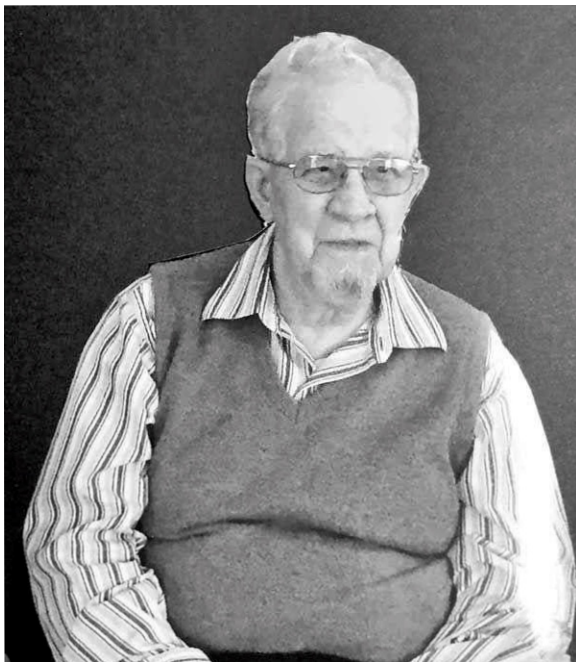


Stories from former Sheriff Norman Howey Flashbacks to the 1960s, 70s and 80s

By Lori Bennett Correspondent

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While some people in the late 1960s, 70s and 80s were dancing under disco balls and wearing big hair, Norm Howey was enforcing law and order in Park County as Sheriff.

Howey recently passed away, and we at The Flume not only want to thank Howey and his family for their contribution to the county and community through the years, but also take a walk down memory lane in the Sheriff's boots of over 40 years ago.

Norman Howey became a deputy sheriff in 1966, then became undersheriff, and by 1971, he was appointed Sheriff. He

served as Sheriff for Park County through 1986.

The following anecdotes are from an interview that Howey shared with Doris LeDue, March 7, 2003, and are stored in the Park County Archives at www.parkcoarchives.org.

Double Murder in Hartsel

"Doc Bell was the Sheriff, and they had drownings down in Elevenmile. While he was in Elevenmile, this fella came into Hartsel and told them, 'I just killed my wife and her boyfriend, call the Sheriff.' "

"He still had a gun in his hand and he had them petrified, but he wasn't harmful."

Howey, as undersheriff at the time, went to Hartsel and picked him up. The shooter's last name was Goes, per Howey's recollection.

Goes said that his wife had an affair and had a child with her boyfriend, so he took his wife and the baby up to Wyoming and worked on a ranch there, raising the child as his own.

However, Goes knew that the wife's boyfriend was still working on a Hartsel ranch. Goes found out his wife had been through Buena Vista, so he went to Hartsel, found his wife and boyfriend in the corral and shot his wife in the head and shot the boyfriend three times.

They had Goes in jail for three days, but then his case was deemed “psychiatric.”

Howey said, “But to me he was normal, he had one intent. That man messed up his life and his marriage and he came out here for one reason. Gentlemen, he says, ‘I killed them and I admit it.’”

Goes was taken to Pueblo, then Denver, then to the State hospital, where he worked in the garage area in minimum security. One day a rim from a tractor tire flew off and hit him in the head, which resulted in him being “brain-dead.” Goes later died in the penitentiary.

One woman with a set of mean high heels

Howey explained that women prisoners were few, and if they were violent they were taken to Salida.

Howey told a story of one woman who was on drugs and was apprehended in Hartsel.

“She kicked in a showcase, kicked the glass in and so we had to go down an arrest her. We took her on to Buena Vista and they jailed her for overnight,” Howey said.

He added, “When she got to the courthouse in Salida, downstairs was the jail and they had screens around the windows and everything. She took her high heels and broke out every window in that women’s cell; a hundred and some windows before they got her stopped.”

Jail

The old Fairplay jail building was condemned in 1950, and during Howey’s service in the 70s, the facility was still used as a holding facility.

Howey said they would take those they had arrested to the hotel or out to eat or get a meal brought them. They also had

to hire someone to sleep in the outer portion of the jail as a guard.

One prisoner set a fire in that area once, but was not able to escape.

There were no bathing facilities in the old jail, so they would just take them to use the bathroom at the courthouse where there was a toilet and a wash basin. They did not get baths or showers.

Juveniles

“We picked up a lot of juveniles,” Howey said.

They took them to Salida, where there was a juvenile detention location.

Howey explained that the juvenile code came out in 1972 or 73, and that when Doc Bell was still Sheriff, they would call the parents and send the juvenile home, instead of transporting them to a juvenile center.

Then, they would be given a date for juvenile court.

“If the parents did not bring them in, we had to go get them,” Howey said.

In later years, he said, “We picked up juveniles, burglars, drug offenses, assaults and they actually went through the social services.”

Then, the Sheriff’s Office would transport them to Colorado Springs to a juvenile center.

Sheriff in a bucket

Howey said, “I had a fellow that was from Colorado Springs, that had allegedly killed a person down at Lake George, outside of Lake George.

“We got word from El Paso County and found out that this group was in the hills outside of Lake George, and they were staying in some of those old ranch

buildings that were vacated up there,” Howey said.

The group broke into some homes and “some of his friends squealed on him and said he’d killed this other fella, but they didn’t know where he was.

“Well, I knew the country down there pretty well and there were some old mine shafts down there. Just below where they broke into this one house, a place that set up into a draw, just below that was a mine shaft.

“And I happened to see that somebody had shoveled dirt off that pile driving by there. So we looked down in there and we could see a lot of old dead boards and timbers and everything.

“And they had just been thrown in there, maybe within a few days’ time. And then dirt was shoveled down.

“So I figured he was down there, so I got the county winch and lowered us down in a bucket. When we dug it up we found the body, and we took him out.”

Escape

Howey did have one person try to escape when he was transporting. The prisoner undid the seat belt and jumped out of the car at a stoplight. Local police apprehended the escapee.

After that, Howey used the leg irons during transport, and this particular prisoner he later drove at least ten times back and forth to Pueblo.

Leg irons and exercise time

There were leg irons attached to the wall. Prisoners were kept in the leg irons and Howey said, “They didn’t get away.”

The prisoners also didn’t get exercise time, Howey explained: “They could do their exercises walking back and forth in

the jail or they could do sit-ups and they could do a lot of things like that, but they didn’t get out to exercise.”

Twelve-year-old deputy

Howey also remembers when he was ten or twelve years old and Joe Hurst was Sheriff. Howey used to help and was paid \$2 or \$4 for going on a call with Sheriff Hurst.

Family man

Cindy Mefford, Howey’s niece, said, “My uncle was a kind and generous person. He always made sure the nieces and nephews had gifts; he was so good to all of us.”

She added, “He was not married until 1986, and during his time as a single man in Fairplay, he also cared for his mother who had Alzheimer’s for many years.”

Nancy Howey, Howey’s wife, said, “He knew everybody in the county at that time, or they knew him, and he always wanted to help people.”

Barry Howey, a nephew who was also a firefighter and EMT in Park County, said that his uncle was compassionate. For example, on one occasion, when an 18-month-old infant had been found after a long search in a creek near Jefferson, Sheriff Howey insisted on notifying the family. He did not want his deputies to go through what he called a “heart-wrenching” part of the job.

It is good to know that the long arm of the law has been close to its customers through the years, putting them in leg irons, taking them for a meal, or looking for them in a bucket down a mine shaft.