned around and ran back home. Mom didn't believe that rocks could move, so she came out with her much brighter flashlight. When we got to the rock she exclaimed, "My, that's the biggest toad I've ever seen. He won't hurt you. He eats bugs. I think you must have scared him. I'm going to name him Thaddeus." And thus, the scary thing was converted into a neighbor we observed most nights.



Alan at the radio in the Dutch Creek cabin.

There was other wildlife around the cabin. At first there were lots of chipmunks and golden mantled squirrels until our cats ate them all. I found it takes about ten years for chipmunks to recover after cat predation. We had a porcupine that loved to chew on rubber tires and the foundation logs. We had a moose walking through the front yard any time we were quiet enough. One moose got used to us and would walk right past even if we were chopping wood.

The most pesky wildlife of all—mosquitos. One afternoon I counted 40 mosquitos on each screen of the front porch. Each screen was 3-foot by 3-foot, so that day there were 400 mosquitos waiting for me to go get a bucket of water. My brother and I were always covered in mosquito bites. Oh God, they were so itchy all the time. The bites always itched most in the morning. We were supposed to stop on the porch and kill any mosquitos that came in with us before opening the inner door, but there was always one that got inside to wake you up in the morning, buzz bombing your ears.

We had another scary neighbor—bears. Here we go. Your storytime. There was a huge deadfall across the trail to the creek. It was an old larch. The bark was off, and it was decided we would cut it into chunks for firewood. We had a two-man crosscut saw on the back porch of the cabin, and we planned to use it. After preparing by setting logs under the low spots that might sag and bind the saw, Dad started the first cut. It was hard work and we each took turns on the little handle across from Dad. The little handle could smash into the log, so you had to start your yank before the other person got your hand smashed.

After 30 minutes we got through the first cut and started on the second. Sometime in the second cut, I got my hands in some pine pitch. No one wanted that on the handle. I was told to go inside and wash the pitch off with 20 Mule Team Boraxo. Boraxo was a gritty soap powder that came in a can, and it could get oil off your hands. I'm not so sure about pitch, though. I don't think that worked. Being eight and full of excess energy I ran to the back-porch door, flipped it open, ran through the inside door which was open, and stopped at the sink, splashed some water on my hands. I didn't use the Boraxo. The cabin was hot because the stove was going. My dad was cooking up beef stew. I could hear it bubbling and it smelled good. Again, with excess energy, I planned to run out the front door and around to the back. I ran through the open front door to hit the front screen hard enough to get a good snap out of the door-closing gadget at the top. I ran full-tilt into the screen door with my hands out in front of me, but it didn't move. Then I saw there was a bear standing up with its paws on the screen. I had my hands on its paws. I don't know if I scared him, but I turned around so fast and ran the 50-yard-dash of my life back to the sawing. "Bbbear," I said. "What? Where?" said my mom. "Bbbear, front door. I ran into it." "Why didn't you get the gun?" said my dad. That didn't make any sense to me. "Bbbecause we're not supposed to touch the gun." "Let's try and get in the back door," said dad. Mom whistled for Andy, our poodle. (I've got a whole story about how stupid he was. He was supposed to be a bear dog. Some bear dog.) He was close by.



Alan had keen memories of the porch at Dutch Creek, especially the day a bear tried to get inside.

We all managed to get in via the back door. My parents closed the inner doors, hoping the bear wouldn't break through them. Dad got the gun down from up high. The bear was still out in front of the cabin, but now about 12 feet away from the door to the right. "Let's see how this bear dog does," said Mom. She grabbed Andy by the collar and let him out through the porch. Dad was

looking for .22 bullets, which were hidden from us kids. Mom pushed the dog out the porch screen door and said, “Get the bear, Andy!” She came back inside, closed the door, and we watched through the windows. Instead of turning right towards the bear, Andy headed left to the poppies. Mom had been trying to keep him out of the flowerbed all summer. It was a contest of giant wills on both sides. Andy saw his opportunity and walked right in the middle of the poppies, turned a clockwise circle twice and took a dump. “Stupid dog! Get out of my poppies. Get the bear!” said mom.

