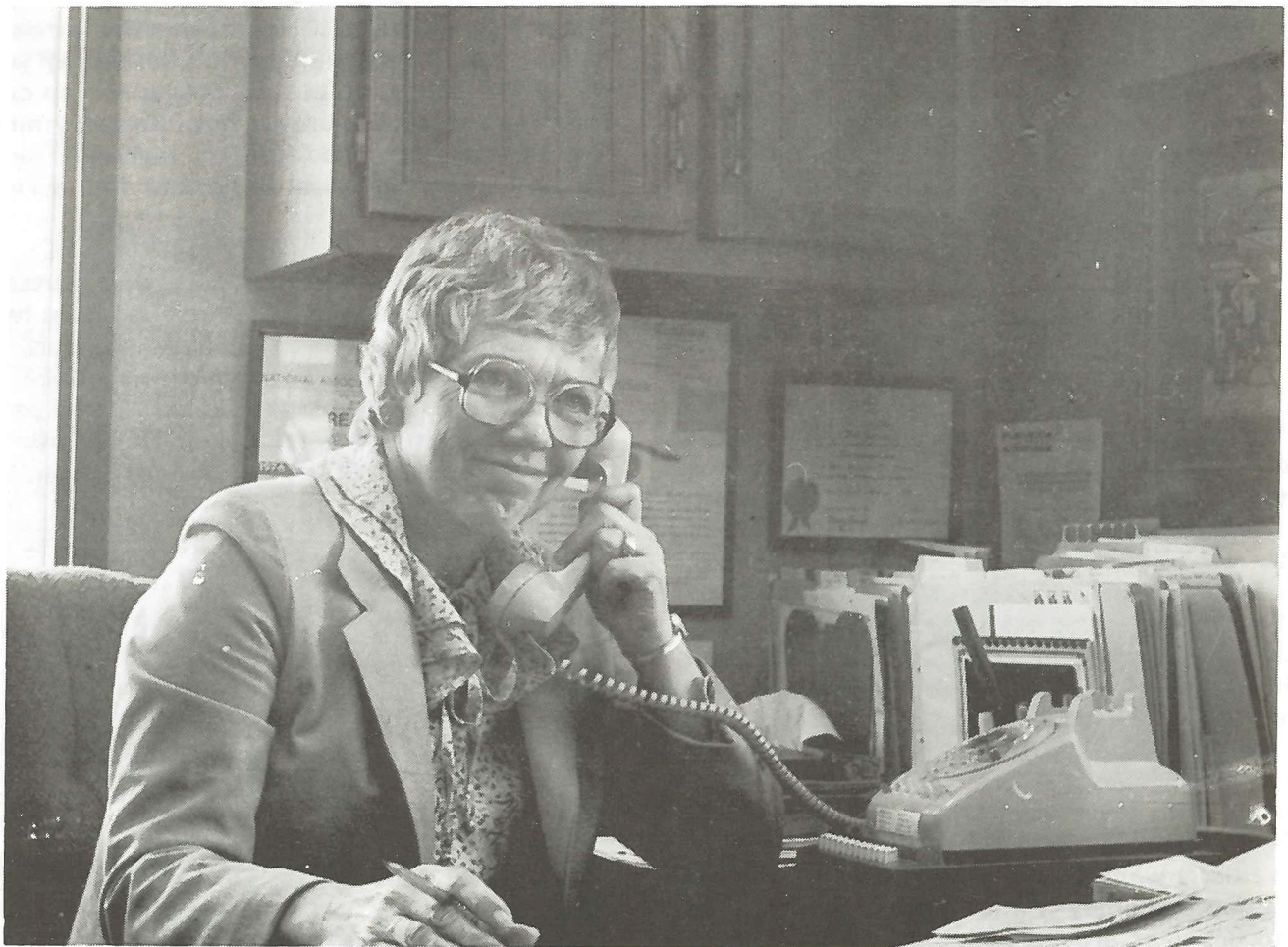


Pat Green Sandefur - Steamboat Business Woman

Luke Tellier



Pat Green Sandefur is one of Steamboat's most successful businesswomen. She had achieved this through a lot of hard work, starting with a "Pat's Pop Shop" on the Focus Ranch and today running Big Country Realty. The first thing I remember about her was when I helped celebrate her son Bill's birthday. I was only eight, but we sure had a good time. I decided to do this story on her because of our long standing family friendship. When I asked Mrs. Sandefur if she would be the subject of my story, she agreed. She started by telling me about her family coming to Routt County.

