



Up Front

Bundy's faith.
By C.J. Hadley

In early April 2014, snipers were lying in the brush on the hills above Cliven Bundy's ranch. Scopes were trained on a simple farmhouse on the Virgin River and at least one camera and high-tech hearing device was set up to catch conversations between the old Mormon rancher and his wife, children and numerous constantly visiting grandchildren. This was two days before what became known as "The Onslaught at Bunkerville." (Check "Patterns of Harassment," *RANGE*, Fall 2014, at www.rangemagazine.com.)

Due to a court order, Dan Love, special agent in charge for the well-armed section of the Bureau of Land Management, oversaw the gather of Bundy's cattle. He hired cowboys with a helicopter when temperatures exceeded 100 degrees. He knew that the desert cows were pregnant or calving and that it was the worst possible time for a roundup. Sadistic, widely considered unbalanced, eventually fired and under criminal investigation, Love savored the power.

Larry C. Wooten, BLM's lead investigator after the gather, became a whistleblower and detailed misconduct, cover-ups, potential unethical actions, malfeasance and misfeasance by his own agency and federal prosecutors. Love had bragged about roughing up Dave Bundy, grinding his face into the ground. Subjects were openly referred to as retards, red-necks and inbreds. A BLM supervisor instigated monitoring of jail calls between defendants and their wives to embarrass them, without prosecutor or FBI consent. "These issues would likely undermine the investigation, cast considerable doubt on the professionalism of our agency," Wooten wrote, "and be possibly used to claim investigator bias/unprofessionalism and impeach and undermine key witness credibility."

Canadian-born Mark Steyn, an award-winning author and critic who lives in New Hampshire, wrote: "Cliven Bundy is a rancher. Dan Love represents the untrammelled power of government. Even before the revelation that he photographs his own fecal matter and then sends out prints hither and yon,

he appears psychologically unsuited to any kind of work that involves contact with the citizenry—even before you hand him the state-of-the-art weaponry."

Ramona Hage Morrison remembered federal agents taking her family's cattle at gunpoint in 1991. The Hages have been fighting federal abuse since 1979, and in court [Hage v. United States] since 1991. (Check "Eye of the Storm," *RANGE*, Winter 2013.)

"I have been trying to expose the BLM's lawless conduct in similar raids in Nevada since 2002," she says, "wherein the BLM confiscates cattle, the assets and means of generating income on a ranch, often with some vague, unsubstantiated allegation such as overgrazing or because the government has converted the grazing allotment to some other use. The BLM claimed Bundy's cattle were a danger to the desert tortoise. Of course, while they were attempting to round up Bundy's cattle they were also euthanizing desert tortoises a few miles away."



Cliven and Carol Bundy on Jan. 15, 2018, back at the ranch in Bunkerville.

As a member of the Nevada Board of Agriculture, Ramona "objected strongly to the BLM using about 200 armed federal agents and bureaucrats, as opposed to the county sheriff, to enforce a court order that simply provided for the government to impound the cattle—not kill cattle or destroy water developments owned by the rancher."

Ramona knew from personal experience that neither the Constitution nor Congress granted the BLM any jurisdiction for law enforcement authority on federally managed lands. "It was a miracle," she says, "that a massacre was averted at Bunkerville."

BLM's job is to manage land, protect the waters, improve the resource for wildlife and feral horses, and keep it open for hunters, anglers, recreationists and livestock. Cliven's forebears have worked the same high-desert ranges since the 1880s. He owns the forage, ditch rights, water rights, rights-of-way and

improvements on that open land. Even though he doesn't have a deed to the land he runs his cattle on, neither does the federal government. Under the Equal Footings Act, among other things, these lands should belong to the states.

Not surprisingly, almost all news coverage twisted the timeline of events and placed blame for the standoff directly on the Bundys. The fact is that it was the other way around. Ramona and several hundred others were witnesses to the debacle.

