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AROUND THE HORN:
Clockwise from top left,
a Mountain nine vista;
fishing along the Eagle
nine; the Mountain's
par-3 eighth; The
Powder Horn clubhouse;
the club pool facility.



Wyoming WOW

Crouching at the base of the Big Horn Mountains, The Powder Horn in Sheridan embodies the tranquility, hospitality and spirit of the American West. BY JON RIZZI

WIDE-OPEN SPACES punctuated by the occasional stand of wind turbines and rock formations define much of the nearly six-hour drive from Denver to Sheridan, Wyoming. Antelopes prance across the vastness north of Cheyenne. Cattle graze and pumpjacks nod all the way through Casper and Buffalo.

But as you exit the interstate towards the verdant Goose Creek Valley, the scenery changes. Wales of irrigated farmland roll into fields alive with horses, Herefords and Holsteins.

And in the near distance, the peaks of the Big Horn Mountains carve the skyline, creating a vista not unlike that of Boulder and the Flatirons from the scenic overlook on U.S. 36.

Homer “Scotty” Scott, Jr. knows both views well. A Sheridan native with a sharp, droll sense of humor, the 81-year-old founder and developer of Sheridan’s magnificent Powder Horn Golf Community earned a football scholarship in 1952 to the University of Colorado. He planned to become a tailback in Dal Ward’s single-wing offense. However, playing behind future CU Athletic Hall of Famer Carroll Hardy and blowing out both knees limited his career to two games. After suffering a compound ankle fracture in an automobile accident, Scotty never got back on the field.

“I thought it was pretty tragic at the

time,” he explains. “But in hindsight, it was a blessing.”

His athletic endeavors truncated, Scotty pursued degrees in civil engineering and business management. During his years in Boulder, he also found himself checking sites that would make great golf courses, including the bluff overlooking what would decades later become Colorado National Golf Club, CU’s home course.

Scotty had loved the game since his days as a 10-year-old caddie for a local district judge at the now-defunct Sheridan Country Club. He would work summers in the golf shop during high school—that is, once he had finished his chores on the family’s 3,000-acre Padlock Ranch 20 miles north of town.

His father, Homer, Sr., had purchased the ranch when Scotty was eight. Having grown up poor in Lincoln, Neb. Homer, Sr. valued hard work as the key to success. His diligence, determination and ambition got him through engineering school at the University of Nebraska and advanced him to western district manager of the Peter Kiewit & Sons Construction firm, where he would work for nearly 40 years. During this time, he and his wife Mildred purchased the ranch, bought a bank and instilled an indefatigable work ethic in their five children.

Married with children of his own during the 1960s, Scotty gave up the idea

of building a golf course “as ridiculous” and followed in his father’s footsteps, which, he says “were way too big.” After 10 years working for Kiewit in Colorado, he, too, became the company’s district manager in Sheridan. A few years later he went into the family business as chairman of First Interstate Bank. “It was a heck of a way to start—at the top,” he says with a smile, “but my training with the Kiewit company enabled me to handle the situation.”

Mainly, he jokes, “I always considered myself the bank’s athletic director.”

THE COURSE

Scotty tells his backstory as we sit in a meeting room on the second floor of the rustically elegant 30,000-square-foot stone-and-timber clubhouse that anchors the golf property he and his wife Janet finally decided to develop six miles south of downtown Sheridan in 1993.

What would open four years later as 18 golf holes on 608 acres in the Little Goose Creek Valley has grown to 27 holes on 930 acres. After rejecting a routing by Pete Dye, Scotty hired Scottsdale-based Dick Bailey, a former design partner of the late Jay Morrish, to design all three nines—Eagle, Stag and

Mountain—the last of which opened in 2002.

His choice has paid off in the form of hosannas from national golf magazines, which have ranked the course among “The Best Courses Wyoming” (*Golf Digest*), “America’s Premier Golf Properties” (*LINKS*) and “Top 100 Modern Courses” (*Golfweek*).

The differences between The Powder Horn trio are substantial. Eagle, the longest at 3,683 yards, begins as an open, meadow links-type experience, with dramatic vistas from the elevated tees on holes three and four, before turning riparian as it snakes around the willows, cottonwoods, aspens and cattails along Little Goose Creek and the adjacent ponds.

