

Community thanks Shirley Donachy

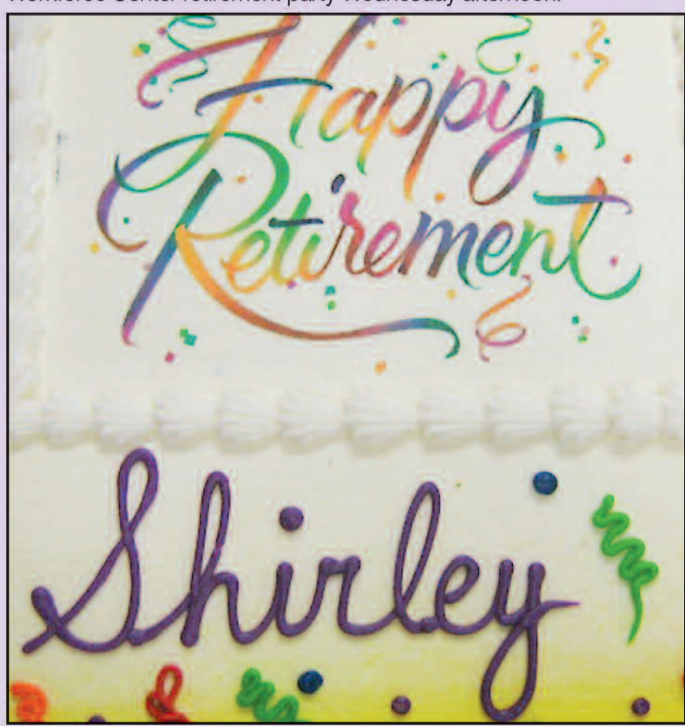


Photos by Mike Garrett

Longtime Trinidad business owners Ed, left, and Karen Griego, extend their best wishes to a retiring Shirley Donachy at her Colorado Workforce Center retirement party Wednesday afternoon.



Shirley Donachy's famous candy jar full of treats is all that's left on her desk Wednesday on her retirement day after 40 years of helping people find jobs through the Trinidad Workforce Center office. Rumor has it that some candy will still be available for center patrons.



Dennis and Nancy Scott, right, and Lorraine and Brock Brunelli, left, were on hand Wednesday to wish Shirley Donachy a happy retirement at her Colorado Workforce Center retirement party and open house.

Punch Hennigan's love of land led to realty

By **TIM KELLER**
The Chronicle-News

When Punch Hennigan's family lost the Kiowa ranch they'd built since his grandparents homesteaded it, Punch managed to flip his loss into a new career.

The purchase of an adjoining ranch when money was free and easy in the 1970s turned disastrous when, like the current recession that began in 2008, interest rates rose even while land prices fell. The Hennigans struggled, holding on until they finally had to sell the whole thing in 1996. The loss was devastating.

Punch had spent his adult life as a professional

rodeo cowboy and a cattle rancher. When realtors started bringing clients to see the Hennigan ranch, Punch found himself giving them tours. "I watched these people and thought, 'Well, I can show land better than these guys can!'"

Looking back, he says, "I've always had a love of land. I'm really tied to land. And I've always been a little interested in sales, I guess through the cattle business." Looking for a career that would allow him to spend his time out on the land, he began selling real estate for Charles Hyde in 1998.

After he earned his broker's license in 2000, he founded Gateway to the



Photo by Tim Keller

Punch Hennigan's work keeps him on the land, the way he likes it.

Southwest Realty with Deborah Harris, then split off to form his own Kiowa Land Sales in 2005, moving to a downtown Raton office well hidden above Mia's Hallmark, across 2nd Street from Radio Shack. "Five years of advertising and people still can't find me!" he laughs, considering that he may have ignored the realtors' maxim of "Location, Location, Location." He explains, "I thought I'd just be selling ranches, but in this business you have to be versatile and do it all."

A look at Kiowa Land Sales' website, www.kiowaland.com, shows plenty of residential listings in Raton and throughout the region, alongside Punch's specialty of ranch, farm, and recreational properties.

"After losing the ranch," Punch reflects, "I learned that we're not God: we're just caretakers of the land. I find it satisfying to help sellers and help buyers, to

bring them together in a way that helps both of them. It's important to have a happy seller and happy buyer."

There are good years and bad years, he says, but even in the slow years, it's a 24/7 job. "I crave a day off, but then when my phone doesn't ring, I get nervous." Because he's out driving ranch roads much of the time, he relies on his cell phone - (575) 447-7758 - to stay connected. "The cell phones and the Internet, they've changed this business, and made it easier," he says. "The cell phone gives me so much freedom and flexibility." During a one-hour interview, his cell phone rings a half dozen times.

"Business is picking up right now, but I don't know whether it's a long-term trend or a summer thing or something else." Asked how many properties sell in an average year, he's stumped. "I just don't think like that. I can't remember prices that land went for. What I remember is the details of each property, its attributes."

That attention to detail is evident on the website, where photographs by Punch and his partner Rose Marchetti Lew show stunning views from many vantages, often displaying wildlife up close. "I've always had a good feeling for getting close to wildlife," Punch says, "and I can get pictures of them." When he gets a new listing, he and Rose plan photographic outings to the land, usually going out in the early morning for the good light, then returning in the evening to get the light from the other direction.

It's the sort of attention to detail that typifies Punch's approach to the business, though it may say less about his love of the real estate business than his love of the land.

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