"My father came with his folks to the north-west section of Routt County near the Wyoming border. They came from Boulder in covered wagons in 1910. It took them six weeks to get here with their three wagons. They had one large and two small wagons. They settled on a cattle ranch of several hundred acres. The ranch is commonly known to people in this area as the "Focus Ranch." The ranch had been homesteaded by someone else by the name of Honald, and then my grandparents' uncle bought it. My grandfather went over originally to run it for his uncle, and then he and my father bought it. Eventually

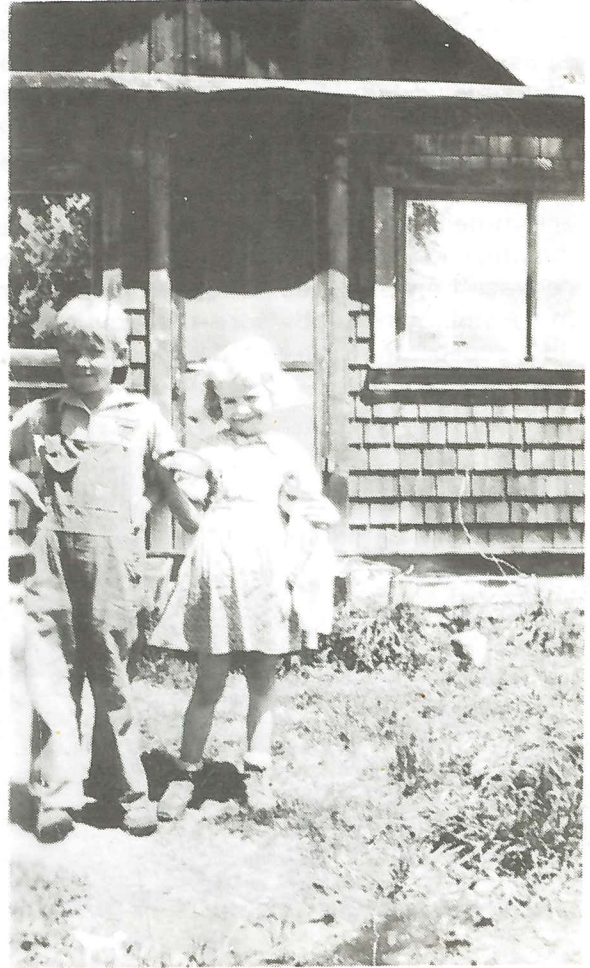
my father bought out my grandfather after he had a stroke.

"My father built most of the buildings around the ranch itself. My grandfather had added onto the main ranch house by connecting it to another house nearby. The "Focus" consists of 900 deeded acres and a cow permit for a hundred head. Dad put in a large reservoir and turned a rather large mesa into productive hay land. When we first started the reservoir, all we had was a scoop sort of thing with one team of horses pulling it. We started building the dam and then later got a grant to finish it with bigger machines. It was later added onto so it was made the size it is today. The Focus is still in the family. My father was killed in a plane crash in 1968, but my mother still kept the ranch until about three years ago when she sold it to a cousin, Terry Reidy. He had been coming there since he was a baby, and knew and loved the ranch.

"In the early Thirties, my folks turned this cattle ranch into a guest and cow ranch. During this time, they just weren't making it ranching. They tried to give the ranch back to the bank, but they wouldn't take it. They were more comfortable leaving ranchers on, and having them run places for them. My parents always had so many guests around that they started taking payments from them to help out.