Kicking some dirt, Andy looked up and he saw the bear. He did not run in terror, nor snarl in anger. Instead he started wagging his tail and looking excited. He proceeded to walk up to the bear with his, “Hey babe, let’s be pals walk.” I had been on the other end of the leash from this lecherous dog and I knew that walk well. His brain only had a few gears—sleep, food, walk, girl dogs. He saw a giant poodle ready for some lovin’. The bear freaked out and ran for the swamp. Andy stopped and looked puzzled. His heart was broken for a second. Mom was on the way out to reward him when he turned for the poppies again, and she grabbed him and hauled him back inside. The French poodle’s reputation as a bear dog is probably due to some mistranslation from French. He never showed any interest in chasing bears. My parents decided that the stew had attracted the bear, and from then on that recipe was known as bear stew, even though there is no bear meat in it. That’s where the bear stew comes from in the North Fork Cookbook, of course.

Audience question: Was it a little poodle, a standard poodle?

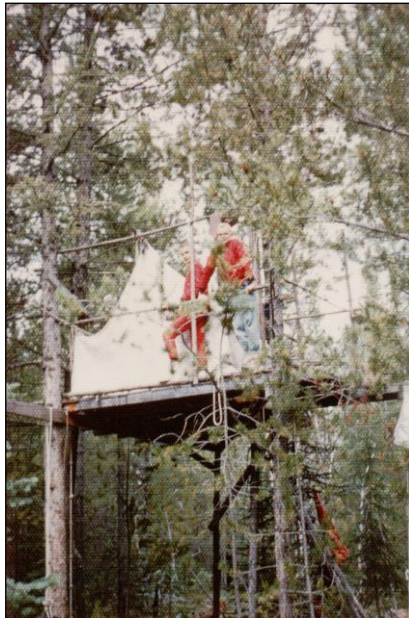
Yes, he was a big standard poodle, and he was useless. [Laughs] All right, I’m going to skip about making breakfast and things, and go on to the next adventure. One particular morning comes to mind. My dad had headed back east to teach summer school, leaving the three of us at Dutch Creek. With dad gone Bruce and I got a lot more obnoxious. *Mad* magazines were a very bad influence. It was the era of monster movies, mummies, werewolves, Dracula, and Frankenstein. In *Mad*’s parody of the Frankenstein movie Igor’s only words were “Ja, boss.” Bruce started saying it every time he was asked to do something. “Put your dishes in the sink.” “Ja, boss.” “Hey, your glass too.” “Ja, boss.” “Fold up your napkin and put it in the napkin ring.” “Ja, boss.” “Stop saying Ja, boss.” Mom’s irritation level grew, which was reward enough to continue. “Ja-boss.” [Laughs] It was his patented phrase. I was not allowed to use it. I had to come up with my own phrase. It’s possible I had Wes Edwards help me on this one. When mom asked me a question I would respond in a sing-song voice, [singing] “I don’t know. I threw it down the privy.” We figured we could respond to every question with those two phrases, to everything, really.

After a couple of days of us being jerks, Mom, who was trying to do some painting, suddenly went to the kitchen, pulled out a pancake turner. “You see this slotted spatula? You’re going to get a spanking with this if you’re still inside this cabin when I get to the count of three. One-two-...” Slam! Clickety clack, the sounds of us running out the front screen door into the woods. [Laughs] It became our morning routine, “Ja, boss,” followed by the dreaded slotted spatula threat.

One of those mornings, after running out the front door, we decided to play “road destruction.” We had two Tonka toys. I’ve got pictures of them over there, exactly like them, a road grader, mine, and a dump truck of Bruce’s. They were sturdy metal toys painted classic road department

orange, with silver decals saying State Highway Department on their sides. We saw the real equipment almost every trip west. Every highway seemed to be being rebuilt every single year. It was almost true, because it was the era of the interstate highways. We decided to rebuild the privy highway, or path to adults. The pine needles would be cleaned up by the grader and then loaded and hauled away by the dump truck. Since the blade was four inches wide and the trail a foot wide and 50-feet long it would be a massive project, providing an all-day job to the Dutch Creek Highway Department. On our hands and knees we pushed our Tonka trucks, making motor noises as they moved. We decided to smooth out the road in Thaddeus County, where Thaddeus the toad sat most nights pretending to be a rock. As we cleared closer to the privy we talked about how much fun it would be to have a front-end loader to pick up and load those pine needles into the dump truck. We wondered if Tonka would make other road destruction equipment for Christmas. Maybe next year we would have more equipment on the job. The idea was very exciting.

