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Goosewing Ranch looks for new owner

Owners hope for a buyer to put the homestead back together — but 2 pieces could go separately.

By Mark Huffman

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*“Of the interested parties so far, everyone would run it.” —
Latham Jenkins, LiveWater Jackson Hole*

The Goosewing Ranch was a long, long way from Jackson long before Jackson was more than a handful of rough buildings.

More than a century later the mileage is the same, but Jackson’s immersion in the 21st century and the slow pace far up the Gros Ventre valley makes the remoteness all the more striking. The Goosewing is 38 miles from Town Square, much of that from the last turnoff, north of Kelly, and then about 20 miles up the Gros Ventre Road.

It’s like driving into the past, leaving behind traffic, then pavement and cell reception.

Now the Goosewing, a dude ranch since the 1970s, is on the market. The dude business, and the slightly over 44 acres it sits on, is being offered by owner Francois Corrand for \$9.5 million. A neighboring parcel of 110 acres, with only a ranch foreman's house, is priced at \$16.5 million.

The two parcels, divided in 1980, were an original 160-acre homestead, filed on in 1911 by Milton Robinson. It was run first as a ranch, then a hunting camp, and starting in 1972 as a dude ranch operated by Harold Shervin and his wife, Claudette.

Though hunters and dudes came from all over the world, the Goosewing was also seen as a getaway by people in Jackson who thought — decades ago — that they needed to get away from the rush.



Before it was a dude ranch, the Goosewing was a working ranch.

COURTESY PHOTO

People 50 years ago appreciated the ranch, but “little did they know how special this place was, especially compared to what we have today” in busy Jackson Hole, said Latham Jenkins, the real estate agent who has the listing.

Current owner Corrand bought the ranch's snowmobile business in 1992 and the ranch in 1996. The dude ranch seems likely to remain much as it is even with new ownership, Jenkins predicts.

“Of the interested parties so far, everyone would run it” as it runs today, Jenkins said. “There’s a nostalgia about operating it.”

Nostalgia aside, it’s also a big operation with a lot of investment and a pile of goodwill value from pleasing visitors over the decades. There’s also the horseback riding and hunting guide permits held by the business.

“These are not easy to come by,” Jenkins said of the private land, in the middle of miles of the Bridger-Teton National Forest. “Especially with commercial, with all the permits to go with it.”

Corrand, he said, “has been a very hands-on owner most of his time” with the ranch.

Several Robinson brothers were involved in settling the area, including Milton, Ed and Butch, who staked out claims around the area. They apparently arrived about 1904 and were known to leave their doors open when they were away so that anyone who came by could shelter or eat. Butch Robinson’s 1946 obituary said “the latchstring was always on the outside and every traveler was welcome.

“The warm hospitality of Butch and Eddie was an open byword in all Jackson Hole. If on occasion they were both away from the ranch, a note sometimes invited their unknown but nevertheless welcome guests to make themselves at home, but to please wash their dishes.”



1 Goosewing was a popular place to get away from it all as far back as the 1930s, attracting even people from Jackson Hole.

COURTESY PHOTO

In 1972 Jackson historian Fern Nelson wrote that after Milt's young bride died — taken by pneumonia after she was caught in a blizzard riding to Kelly — on several occasions he apparently dressed in her clothes when he knew people might be passing by to lure them to visit.

Milt was a teacher in Jackson in 1913-14. Another brother, Wilbert, lived in Kelly. The brothers, trained as masons by their dad, ran a brick-making business in Jackson for several years. A nephew continued to own some of the homesteaded land into the 1970s.

Milt Robinson sold in 1955 to Harold and Claudette Shervin. She had been raised on a nearby Gros Ventre ranch. The Shervins ran a hunting camp, and Claudette was known for her cooking, especially her breads and pies. They opened the dude ranch in 1972 with eight cabins. They also raised oats and hay, most of which they sold to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, which fed elk nearby during the winter. The Shervins also began the snowmobile business at Goosewing.

The Shervins sold in 1983, and the ranch went through several owners before Corrand bought it.

As a boy Corrand — who went on to a career in pharmaceuticals — worked on an uncle's farm in the French countryside. He also fell in love with stories of the old fur trappers, many of whom were French by way of Canada.

“Since he was a little boy he was enamored with the American West,” said current general manager Amy Worster, who runs the Goosewing with her husband, Randy. “Especially the mountain men.”



The Goosewing Ranch consists of the 45 acres on the lower bench, next to the Gros Ventre River, which offers good trout fishing.
COURTESY PHOTO

Worster made a good first impression with her boss-to-be in 2005, when she was driving up valley to apply for a wrangler job. Miles down the road she had a breakdown and had to turn on the Old West ingenuity.

“My truck broke down so I rode my horse in,” she said last week. “It was a long ride.”

The Goosewing today includes 11 cabins, eight as old as the 1930s and three added in the 1980s, as well as several Conestoga-style wagons made up for glamping. There’s a building used as office and headquarters and a main lodge where guests eat, a place done up in Old West style with log furniture and decorated with moose and deer heads, with a taxidermied bobcat glaring at people walking in and a mountain lion looking down from the top of the stairs. There are also barns and work buildings, and the generator that provides for the off-the-grid ranch. All the buildings on the Goosewing amount to about 13,000 square feet.

When the place is booked full, there are about 35 guests. The staff is about 30 people, Worster said, and with all the activities “it’s a busy operation between the guests and the staff.”

Corrand owns 44 acres and the Goosewing business. The other 110 acres is owned by Etca White, who has subdivided enough for the house she built years ago. Much of her property is irrigated hayfield.

Realtor Jenkins, representing LiveWater Jackson Hole, said the owners “would like to see someone put the homestead back together again,” but the parcels can be sold separately.

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