"Mom was teaching school on the Snake River too. One day we were with a sitter and Mom was at school, and my brother and I went to Dad's shop and got into a barrel of tar. We were only three or four and we decided to try painting with the tar. Of course we painted everything in the shop including ourselves. We were just covered with tar, and we were afraid of the babysitter.

We started to walk to meet my mom and she discovered us about a half mile from home with tar all over us. We had a bath in gasoline since that was the only thing on the ranch to remove tar. We weren't punished further, the bath was enough.



Pat and brother Jim.



*Pat Sandefur and younger
cousin Barbara Temple.*

"By the time I was old enough to be helpful, I assisted with the guests. In the spring I would help get the cabins ready. I'd help wait tables and wash dishes too. One of my duties was to take the guests riding. I'd help saddle up about twenty-five horses every morning and we'd ride until about 11:00 a.m. When we got back I'd open up my Pop Shop before lunch. That was a little business I started when I was about thirteen and ran all the way through college. One day my folks went to Craig and left us kids home. My brother and I got some other kids staying at the ranch to help us drag my mom's chicken coop across the pasture to the road. We just put it on skids and took it. We replaced the coop with an old piano box for my mother's chickens. By the time my parents got home, we were busily

working with scrub brushes, soap and water to get it ready to be the "Pop Shop". At first my folks said no way, but they finally decided to let me go ahead with it. They loaned me twenty dollars and with that I invested in the first pop for my shop. It was a money making project right off and I continued it every summer until I moved away."

The kids of the area formed the "Little Snake River Club" and all of them built a rodeo grounds on the ranch. "The kids that came to the ranch helped us build the arena and it was really fun. We had rodeos and barbeques there every summer until all of us that started the club grew up, married, and moved away. It was great entertainment for the guests at the ranch as well as the other kids in the valley. After we moved, there wasn't enough kids to keep the club going so my Father eventually tore the arena down. Besides rodeos, there were other things going on at the ranch.



The arena we built on the Focus

"When I was a small girl, I remember lots of community dances at Pep Hall. In the winter, dances would last until morning, then everyone would go home and do chores. No one left before dawn because it was too cold and too dark to go home in a sleigh. We always looked forward to getting mail too on the ranch. In the winter it came by sleigh with our mailman, Mr. Kelly. He would go past our ranch, up to Columbine in one day, spend the night, and then come back the next day with the mail from Columbine.

"When it came time to go to high school, I went to Savery, Wyoming. It was twenty miles from the ranch and we didn't have a bus, so I boarded with a family there. The next year my parents decided it would be better to send me to a bigger school in Denver. I didn't want to go, but they sent me anyway.



Pat during haying season on the Focus

"I missed the ranch. I was very definitely a country kid when I hit the big city. I was very young anyway, because I had skipped the second grade. I had been the only second grader at our little school, so the teacher had skipped me to third grade. I didn't want to be in Denver, but I lived with my aunt and uncle. Some of the friends I made in the city insisted I make some changes. They took my hair out of braids and curled it and made me wear lipstick. My aunt and uncle lived across from Washington Park and a bunch of us that lived in that neighborhood played there a lot. We had dates to go to dances or the show also, and the boys always took the girls and paid our way. We went by streetcar or bus since nobody owned cars of their own then. We did lots of things and had lots of fun.



The Temple family (left to right)

Shorty, Pat, Lucy and Jim.

"I graduated from high school in 1945 and went to college in '46 and '47. I was a business major with a minor in elementary education. I had an emergency teaching certificate after two years time so I taught one year, then I went back to Colorado University and took the courses I needed for a five year teaching certificate. My folks had taught me to follow through on everything I started even if it didn't turn out the way I intended. Always go ahead and finish something before you start something else. They were very honest people and awfully good to me."

Pat met her husband, Jay Green, after one of the hands on the Focus had broken his leg and someone was needed to replace him. Pat went to the employment office in Craig to see if there was anyone available for the job. Jay had just gotten out of the Navy and was there looking for a job. Pat hired him and he went to work for the Focus. Pat and Jay were married May 2, 1949.

