



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

A legacy of caring

The news that the Rimrock Ranch is going to remain what it is today and forever more, because it is now under the ownership of the Deschutes Land Trust, (DLT), is like hearing that apple pie is for breakfast and will help you live to 120.

Ever since Bob and Gayle Baker came into my life, I was hoping they'd head down that preservation road. In times to come, that land — with Whychus Creek running through it, plus supporting active bald and golden eagle nests and other natural resources — will be a treasure house of the biota of Central Oregon.

When they purchased the place in 1988, Bob, being a lawyer, was up to his armpits in legal issues in Alaska. He had his eye on retiring in the near future and coming to live in the Sisters Country, but there was just no way he could live in both places.

In that light, he hired Roy Runco of Sisters to watch over the place. Roy was charged with, as he puts it today, "Keeping things pretty much the way they were, and above all, leaving the rattlesnakes alone." I came into the picture because I was looking for a place to put my bee hives, and when I met Roy who asked Bob, they both

agreed that I might do so.

I didn't know it at the time, but that became my introduction to one of Bob's passions in life — to be a keeper of bees.

The first thing that I did when Bob hit the ranch in 2001 was start him into keeping bees. He purchased a few hives and, if I remember correctly, he got started with a swarm I gave him.

But first came the cows, or as Gayle called, them, "My Girls." Talk about having your hands full! That dear woman chased cows and calves all over the ranch with the aid of her "Puppies," as she called her Norwegian short hair Wrango and her border collie "Ocho" (after the Ochoco's where he came from). Wrango is still with her, but Ocho moved out into that big range in the sky in June.

In the years to come, Bob got more and more hives, expanded his bee yard, planted a bushel of fruit trees, and in short-order became a bee rancher.

Providing habitat for wild-life was always a priority.

Don McCartney, who has placed kestrel nesting boxes across Sisters Country, recalls, "About 20 years ago, I noticed that the Rim Rock Ranch has great kestrel habitat. After much searching I obtained their phone number and called them. Gayle answered and I made my request to put kestrel boxes on their property. Her reply was a question: 'How soon can you be out here?' That started a long friendship, as whenever I went out there to check the boxes, I would always look forward to see their smiling faces."

All through those golden days, Bob and Gayle held an annual get-together at the ranch picnic grounds. Oh, those barbecues! Oh those

wonderful times of chin-waggin' with old pals, new pals and Bob's extended family.

As usual, Gayle was the Chief-Cook-and-Bottle-Washer of those wonderful events, often not getting into bed until way after midnight after saying goodnight to guests, washing dishes, washing more dishes, and making sure all the fires were out.

At that time, I was president of the Friends of the Sisters Library (FOSL), and we were going full-bore raising money to help keep the Deschutes Public Library in the green and books on the shelves. Bob and I became even closer with his love of books, and Gayle got busier and busier with her "Girls" and calving.

That was when Bob took a very active part in Gayle's cattle ranching times. When a bumper calf appeared and needed milk Gayle found herself handicapped; she didn't know how to milk a cow. But Bob, having grown up like I did with his grandfather on a dairy farm, knew what to do.

He was able to step in to obtain the necessary milk for the bumper calf and at the same time, teach Gayle how to milk and from then on she took care of the cow operations by herself.

In the spring of 2010 when Sue and I embarked on the field work necessary to fulfill our role in a state-wide eagle survey, it became obvious I had to make some time-use changes in my life and being president of FOSL, as much as I loved it, had to go.

Well, why not give it to Bob, I thought? I had asked him to join the FOSL board when he came home to Rimrock Ranch, to which he agreed. I thought he'd make a wonderful president; he had plenty of executive



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Bob and Gayle Baker are happy that there's enough barbecued pork to go around at their picnic.

experience as an attorney in Alaska. When I asked him, he immediately said yes.

One of the people he worked with one-on-one, was board-member Zeta Seiple, who was the spark plug of all the art shows FOSL put on, as well as the used bookstore manager. She had this to say:

"Bob was very well liked as president of the FOSL board. He was serious when needed, but always had a good joke ready. He was a warm, kind person, very knowledgeable, and a good listener. He liked to end each board meeting with book reviews, where board members would share the books they'd read since the previous meeting. He always had the most books to share

because he was a voracious reader. We all missed him after he left the board, and were deeply saddened when he passed."

On December 17, 2013, after a prolonged battle with kidney issues. Bob went out among the stars. I miss him along with everyone else who worked with him on library and Rimrock Ranch issues.

But Gayle carries on and she continued the talks with DLT to see that her and Bob's wishes to safeguard their land from any development would be carried out. She persisted and succeeded (*see story page 1*).

Another precious stretch of Whychus protected because of foresight and caring about the land.

Sisters burglary under investigation

Sisters deputies with the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office are investigating a burglary that occurred over the weekend in a neighborhood off East Cascade Avenue just east of Sisters Elementary School.

Lt. William Bailey told *The Nugget*, "We are investigating a burglary on Cottage Lane that was believed to have occurred overnight on August 7."

Lt. Bailey said that the burglary was believed to have occurred while the residents were asleep in the residence.

"They contacted us later that morning after they realized it had occurred," Bailey said.

The residents realized the burglary had occurred because they discovered that

something was missing from the house, Bailey told *The Nugget*.

The lieutenant told *The Nugget* that it is too early in the investigation to determine the exact circumstances of this particular incident,

but he urged residents to be mindful of security as a matter of routine.

He said that residents should always lock their house and secure vehicles overnight and close garage doors to prevent easy access.



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