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MRS. L. M. WHITNEY



HARRY DRACKERT



MRS. BERTHA WINNE



HUGHES PORTER

Divorce Ranch Owners Take Issue with Magazine Story

By WENDY MILLER
Journal Staff Reporter

How is the Nevada divorce ranch business?

Confined to one ranch in Verdi, proclaims the July 17 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

The Donner Trail Ranch is portrayed "Last of the Divorce Ranches" in an article by Robert Wernick.

Owners of at least three guest ranches in the Reno area strongly disagree.

"Practically all our guests are divorcees," said Mrs. Bertha Winne, owner of the Lazy A Ranch at 14403 S. Virginia St.

Mrs. Winne said she has been in business more than 20 years by her own testimony.

What'll They Think?

"I've had guests from over the nation, many from the East Coast. What will these people think when they read that only one divorce ranch exists?" Mrs. Winne wondered.

"Ninety-nine per cent of our business is divorcees," asserted Mrs. L. M. Whitney who, with her daughter Beth, owns the Whitney Guest Ranch.

"Our rates are too high for the average vacationer,

though we take a few who are not here for divorcees during the winter, lower rate season," she said.

The Whitney ranch does not serve meals, and accommodates 16 to 18 guests.

The Sierra Gables at 11100 Caribou Road, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Hughes Porter, caters to divorcees.

"We have a swimming pool, and horses are available," said Porter.

No Flirting

To a charge in the *Post* article that "poor little rich girls . . . flirt with the cowboys while waiting out Reno divorcees," Porter answered:

"We don't allow them (the wranglers) to flirt. Anyway, Earl (Dory — in charge of horses on the Porter ranch) is happily married. I am too," he grinned.

"We've had the other type (of ranch hand)," added Porter. "We had to get rid of them."

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Drackert, owners of the Donner Trail Ranch, are willing to stand behind the authenticity of the article.

"I think it's dandy—and accurate," enthused Mrs. Drackert.

"It's written by a friend of ours of many years. We are very pleased with the story," she continued.

She said she and Mr. Drackert are "flattered that he (Wernick) wanted to do a story on us."

However, Mrs. Drackert admitted, "There are a couple of other divorce ranches around Reno."

But, she said, "we are practically the last."

Berry Helped

Bill Berry, for many years a widely known news reporter of splashy divorce cases in Reno, said he collaborated with Wernick on the story.

"The others (guest ranches) get one or two now and then (divorcees).

"I can remember a day when 15 or 20 ranches catered exclusively to divorcees," said Berry.

The few guest ranches left aside from the Donner Trail Ranch get "one or two divorcees now, but not enough to be called 'divorce ranches,'" he asserted.

Berry named a number of "divorce ranches which did 'big business in the 1940's,' but have since closed or turned to other interests.

The Washoe Pines has had a succession of owners, and now "maintains some kind of juvenile program," he said.

The old Flying M E Ranch, opposite Bowers Mansion, burned down, as did a portion of the DelMonte Ranch, reminisced Berry.

Berry attributed the "decline in divorce ranch business" to the deglamorization of Reno as a divorce capital.

"The name, Reno, used to have color and glamor as a divorce center," claimed Berry.

He said the failure to "play Reno up with all its recreational potential," accounts in part for loss of the image. Berry agreed with author Wernick that Alabama and Mexico have a more enticing image to the prospective divorcee. Berry added the location, Sun Valley to Wernick's list.

Berry admitted that the rate of divorce in Reno has not decreased at all.

"But," he lamented, "the glamor is gone."

He said he imagined most of those seeking divorce now stay at a boarding house or motel, and don't bother with a ranch.