The principles of hard work and honesty that Mrs. Green's parents taught her became more important as she and her husband, Jay, established several businesses in Routt County. The first among them was the Clark General Store in Clark, Colorado, northwest of Steamboat Springs. "We bought the Clark Store in 1954. It was quite a business selling groceries, gas, housing the telephone exchange, the post office, and renting out cabins. Our children were very young. Debi was three, Sandy was a year-and-a-half and Bill was just nine months old. Needless to say it was a very busy time for all of us. We only kept that business for a year-and-a-half, selling it in 1956."



The kids Pat taught on Snake River



Bill, Sandy and Debi in candle factory.

While the Greens were in that business, they started another enterprise, making candles. "When we started our candle factory, we were twenty years ahead of the times as far as other candle factories were concerned. I wonder what the planning commission would say today about somebody coming in with anything as far out as that was in those days. There was only one person in Steamboat who even thought we had a ghost of a chance of making a go of that business and that was Claude Luekens, County Commissioner. He helped us find a location for the business in downtown Steamboat so we could move it into town. We rented a space in the old courthouse annex to make the candles. Before we had been using our basement, and I can remember our kids riding their tricycles underneath the production line. We bought a house to live in on the corner of Aspen and 6th Streets.

"We hired as many as eight people during our busy season and began to branch out in our products. We made fire starters and tapers as well as glo-candles. We also made beautiful place cards. We sold those for fifty cents and the candles cost a dollar-and-a-half. I still have the first candle that we actually completed after we decided to go into business. We packaged it, took it to the post office, and mailed it back to ourselves. It's still in the cedar chest and has never been opened. I don't even remember what kind it is, maybe pine or sagebrush.

"First we only merchandised locally, until Clarence Light of F.M. Light and Sons told us about a gift and jewelry show in Denver. We contacted the show managers and asked them for space to set up a display. They told us that they were not sure they would have room, but we could set up a display if space allowed. We got

our things together and went to Denver for our first big showing. We shared a booth with another small company. We had no idea how to set up a display, so we watched the people around us to see how they did it. They called for risers, so we called for risers. We didn't know what they were, but if they needed them, we needed them. We got the whole thing set up, and it was a really beautiful display. We used driftwood, natural pine, pine cones and wagon wheels. It was very unique, and they wrote it up in the Denver Post.

"Right from the beginning, through gift shows, we were selling a very large number of candles. Everywhere we went to shows they would think the candles were imported from Japan. They didn't think anyone in the United States did that kind of work. We ran the candle company for five years and then decided to sell it. When we first started into it, we thought that it was going to be something that would not require me full time, but we discovered that if I was not there everyday all day long we manufactured too many rejects. At that time there was not the number of people around Steamboat with artistic ability. We couldn't hire enough people with the natural ability to decorate the candles, so I ended up working long hours at the factory. That's the same situation we had gotten into with the Clark Store, so we sold the candle business for the same reason.

"Next we owned the Chief Theatre in Steamboat plus the theatre in Oak Creek. Unfortunately we had gotten them just at the time television came to Steamboat Springs. We hadn't realized what that would do to the theatre business, but it really knocked it for awhile. It seemed like everyone rushed out and bought a television set. The population was declining in Oak Creek at that time too, so we only kept it open for a year or so. I can remember the first year at the Chief in Steamboat. Both my husband and I worked there every single night. At the end of the year we had no salaries for either of us, we had worked every night and we were only a thousand dollars in the black. We had put in a whole year for a thousand dollars!

"My late husband, Jay, had been selling real estate for Eldon Brummett during the time we had the candle and theatre businesses. He decided to go into the real estate business for himself. We built a house on Highway 40 behind the present location of Big Country Realty. This was the late Fifties, and that was a very difficult time in Steamboat Springs. We were just barely feeding the family and things were tough. It was especially hard for small businesses, so Jay got on out at the mine. I studied and took the real estate exam. I took care of the office during the daytime and I set up the appointments and so on.