That's when we heard a loud crack in the woods. Somewhere nearby a big branch had been snapped off. "What's that?" said Bruce. "Probably another bear." We had found out that the Park captured bad bears at Sprague Creek, Fish Creek, and Apgar Campgrounds, and then hauled them up the truck trail and dumped them at the end of our road. It would spray-paint on the bear's rump, a yellow paint. If the bear got caught with two spray marks on it, it would get worse punishment than a ride to our cabin. The details of the punishment were not told to us kids. I think they were shot, actually, but I'm not sure.



The McNeil boys loved playing in their tree house.

"It's too far to run to the cabin," said Bruce. "Mom said she would use the slotted spatula if we came back. What if the bear chases us?" We had both seen how fast a bear can run, 40 miles per hour for a quarter of a mile with my dad driving behind it on the truck trail. We also knew we could not climb a tree higher than a black bear. We had seen one run way up a lodgepole after my Mom shot it. "I know, the treehouse. We can hide there," I said. The treehouse was behind the privy, about 15 feet further. It was a chunk of plywood from a refrigerator shipping box

placed over a couple of boards. It was five feet high off the ground, with no sides or roof. It seemed pretty high to us, because we were less than four feet tall. We took off running and climbed the 2 x 4 chunks nailed to the tree. We sat in the treehouse and listened. Snap – another big branch. “That sounds closer.” We both started yelling, “Mom! There’s a bear!” at the top of our lungs. We made quite a racket for a minute. No sign of rescuers coming. We stopped yelling for a moment. Crack, crack. Oh no, two more branches had snapped off in trees somewhere nearby. We screamed, “Mom! Bear! Help!” Still no sound of the screen door snapping open. Where was she? How could she not hear us screaming? If only there were a window on this side of the cabin she could see us. Crack, crack, snap, crack. The bear was getting awfully close. Those snaps were lots louder. “Lie down flat. Maybe it won’t see us if we hold still. Cover your head,” I said. We tried to emulate pine needles on the plywood deck. Don’t stick up. Don’t move. We didn’t have our hands over our necks for protection. We had got those instructions completely wrong. Instead we had them crossed over the tops of our heads. [Laughs] I don’t know how we got that idea.

Snapping of the branches was nearly continuous now. It had to be a monster bear to be breaking so much. It was pushing over trees for fun while working up an appetite. I could hear heavy breathing now, and it wasn’t us. It must be the bear. If I could hear it, it must be really close, maybe eight feet away. An old-timer had told us boys he had been sleeping on a trail just wrapped in his blankets. He had woken up to the sound of a bear snuffling and huffing hot breath over his face. He grabbed his Bowie knife, which he always kept with him and shoved it up through the blanket stabbing the bear in the chest. The bear ran off, and he climbed the tallest tree he could find and spent the night there. I learned that old-timer’s name was Ralph Thayer years later.

We were holding our breaths, hoping that bear would go away. The snapping had stopped, but the breathing was louder. It sounded like it was right above us. Oh no, it must be standing up getting ready to swipe us off the treehouse with its powerful arms. We knew how powerful they were. The Davalls always covered the cabin windows with plywood with nails sticking out. They had a bear rip a whole window frame out, busting a 4 x 4 in two. Moe said he had seen a bear throw a dead elk 20 feet with a swipe of its powerful arm. This is the end. We were doomed. We were going to be eaten. Mom doesn’t even know it. I’d never been so scared in my short life. I had never been so scared in my short life. The breathing was right over me. I felt a slight wind from the exhale.

