

# Passion for the Land



*A Collaborative Project to help rural residents share stories about preserving community heritage while protecting agricultural lands & natural resources for future generations*

## Unforeseen Consequences by Cindy Noble



My family like most other ranching families was picture perfect. Things changed, years rolled by, and finally both my parents passed away. My brothers and I ended up with different views on how to manage the family business.

Honestly I can't imagine that the current situation was a part of my father's plan. Maybe the problem was he never had a plan to begin with. He might have been hoping for the best and just wishing we would all just get along. As it turns out, my brothers thought they could do a better job without me.

And because of how my father's estate was drawn up and passed down, they were well within the law when they forced me out of the family partnership.

Reality is owning a ranch is hard work. Maybe more work than they bargained for. Horses and cattle, fences and gates, and the issues of agriculture need constant attention.

Then entered a notorious local realtor who promised them big money for portions of this 5000 acre ranch we inherited. Try as they may to sell 200 acres here and another 100 acres there, this economy has provided no buyers.

Passing land to family members is a tricky process. The land that was passed to my brothers and I free and clear, is no looking a little run down. I can think of many instances where a plan might have helped my brothers and I. But instead we did not have the skills to develop goals without allowing our personal issues to get in the way. So now the places we shared, the land I know is now the subject of conversations by people outside my family who plan to acquire, develop, and possibly destroy my family's heritage.

I wish things were different because they are definitely not better. This situation calls for serious thought about how families take estate planning in consideration. We should be telling our stories; we should be asking good questions and voicing our opinions before things get messy.

I believe it is important to keep talking about how land can be passed to people who want it, want that kind of work, and know how hard it can be.

Turns out, this is not my story alone and in order to keep large tracks of agricultural land viable, we must keep ranching families talking about the best way to hand down what is often their most valuable asset. The land itself.



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