"The BLM surrounded the Bundy Ranch with a mass of unidentified armed bureaucrats," she says. "It wasn't until a video went viral of the BLM setting attack dogs on the Bundys, Tasing Ammon, and body-slammng Cliven's cancer-survivor sister on the ground that hundreds of protesters turned up at Bunkerville. The crowd included state legislators and former sheriffs from surrounding states. Most of the protesters didn't know the first thing about cows. As the Bundys and others claimed, it is now confirmed in the whistleblower's report that the BLM had every intent to haul the Bundys off that ranch in body bags or in chains. This was not a mere bill collection as the government claimed; this was a violent land clearance."

As most *RANGE* readers know, 21 people in this case have been held in jail on numerous charges, including Cliven, sons Ryan, Ammon, Dave and Mel, plus patriots and militia members from coast to coast. After three trials, exorbitant cost to taxpayers, close to two years in jail while suffering torture and abuse, and gigantic cheating and lying by BLM employees and prosecutors, Nevada's Chief U.S. District Judge Gloria M. Navarro dismissed the case with prejudice on Jan. 8, 2018, saying, "The government's conduct in this case was indeed outrageous." (See "Bundy Fiasco," page 52.)

In "Bundy Morning Quarterbacking" on Jan. 13, 2018, Mark Steyn wrote: "Like others who have found themselves in such situations, the Bundys were portrayed in the media as paranoid right-wing loons exaggerating the threat. The judge, on the other hand, found that the government had lied on an industrial scale to both the court and the defense about what it was actually doing to the Bundys."

Steyn also quoted *National Review's* David French. "On one side was a collection of dangerous, out-of-control armed men who were deliberately provocative, prone to saying unhinged things in a single-minded quest to destroy their enemies, and who lied time and again to cover their misdeeds," French wrote. "On the other side was Cliven Bundy."

Steyn again: "ABC's video [shows] low-level bureaucrats from a minor branch of the vast bottomless alphabet soup of federal agencies,

and they're running around pretending to be elite commandos. The county sheriff is supposed to be 'the law.' The head-them-off-at-the-overpass stuff was represented in the media as an absurd overreaction by the Bundys. Not so. It was the government snipers that were the overreaction—as the evidence the government concealed from the court and the defense makes plain.”

According to constitutional law professor Jonathan Turley: “[F]ive different agencies... found the Bundys did not represent ‘a likely threat of violence,’ but the feds still went in with the full Robocop.”

Wooten’s memo shared Waco-like sound-bites from the feds’ own body-cams, including: “Pretty much a shoot first, ask questions later,” and “Mother F—er, you come find me and you’re gonna have hell to pay.”

Mark Steyn wrote, “Even by the standards of Ted Stevens and other malicious prosecutions, the depravity of government conduct in this case should be an abomination to every taxpayer who paid for it and, more importantly, to every citizen down the road who catches the feds’ eye and has to weigh the likelihood that he’ll be on the receiving end of some Dan Love-type agent in charge.”

The federal government manages more than 80 percent of Nevada, “an area the size of Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Portugal combined. Just in Nevada,” according to Steyn. “If BLM were Microsoft or Standard Oil, there’d be an anti-trust investigation. Instead, the BLMpire is the biggest collective farm in history, beyond the wildest dreams of Soviet commissars. Except that, as the Bundys have discovered, no one’s allowed to farm it. It’s serfdom without the perks.”

Remarkably, since the beginning of federal harassment of the Bundy family in 1991, their persistence, stamina, resistance to extreme pressure and belief in God has never wavered. Cliven Bundy says he was a “political prisoner” for 700 days and that his argument lies with local authorities, not the federal government. He insisted on a jury trial and refused to make any deals, which cost his family and friends a great deal. “I come into this courtroom an innocent man,” he said on Dec. 20, 2017, “and I’m going to leave as an innocent man.”

Before he was released on Jan. 8, 2018, his stalwart and loving wife, Carol, said: “I am so proud of that man who stands on principle, for what he feels is right. I feel that God is in control and it’s going down exactly the way it’s supposed to.”

Now, dear God, Secretary Zinke, Attorney General Sessions, and President Trump, please set Dwight and Steven Hammond free. ■