Then something unexpected. There was a sort of snort that sounded like a whiny. Curiosity got the better of my fear. I opened my eyes and rotated my head up a tiny bit, barely looking over my arms. I was looking right into a big bunch of dark brown fur, but it didn’t look quite like a bear. Something was wrong with its arms. Wait—there’s another big patch of brown right next to it. Two bears? A mom teaching its cub how to eat boys? I raised my head slowly to try to see the top of the two bears. They were huge, at least nine feet tall. Both had cannibal horns on top of their heads, a foot-long stalk with knobs on the end. Wait—what? Then it snapped into place. It was Junior and Yunion, the moose twins, now a year older. They were some moose we had seen the previous year. I whispered to Bruce, “Hey, it’s Junior and Yunion.” The moose noses were right above our heads. They were facing us like they wanted to sniff us. They looked down and huffed. It was probably moose talk for “What silly boys?” “Yeah, they sure make a lot of noise. They might attract a mountain lion with all that noise.”

They turned and walked towards the cabin and crossed the road to the salt lick. We watched them until they headed north up the hill. Relief poured over us like ice cold water. Wow, that was scary, but it was just old friends. We've got to tell Mom. We ran down the trail to the house, ran in the front door, both talking at once. "There was a moose, a bear. He almost ate us, and it was in the treehouse." Mom looked up from her painting and said, "Slotted spatula, I'm counting to three—one, two..." Slam, kerchunk, we were out the front door and back to road destruction without motor noises, just talking about the moose that almost ate us, over and over. Finally, at dinner we told the tale to Mom. [Laughs]



Alan and Bruce McNeil with their friends Gary (left) and Westy (right) Edwards, whose father Burt was the ranger at Logging Creek Ranger Station, 1959.

Do we have time for another one? I'm going to go on to one that's kind of historical that was interesting to me.

Audience question: Is the cabin still there?

No. I've got the finale. The cabin was destroyed by the Park.

Audience question: Are you going to give your mother time for a rebuttal?

Yes, is there any rebuttal to be had? I think that's correct.

Audience member: It's only fair.

Cecily: I never threatened my boys.

Come on, this was a different time, a less kind and a less gentler time. [Laughs] I'm going to find the Blackjack one, because there was another bear that gave us so much trouble I've got three stories about that bear. It just kept going on and on and on. He actually ran us off our place that year, it was so bad. Reuter Peak, which stands northwest of Numa Peak and southwest of Kintla Peak, could be seen from this Hall. It was named after Blackjack Reuter, a North Forker with a

past he tried to leave behind. I wouldn't know about Blackjack if it weren't for Ralph Thayer. I've got a picture of him. I think it was in that group, the guy with the rounded hat.

Ralph Thayer took a liking to me. Maybe it was watching Loyd Sondreson hand me an 8-gauge to shoot a clay pigeon and then yelling "Pull" before I could get it to my shoulder. The recoil nearly blew my elbow apart, and the old-timers had a heck of a good laugh. Ralph had been the butt of his fair share of teasing when he was younger. He would sometimes walk across the Hall, sit down next to me and tell me a story in his quiet high-pitched voice with a little bit of quaver in it. I regretted not sitting longer with Ralph, because his stories were the best, but adults made me nervous. All of them seemed to have permission to spank me, and I was never supposed to talk to strangers.

One story in particular stuck with me. Ralph thought it was one of the funniest stories ever. Ann Hensen had a similar story. Blackjack Reuter was an early squatter on the east side of the river. He lived near the Kintla post office. He lived alone with his dog and didn't socialize much, but he didn't mind a visit. He was known to make great chocolate pancakes. Blackjack was the kind of guy who would stay in his red union suit, whole body underwear and blue jeans most of the week, if not the year. You might say he was lazy or extremely efficient, depending on if you were a lady or a bachelor.

