

## *Introducing 2012 Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame Inductee...*

### **Pete Sacks**

Pete Sacks was born in Fort Lupton, Colorado, in 1924. He moved with his family, shortly thereafter to South Dakota, where his father raised wheat and flax on Indian ground. The crash of 1929 wiped out the Sacks family financially, so they moved to Missoula, MT, and his family worked at the sugar beet mill during 1929 and 1930, after which they sharecropped on the Dussault Ranch. When Pete was in the 6th grade, his family moved to Frenchtown, again sharecropping sugar beets, and also milking cows. Pete by this time, was earning his share for the family, hoeing sugar beets, and milking the cows. In 1945, the Sacks' moved to the Bitterroot Valley, and from 1945 until 1947, they leased and ran the Fort Owen Ranch, in Stevensville, putting up hay, and raising cattle. Pete had developed a love, and a feel for horses by this time, and was training some colts for the public, along with his family ranching duties. In 1947, Pete and his family bought the ranch on Birch Creek, Corvallis, MT, where he still lives today. They raised some sugar beets, then went into the cattle business, and bought another ranch property. Pete married Viviette Seal in 1948, and they made their home on the Birch Creek place. Pete continued to ride in conjunction with their cattle operations, and in 1952, he got interested in calf roping, joined the PRCA, and went to as many rodeos as his time would allow. He mostly competed locally, and followed Oral Zumwalt's rodeos pretty steadily. In 1958, he bought a really good calf roping horse, "Bay Rum" from Bud Pilcher, and did very well competing on him. Bay Rum put a rider in the right position on a calf, and had an impressive hard stop, once the loop was on the calf. In addition to his abilities as a calf horse, Bay Rum was a good hazing horse, and Pete used him many times as Benny Reynolds' partner. The hazing money Pete made, helped pay his expenses to get to the next rodeo.

Pete's interest eventually shifted from calf roping to team roping, and he can head a steer with the best of them. He traveled as he could around his ranching responsibilities, traveling to Washington, Idaho, Nevada, and all across Montana. He and his wife used to go to the big Century Roping in Elko, a five day event, every fall, where they had a very good time, and Pete always did well. If Pete had not had two Bitterroot ranches to run, he could have done well on the national circuit—he had both the talent and the horses to do it—just not the time. And speaking of his horses, he trained his own horses, and still does. Pete has roped steadily since 1952 either calves or steers, at least once a week, and sometimes more than that, if there are local jackpots to go to. He has roped regularly at Mytty's Lolo Creek Arena since it was built, and has won many buckles there. In fact, he has won over 30 buckles up until this point, and will probably win some more before he's done—he's only 87! Pete

sold the bulk of the Birch Creek property and the cattle in 1973, and then owned a backhoe business until 1995, meanwhile training, riding, and roping whenever possible. In 1982, he won a saddle, riding his good horse, Snazz, in Clarkston, WA. He is a charter member of the St. Mary's Saddle Club, Stevensville, was a member of PRCA while calf roping, a member of the Northwest Rodeo Association (NRA), a member of the Montana Team Roper's Association (now the Wrangler's Team Roper's Association), and is a lifetime member of the U.S. Team Roper's Association.

In 60 years of roping, Pete has only had two major wrecks. Back in his calf roping days, he roped a snuffy calf, and when he threw his coils, one came down and caught his left hand, which was on his horse's neck, wrapped around the hand, and as the calf hit the end of the slack, it pulled Pete right out of the saddle, slung him through the air, and slam dunked him out by the calf. His left little finger was hanging only by a hunk of skin, so Pete laid it in the palm of his hand, and got hauled to Stevensville to Doc Spencer. Doc sewed it back on to the best of his ability (he had been an army doctor), made no guarantees, bandaged him up, and sent him on his way. Two weeks later, at a roping in Conrad, Pete caught his calf, went down the rope, flanked and tied the calf—and could not open his hand. The pressure of throwing the calf had bent the metal brace clear around. It really tested the sewing job on Pete's finger, but they got him straightened out, and he still has the finger, although it's a little crooked. His second wreck happened in the 1970's sometime, when he decided to be a heeler on a steer at the Pony Palace, Hamilton, MT. His dallies didn't line up right, and he donated his right thumb, and has stuck to heading ever since.

In 2007, the Pete Sacks Classic Roping was held for the first time at the Mytty Arena in Lolo, and has become an annual event. In 2008, Pete, roping with his nephew, Randy Sacks, won the event, and the special embroidered jacket. He still ropes weekly, and still ropes with the best—for instance, the Tryan family. When asked about his long cowboy career, Pete says he's "real lucky", and that he's "real thankful", he also said he "enjoyed every bit of it."

On March 25, 2012, Pete, 87, riding his 22 year old QH gelding, Red, won the championship belt buckle for the Winter Series Team Roping at Lolo Peak Arena, Lolo, MT. He roped 18 head with 4 different heelers to accomplish this.