



William "Bill" McGee in 1947. Courtesy of Sandra V. McGee

Wrangler, writer 'Bill' McGee was 'genuine cowboy'

By Sandra V. McGee

On October 30, 2019, William "Bill" L. McGee, age 94, rode peacefully to the last roundup from his home in Napa, California.

Nevada historian Neal Cobb described Bill as "a genuine cowboy with the heart to go with it." I like to quote a line from *Sun and Saddle Leather* (1922 edition) by South Dakota cowboy poet Charles Badger Clark: "Cowboys are the sternest critics of those who would represent the West. No hypocrisy, no bluff, no pose can evade them."

This describes Montana cowboy, Bill McGee, known for his straight talk, which later became his signature writing style. He was strong-willed and quick-tempered, but was solid on qualities that mattered: trustworthiness, honesty, dependability.

Bill was born on September 30, 1925, in Livingston, Montana. In 1926, he moved with his parents and siblings to the small cowtown of Malta on the Montana Hi-Line. When the Great Depression hit, Bill's father, a rancher and border patrolman, left Bill's mother with four small children and went to Alaska, claiming Montana was "gettin' too crowded." In 1932, Bill was

"farmed out" to a neighboring cattle rancher so there would be one less mouth to feed at home. For seven years, Bill worked on the Carl Holm ranch for room and board and a new pair of Levi's every year.

Bill believed growing up in those hardscrabble years instilled in him the work ethic he needed later on to succeed in life and business.

After his discharge from the Navy in 1946, Bill returned to cowboying, with the hopes of owning his own cattle and guest ranch someday. In 1947, he worked as a horse wrangler in Yellowstone National Park. He was a trail guide and deer-hunting guide for the Bob Skates stables at Lake Tahoe.

Then he landed the coveted job as head dude wrangler on the famous Flying M.E., 20 miles south of Reno in Washoe Valley. The "M.E." (for Emmy Wood, the legendary proprietor) catered to wealthy Easterners and socialites seeking a six-week divorce. Bill went on trail rides with a du Pont and an Astor. He went hunting and drinking with Clark Gable and Ava Gardner. Bill always said, "At the age of 22, and surrounded by all those women on the ranch, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Those were some of the best years of my life."

Bill left cowboying in 1950 and made a transition into the entertainment business. He enjoyed a 32-year career in broadcast sales and marketing.

In 2004, Bill and I co-authored *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler*, a coffee-table book with a collection of stories about Bill's years on the Flying M.E. and illustrated with 502 photographs, most never-before published. In 2016, Bill and I co-authored *Montana Memoir: The Hardscrabble Years, 1925-1942*.

No matter what Bill was doing, he never forgot his Montana raisin' and his cowboy roots. He loved country music and listened to it to the very end.

The full-length "The Last Roundup - Remembering Bill McGee" is posted at WilliamMcGeeBooks.com.

Remembering Arizona film historian Charlie LeSueur, 1951-2019

By Rachelle "Rocky" Gibbons

WWA patron member and my old friend Charlie LeSueur died November 10 at the age of 68. As I write this obit on November 23, Charlie's funeral is taking place in Arizona.

I first met Charlie in 1975, when we both worked at a Salt Lake City radio/TV station. I had been hired as an



Charlie LeSueur

advertising copywriter, and thespian Charlie played the kooky villain character "Raymond" on the locally produced children's show *Hotel Balderdash*,

which also featured his buddies Randy Lovoi as "Harvey" and Larry John as "Cannonball."

In the role, Charlie wore a ridiculous blond wig and giant black-rimmed glasses, and I had a huge crush on him. He was a genuinely nice man, with a caring attitude back then that carried on throughout his life.

After the show ended, Charlie returned to his native Mesa, Arizona, along with his bride and soulmate, Dawn Morris. I lost touch with him for a long time, but became reacquainted just a few years ago when a mutual cohort, Dan Jessop, who knew I was the WWA membership chair, let me know of Charlie's whereabouts.

After reconnecting, I discovered what an illustrious life Charlie LeSueur had led. His achievements and accolades are too numerous to mention here, but I'd like to hit the highlights.

Charlie's passion led him to a successful career in community theater, advertising, radio and as a teacher at Central Arizona College. He was an incredibly knowledgeable historian, **LeSUEUR** (continued on page 24)