Pat Sandefur and the candle factory.

When Jay got home from work, he took care of the real estate things. That was the beginning of Big Country Realty. There were ranches selling at that time, and one of our first major sales was to sell the Semotan Ranch to the Jeckels. That was one of our first big sales after Jay had gotten into the business for himself.

"Jay continued working at the mine in order to make ends meet for the family. His health was failing at the time, so he quit the mine. We were just thankful that we had gotten the business built up enough, because he was not able to do that hard work, so we went into real estate full time. The big boom started in the late Sixties and began to increase more and more until 1972. We took on a couple of sales people while we were still over in the house. The living room was the waiting room and a small bedroom served as an office. Everyone that came there liked it because there were often fresh cinnamon rolls baking and it was comfortable. It was hard on the family though because there were always people there. We could never get away from the business so we built the office and in 1969, we moved the business out of our home."

Mr. and Mrs. Green continued to work together in Big Country Realty until Mr. Green's death in 1976. Then Mrs. Green took over the business and is still running it. Last year she married Merle Sandefur of Steamboat. She recounts the economic patterns of the Seventies in this way:

"A slump came in 1972 because of a general slowdown in the economy of the entire country. It hit real estate first because it is a vulnerable business. When times get rough, people are afraid to invest their money and they sit tight, waiting to see what's going to happen. Beginning

in 1972, mortgage money was non-existent. You just could not borrow money to buy anything and that just dried up the market. There were some four-hundred condominiums on the market here in 1972, and I don't think any of them sold for maybe a period of three years. A lot of people went broke who had built whole complexes. Many ended up being owned by the bank or different lending institutions, since interest rates for a building project like that were extremely high. Once it was completed, the contractors were not able to sell what they had built, because nobody could get financing to buy them. We made it through the '72 slump with our small office force. It was more difficult for the sales people during that time than for those of us owning the businesses. We had a back log of things being paid out over a period of time to fall back on, and that helped us a great deal. The slump ended, and the value of things has been increasing ever since."

I asked Mrs. Sandefur why the real estate business had been attractive to her as a career. "I enjoy meeting challenges and every real estate transaction has many. I really like something where I feel I can do a service for people and in this business I feel I can do just that. When I am working with someone who is looking for a specific piece of property, I feel I can help him find it and then solve all of the problems to get it purchased. In real estate, everyone has a need whether it's someone retiring and needing to sell, someone who needs to buy a place for their family or any other reason. Anyone who wants to sell or to buy has a need and in working with them, you can help to satisfy that need. Real estate is the same as any business where you work with the public. Anyone



Pat working on real estate transaction.

who really looks at it as being a service to people, will probably be a success. You must answer the questions that people have and listen carefully to what they say when they come in. You can learn a great deal if you listen. The customer will tell you what kind of a house they have lived in, approximately what they are looking for here, where they want to locate and their price range. Once you find out all of these things, we begin by going through the Multiple Listing Service booklet. (This tool reflects all of the property for sale through the member realtors, including houses, ranches, businesses or land.) As we go through this book, we locate the things we think might be of interest to them, and we show them those things they choose.

"We list property too and provide service for the seller. Once I listed a ranch for sale and the people who owned it had moved away from here. They had needed to sell this piece of property, so the first step was to list the ranch. Eventually over a period of time, we made a brochure and sent it out to a number of people. We advertised in the Multiple Listing Service and we advertised it in local and area newspapers. When we came up with a buyer for that property, we worked out a sales contract negotiating between buyer and seller. That way we met the needs of both since each want certain things. With this particular sale, I made two trips to Denver working out details between the buyer and the seller. It's a matter of service, to work things out with people."