Although he was a quiet guy with a twinkle in his eyes, a plum nice guy according to Ralph, there were rumors that Blackjack had been a desperado when younger. Most folks were convinced that it was best not to annoy Blackjack. Blackjack had white enamel dishes with red rims like most of us, but he nailed his four-place settings to the table. One big nail in the center of each one. When the meal was over he would whistle, and the dog would come lick the dishes clean. Blackjack would rub a dishtowel on them to dry them afterwards. The Hensens visited once and only once. Blackjack made them some pancakes. He shooed the dog off its bed next to the stove. The dog's bed was his 50-pound sack of flour. Blackjack reached into the center of the bag and measured out some cups of flour. The Hensens were a little distressed the dog was lying on the hole in the bag. They survived their meal and found no fleas in it and resolved never to visit again. I sometimes think that was Blackjack's plan to get rid of dudes.

Ralph's story was of another fellow, Andy—he never met him. Andy was another bachelor. He knew Blackjack always made chocolate pancakes on Saturday for late breakfast. Andy dropped by in time for fresh pancakes every Saturday like a bear arriving at the Bowman dump in time for the Park garbage truck. He never brought anything but gossip with him. Blackjack told Ralph, "By gollies, I'm plumb tired of Andy eating my grub. [I'm] fixin' to do something about it." A couple of weeks later when Ralph visited Blackjack told him, "That varmint won't be coming back, I'll betcha. I fixed his goose." He gave Ralph details of how he got rid of Andy.

Since the coffee was important to the story you need to know how cowboy coffee was made. You take your big, blue agateware coffeepot with a spout that looked like an upside-down nose. We have a small one back there. Fill it with water, throw some handfuls of coffee in it, set the coffeepot on the stove and wait for it to boil. That used to be the way the Hall made its coffee. I remember that.

“Might have a bit of grit in it, but it will grow hair on your chest,” is how old-timers described it. I think that was actually Loyd who told me that. [Laughs] Blackjack made a special cowboy coffee his inventive gourmet way. He put the grounds in one of his socks, tied it, and then threw the sock in the pot. Ralph said it was a neat trick. It kept the grit out and you could fish the sock out before the coffee got tasting like diesel fuel. After pulling the sock, you could keep it on the stove all day. It was probably a sock he wore.

On Andy’s last visit Blackjack made chocolate pancakes as usual and set some cowboy coffee to brewing. Once the pancakes were all done and sitting in the warming oven, he set out two forks and two tin cups. He served up the pancakes, which Andy started eating right away. “How about some coffee?” grunted Andy. Andy’s lack of please and thank you’s rubbed Blackjack the wrong way. He had grown up in a time and a place where forgetting those words would get you shot. “Coming up,” said Blackjack. He wrapped a rag around the two metal handles of the big pot to pour some coffee in Andy’s cup. A thin stream came out. “By gollies, it must be the sock.” Blackjack lifted off the lid, looked inside, swirled the pot a little bit, put the lid back and tried to pour again. Just a tiny dribble came out. He lifted the lid again and put his face down, making a big show of looking around in the pot. Then he looked at the spout. “By gollies, here’s the trouble.” He reached into the spout and pulled out a soggy dead mouse by its tail and flung it over his shoulder. Then he poured Andy a full cup of coffee. Andy’s tan sank into his boots. He didn’t say a thing as he finished his pancakes. He didn’t ask for a second serving of cakes or coffee as usual. “I’ve got to go split some wood,” Andy left in a hurry. Blackjack told Ralph, “I never heard him talkin’ of workin’ before. Don’t expect he’ll be by for pancakes again.”

Blackjack had a good reason to change his name. He had gotten on the losing side of a feud that went on for years, and maybe he got too much publicity under his other name. Blackjack had a whole other life before the North Fork as Dutch Lannigan. In 1883, he traveled the North Dakota Bad Lands to hunt. He may have traveled from Germany—that part is unclear. The President of the United States said that Dutch shot the last buffalo in the Bad Lands in 1884. With his new friend, a half-breed named Frank O’Donnell, they built a small log cabin to use as the base of their hunting. The nearest town was Little Missouri, beside the Northern Pacific Railway. It looks kind of like a typical old North Fork cabin—very short, maybe 5½ feet high.

