

▶ THE TAMING OF THE RANCH

an elevation of 12,100', the northeast corner—lowest point—is at 8,000'. Just getting to the northwest corner of Greenwood would take four hours in a four-wheel drive. We tried to find a shorter route by going across private land, but each time we sought permission to go across, the state would be in the midst of a particular hunting season.

Instead, we opted for a one-hour helicopter ride to the peak of the mountain, an area that had not been visited by the previous owner in more than 15 years. From the peak, our survey teams hiked down the mountain along the mountain ridge. This proved a relatively straightforward process, with the exception of the occasional wildlife. At one point, a black bear crossed our path, took a close look at us, and moved on uninterested. We didn't stay around long to see if he changed his mind. We also had to be extremely cautious around the numerous abandoned mine shafts, several dating back to the early 1800s.

Fortunately, more than 100 years ago original survey crews used very visible boundary markers, including 8" x 8" pine posts set in mounds of stone, a 3' tall stump of a pine tree, marked stones and different size pipes—all found very near deed descriptions. Most of the original outside boundary survey was done by using transit stadia. The two survey teams completed the entire side of the mountain within about 10 hours and met back up with a four-wheel-drive truck in Baldy City, an old mining town that sits at an elevation of 10,000'.

Property Boundaries: More or Less

During 1982, Pennzoil donated 160,000 acres of land called the Valle Vidal Unit to the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Carson National Forest along the western boundary of the ranch. The region is used by the Forest Service for camping, fishing, hunting and backpacking. Unfortunately the property line between Valle Vidal and the Vermejo Park Ranch has never been surveyed.

Surveyors fell back on the Valle Vidal deed description taken from 1955 and 1963 USGS 1:64,000 topographic sheets. It provided little, if any, help.

A sample description reads: "Thence easterly 1.7 miles, more or less, and more particularly to the summit labeled 10045 on the USGS map 'Ash Mountain'; thence north of east 1.4 miles, more or less, and more particularly down side drainage to intersection with McCrystal Creek; thence north-easterly 0.6 miles to a point on the ridge near the 9080-foot contour and overlooking Harry Bremmer Canyon." The

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