

CONFESSIONS OF RED MEAT SURVIVORS

Some of ranching's old-timers admit to ignoring the problems of cholesterol and other unnamed and often unsubstantiated handicaps. They believe that red meat is good, which is proven here, simply by age and attitude.

Salmon River. "I packed for the lookouts who were watching for fires. The longest trip was about 18 miles—one day in, one day back."

In winter he worked at the stockyards in Carlisle. Then in 1943 he went to work for Dave Little, son of Idaho's sheep king Andy Little. He worked at the same place for 40 years, pretty much running it.

"We moved cattle all through these mountains north of Boise. I had a lot of responsibility. I had to get cattle out of the high country when they was snowed in. I had to be everywhere."

Elmer and Hilma were furnished everything except clothes. "We didn't have to spend a dime and every year I got a bonus. When I went to work for Dave, he was broke but things changed. We were friends. It was a nice cow outfit. I got the checkbook and bought everything, ya know."

Dave took to politicking while

IDAHO Elmer Bowman, 89

I'd do it again.

The sons of ranchers, Bill, Elmer and Clarence Bowman were raised in good Idaho cow country. And at age 89, Elmer still day works.

"I always liked ridin', since I was big enough to get on a horse," Elmer says. "My uncles were good cowboys. They kinda raised me and so all I've ever done is ride."

Bill and Elmer rode to school, "when we went to school." One year, it was 12 miles each way, sometimes only three miles, and they rode every season for nine years. The school finally closed down. "People moved to town," Elmer says. "There weren't enough kids. I never had much schooling."

His father's place was leased and not big enough to share with the boys. When Elmer's uncle died, Elmer and Bill bought that place. "It was a mountain ranch, a good outfit for cattle. We stayed there till he got married and then I got married, and one of us had to leave. We didn't get along. We couldn't live together."

Charlie Cooper, Elmer's father-in-law, had a ranch and turned it over to Elmer. "That was real hard times, '40, '41. The place used to

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belong to my grandfather but my uncles lost it after my grandfather died." Elmer leased it. "That ranch sold for \$14,000 in '43."

Elmer married Hilma Matthews, a widow with two daughters, Verla and Marilyn, in 1940. They added three more children: Jean, Karen and Dale. Jean was killed in a car wreck when she was 19.

"Dale cowboied for me for years. The ranch didn't pay him enough money so he left. That's the



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Frank, with sons William, Clarence, front, and Elmer, right, 1933. > Day working 2006 for Harry Bettis in Payette. > Elmer and dogs, Bear Valley Cow Camp, 1987. > Elmer and his family, from left: Karen, Dale, Hilma, Elmer, Verla and Marilyn.



smartest thing he ever done. He and his wife Patti owned a Century 21 and made lots of money." Hilma died in 1997.

In 1943 the Forest Service hired Elmer during summers to pack mules in the backcountry along the

Elmer was running four or five different camps in the mountains with a cowboy at every one, each earning about \$45 a month. "I tell

cowboys this is the worst job there is because there's no retirement. When Dave died, in his obituary he give me and another guy full credit for being in the shape he was in, but still no retirement for us."

Even though there was no retirement, Dave Little did leave Elmer four acres of land close to Emmett, Idaho. It's big enough for his horses and dogs and it sits on the edge of old Dave Little's huge outfit that he left to his four children—Dave, Brad, Jim and Judy.

Elmer can't do without horses or dogs, which are mostly border collies or Australian shepherds. "Those dogs go everyplace I go. I always had the best dogs. They help me work with the stock. I had dogs that would trail cows and find them in the high mountains in rough country, and let me know where they was at, ya know. Dogs are family. I had to have them."

It is said that Elmer Bowman is better to his help, horses and dogs than he is to himself. After Dave died, Elmer started working for Dave's nephew Harry Bettis. "I just day work for Harry. Have known him since he was a little kid. And I used to manage the ranch he now owns south of McCall."

The Bowman family gets together quite often. Family comes from Alaska and Texas and California to gather in Idaho. "It's kind of a reunion. Kids, grandkids and great-grandkids." Elmer's been to Juneau, Alaska, and says it's nice country, "but I wouldn't trade one of these places up here in Idaho for the whole state of Texas."

He looks great but moans a bit about his health and about the tourists and rich people coming to Idaho who change it. "This country used to be all cattle but it just looks to me like it's about ta end." He misses the freedom, the open spaces, and sometimes he thinks about the past.

"We lived a good life. We didn't have money, we had ta work for everything and we had ta go without, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. I could ride any horse that had to be rode. I really enjoyed it. Still do. And I'd do it all over again."—*C.J. Hadley*