Little Missouri was a lawless, wild and wooly town. Most of the buildings were bars. There was no government in the area. The nearest marshal was hundreds of miles away. Most of the area residents lived by hunting and guiding dudes that arrived on the railway. Dutch remarked that seeing the trains come in was “all the scenery we had.” Here’s a picture of him and his buddy who was the half-Indian. The Marquis de Morès, a distant heir to the French throne with huge ambitions and little common sense, announced that he would build stockyards “larger than Omaha” in Medora, named after his wife, right across the river. And he was going to spend millions and millions on his businesses. That attracted desperados of all sorts looking to make easy money. Lawlessness was romantic to the Marquis. He was a fierce fighter when pressed, but usually let underlings handle everything, including his fights.

The *Sioux Falls Press* wrote later of the Marquis, “One time his agent at Medora, his ranch on the Northern Pacific, wrote him at New York about the loss of 3,000 head of sheep, the letter going into all the details of the affair. The Marquis turned the sheet over and wrote, ‘Please do not trouble me with trifles like this,’ and sent it back. He was a very pleasant gentleman to meet,

but unfortunately his schemes are bigger than he is.” To hunters like Dutch, a foreign dude messing up their lawless paradise was intolerable. The deer and the antelope would be run off by the sheep and cattle. There would be stores and banks and then police officers. The hunters would have to buy and sell things just like common folks. The hunters grumbled nightly over their whiskies in the spring of 1883, as more and more of the Marquis’ sheep arrived. That summer the Marquis decided that Dutch and his friends Frank O’Donnell and Riley Lufsee were the biggest troublemakers of all.

It started with the half-breed Frank O’Donnell getting in a feud with Jake Monders, who most likely had cheated him. Monders was described as too crooked to sleep in a round house. Monders got the ear of the Marquis and became his closest advisor. He pulled the Marquis gradually into the feud, telling both Frank and the Marquis bloodcurdling tales of what the other one was going to do to him. Everyone in town got very nervous. The Marquis asked Monders what to do. “Get the first shot,” replied Monders. The Marquis was uncertain. He traveled all the way to Mandan to get advice from the magistrate. “I have a situation. What should I do?” “Why, shoot first,” said the judge. The Marquis returned to Medora and set up an ambush with Monders west of Medora. On June 26, when Dutch, Frank, and Riley came riding down the open trail next to the railway, the Marquis gang opened up from cover. Riley was killed. Dutch and Frank were both wounded. Monders claimed that Dutch and Frank had started the shooting. He charged them with manslaughter and had them arrested. Many in town were outraged. The Marquis was arrested and then acquitted, while O’Donnell and Dutch Lannigan were kept under lock and key. They were sent to Mandan jail.

Apparently, they were released in September 1883, the same year, because the newspaper mentions that Frank was taking dudes hunting. There was a reconciliation between Frank and the Marquis that fall. The Marquis paid \$1,000 for the next year’s hay from Frank’s ranch, probably more than it was worth. Dutch hated the Marquis for killing his friend. There was no possible reconciliation. Dutch went back to work hunting and guiding.

A year later, in a lucky break, he was working for Teddy Roosevelt, one of the guys who lived up here in the North Fork. Roosevelt arrived on his second trip west in August. He wanted to go hunting in the Bighorns. He needed riding ponies and he sent Dutch and another man to Spearfish to get them. They returned in four days with ponies and set off on a long journey. On the trip, Roosevelt came to like Dutch’s simple style and amazing memory. Blackjack said of Roosevelt, “By gollies, he rode some bad horses, some that did quite a lot of buckin’ around us. I don’t know if he ever got throwed. If he did he wouldn’t have said nuttin’ about it. Some of those eastern punkin’ lilies now, those goody-goody fellows, if they’d ever got throwed off you’d never hear the end of it. He didn’t care a bit. By gollies, if he got throwed off he’d get right on again. He was a dandy feller. He struck me as the sort of rough and ready all-around frontiersman—wasn’t stuck up a bit, just the same as one of us.”