Since real estate transactions seem so complicated, I asked Mrs. Sandefur what you had to do to be a realtor. "In order for anyone to sell anyone else's real estate, you have to have a real estate license. I could build my own house and sell it without a license, but I would have to have one in order to sell anything that belongs to someone else. To get a license, you have to fill out a government form, and apply for the test far in advance. Then you must take real estate classes, take an exam, and of course pass it. Once you have done that, you find a broker who will sponsor you and then get into an office where you will study a lot more. You will have lots of basic information, but as far as knowing the techniques of selling, that comes from experience, not from school. You have to pass an exam in every state and each state test is different. By state law, there is an agency all realtors function under. The agency has a director and three real estate commission members chosen from realtors throughout the state. Under this Commission is an assistant director with a staff that handles all the licensing for Colorado. We also have our Northwest Colorado Board of Realtors and there again we have rules for the people who are members.

Membership in this group also makes you a member of the National Board of Realtors. That Board is an organization that stresses pride in handling dealings in a business-like and helpful manner.

"You use all of this knowledge and the rules to solve the problems of buying and selling real estate. In a sale, when a contract has been signed by both buyer and seller, we order a title commitment from a title company. Locally it's either Northwest, Transamerica, or Valley Title Company. They issue a title commitment telling what requirements must be met to sell that piece of property. If there has been a death of one of the owners, a death certificate must be provided, or if signatures have not been consistently signed in the same form, steps must be taken to clarify that. Where estates are involved, you must obtain a release from a lien by Colorado inheritance tax. There may be other partial liens that must be cleared before a sale may be completed. A note and deed of trust needs to be provided. Once all of these steps, and sometimes many more, are completed and the documents accumulated to meet the requirements, we can close on a sale. It is difficult to go over all of the various things that could happen in buying and selling real estate, so you must always be careful in your work. I don't think there is ever any real estate transaction that does not have its own special challenges as far as that is concerned, but it seems that our laws have gotten more and more complicated, and there are more things that we must check to be sure everything is done right."

Before I left Mrs. Sandefur, I asked for her comments on the present real estate market in Steamboat. "A great deal of our present boom in real estate is due to demand. There is such pressure for places for people to live and for land to build on, that there are just more and more things selling. The market is so critical in Steamboat, that everything automatically increases in price. The market here changes with the seasons since the numbers of people in town changes. There is just so little in the way of places for working people to stay or rent, it is a real problem. In the summer time there are condos available, but in the winter there are not because they are rented on a nightly basis. The condos that are in the rental program begin to go into nightly rental in December for the skiers. If that weren't the case, we would find most of the condos rented to working people.

"The cost of land close to Steamboat Springs is getting very high because of the demand. It is so high that it has become difficult for someone like you to decide to become a rancher and go out and buy any land to run cattle. Commercial land along Highway 40 is selling by the square foot,

not by the acre at all. Some recent land sales were in excess of \$2.50 per square foot along the highway. Some of the home building sites on the golf course are selling for over \$30,000. Some of those are duplex lots and others are for single family homes. Prices have gotten terribly high and it's almost unbelievable until you see what is happening. There seems to be nothing to bring prices down unless more subdivisions are opened up. The cost of land and of developing a subdivision with roads and everything is high so we're not going to have lots at a really low price. Nobody is going to manufacture land next to the golf course or the ski area, so prices there will stay high. People are so anxious to buy what is available, that it is not unheard of to have two contracts offered on a property at the same time. If you find something you like, you better buy it because you don't know when someone else will come along and just take it. Presently the condo market is sold out so I don't think real estate is going to level out. The way it is now, the demand is so great for what few things are available, that prices will just go higher and higher."



After interviewing Mrs. Sandefur, I realized how much work there is involved in the real estate business. I also recognized as a young rancher, I would never be able to buy a ranch in this area as my father did. We bought 640 acres for approximately \$44,000 twenty-two years ago. Now a good tractor to work the land will cost at least that much. Most of the ranches in Routt County that are for sale are being bought up by big companies with a lot of money. Because of the high prices I could never buy a ranch locally without the help and advice of someone with Mrs. Sandefur's experience and concern.