Roosevelt started a partnership with two locals to raise cattle. They hired Dutch as their night herder. Dutch was slowly working to bring about the indictment of the Marquis for murder. The Marquis was not pleased that the Roosevelt outfit had the Dutch working for him. He assumed correctly that Roosevelt would take Dutch’s side. Two years after his friend’s death on August 26, the grand jury indicted the Marquis for murder in Mandan. The Marquis fled east on the railway, but eventually returned to Mandan for trial. While he was being held in prison, the town

folks and cowboys bombarded the building. When it calmed down Roosevelt visited him and found him sitting smoking on his cot with his valet hiding underneath it.

The Irish in town found out that he had killed a Riley. Of course, Riley was his first name, not his last name, and they demanded blood. The Marquis was granted a change of venue. On September 15, the trial started. One witness told a friend of the Marquis, said his memory was getting poor and it might fail during the trial, and he needed 500 bucks; and he was paid. The Marquis' lawyer threw out one jury member and years later it was discovered that jury member had said he would hang the jury unless the Marquis gave him \$10,000. The Marquis testified that Dutch and his friends had unloaded all the barrels of their six-shooters and then switched to their rifles. Sheriff Harmon, who had arrested Dutch and Frank, testified that their guns were fully loaded when they were handed to him. The jury took ten minutes—the verdict “not guilty.”

The Marquis often jumped to false conclusions. He assumed that Roosevelt was behind that trial. When he found out that a friend of Roosevelt's had paid Dutch some money just before the trial, he assumed it was a bribe. Instead, it was Dutch's pay and some travel money. The Marquis sent Roosevelt a venomous letter ending in, “there's a way of settling differences between gentlemen.” Roosevelt received it at his Elkhorn Ranch, read it and declared, “That bully is challenging me to a duel.” He discussed it with his foreman. He had no real desire to duel, but he would not be bullied.

“Now as I'm the challenged party, I have the privilege of naming the weapons. I'm no swordsman, and pistols are too uncertain and Frenchy for me. So, what do you say I make it rifles?” He wrote back that he had no enmity towards the Marquis, “but as the closing sentence of your letter implies a threat, I feel it is my duty to say I am ready at all times and all places to answer for my actions.” Further it was a challenge he insisted upon having satisfaction. They would meet with rifles at 12 paces. The adversaries would shoot and advance until one or the other dropped. “Now,” said Roosevelt to Seawell, his foreman, “I expect he will challenge me. If he does, I want you to be my second.” Seawell grunted, “He will never fight a duel of that kind with any man. He won't challenge you. He will find some way out of it.”

The Marquis wrote back the next day, “It was all a misunderstanding.” After that, there was no more trouble between them. Teddy Roosevelt had a going cattle ranch for a couple of years. Dutch remembers their last big roundup in 1886. As the evening wore on, the men were getting kind of noisy. Roosevelt, who had ridden into town possibly to keep an eye on the boys, heard the commotion and contrary to his usual habit, which was to keep out of the center of trouble, entered the saloon. “I don't know if he took a drink or not,” said Dutch afterwards. “I never saw him take a drink, but he came in and he paid for the drinks for the whole crowd. ‘One more drink boys,’ he said, and then as they had had their drinks he says, ‘Come on,’ and they all went with him. He just took the lead, and they followed him home. By gollies I never seen anything like it.”

The winter of 1886 was fierce with deep snow and freezing temperatures, lasting long into the spring. Tens of thousands of sheep and cattle died. Everyone in the area was hard hit. The spring of 1887 was depressing, with the only thriving business a fertilizer operation using the carcasses. By the fall, Medora was losing its population. The newspaper office burned down and the bars closed. The Marquis' businesses had all failed. Roosevelt signed over his interest in what remained of the Elkhorn Ranch. He wrote several books that year including *Ranch Life and the*

Hunting Trail, which mentions Dutch Lannigan and claims it was his nickname. In 1888, Reuter's friend TR was back east campaigning for Benjamin Harrison. TR was going to be busy with politics, a new wife, and a one-year-old son. Dutch probably headed for the North Fork that very year. The park didn't exist yet, and the area was a forest reserve. Logging, hunting, and trapping were all going on in the North Fork. It was a lawless area where a man could survive by hunting. By 1889, the population of Medora was 11, including chickens when they were all in town.

That's the story of Dutch.