Considered the most difficult nine, the 3,491-yard Stag also plays through the trees and around water. Its 564-yard par-5 3rd, a dogleg-right crossed by three ponds, features a far-right backdoor landing area that can lead to a birdie—or a big wet snowman. The photogenic par-three 6th, with its red barn crouching behind the elevated green, requires a carry of the diagonally crossing stream. Your humble narrator carded a birdie.

Powder Horn’s regular member’s



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HORN OF PLENTY: The par-4 fourth on the Eagle nine.

group—known as the Bandits—usually plays the above combination during their daily money game. Scotty says he prefers the Mountain, because it’s “about four shots easier than the Stag.”

Traversing some of the highest ground on the property, the 3,443-yard links-style layout also seems to be Scotty’s baby. Each hole bears a Scottish name. “Blink Bonnie” describes the beautiful view of the Little Goose Valley and the Big Horn Mountain Range from the fourth tee; “Deil’s Creel,” or “Devil’s Fishing Basket” describes the demonic carry over the powder horn-shaped lake on the par-3 eighth.

“Most people wonder about ‘Lang Whang,’” Scott muses after we play the 525-yard par-5 6th. “Just so you know,” he says with a laugh, “it means ‘good whack.’”

Adding to the Mountain’s Scottish flavor, replica Swilcan Bridges cross burns on the first and seventh holes, complete with plaques, in Scots, celebrating a “guid roon o’ golf wi auld friends.”

A similar sentiment resounds above the fireplace in the clubhouse, where a prominent wood carving of Scotty, Janet and their four children—along with two distinctively dressed golfers and a bagpiper

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BARN BURNER: The par-3 sixth on the Stag nine.

raising glasses on a golf course—hangs with the inscription: “A toast to the Old West Tradition and the Auld Scottish Game.”

“FAMILY” AFFAIR

As it was to Homer Sr., family is extremely important to the Scotts. The couple and their offspring comprise the Scott Family Council that owns The Powder Horn, Padlock Ranch and, among other holdings, five Perkins restaurants around Wyoming, including the one in Sheridan.

“We consider anyone who works for us part of the family,” Scotty explains. “That

was our M.O. when we ran the banks. We had very little turnover in the operations we’re involved in. Our Perkins manager has been with us 34 years. Loyalty is next to godliness as far as I’m concerned. That’s the way we were raised.”

Loyalty, however, seemed to stand in the way of The Powder Horn moving from a semi-private club to the fully private one most members and consultants thought it should be. “I thought we had a team here that could handle all that,” Scotty admits. “Then my daughter and (Sales Manager) Scott (Sheehan) pushed to bring in Troon Golf.”

Scotty’s daughter, Sandy Suzor, is The Powder Horn’s sales and marketing director. “After 21 years of doing it the same way, we had a chance to make something special,” Suzor says. “We’ve already seen cost savings and improvements in efficiency.”

That the world’s largest third-party manager of golf and club operations had as its Executive Vice President of Operations John Easterbrook—a former University of Wyoming golfer whose father coached the Cowboys’ football team—certainly helped smooth the transition from a family-managed business. He sent in one of Troon’s brightest stars, Robert Kearney, to be the general manager. Scotty calls him a “godsend.”

The club is now completely private—full golf memberships run \$4,400 with \$450 per month in dues—and its current roster of 220 full golf members have reciprocal play at any of the more than 70 clubs in the Troon Privé private-club network (among them Colorado’s The Club at Cordillera, Club at Crested Butte and Bookcliff Country Club).

Nonmembers can play as part of a \$399 per night stay-and-play package in one of The Powder Horn rental pool’s 20 properties (including 12 elegant two- and three-

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bedroom cottages). The Powder Horn has also just broken ground on nine 3,330-square-foot Creekside Cabins near the clubhouse. It also currently offers a package with the Scott-owned Candlewood Suites in Sheridan.

With no state income tax, Wyoming's "less taxing, more relaxing" mantra resonates with those looking to escape Colorado's increasingly crowded and pricey Front Range. More than 510 of The Powder Horn's 675 currently platted homesites have sold, and houses have sprouted on 230 of those lots. "And we still have prime areas to develop," Scotty says. "The PUD calls for 925 units."

These aren't all homes for retirees, either. Younger families have bought in The Powder Horn. Kelly Gould, the president of Pascal Public Relations, moved from Denver nine years ago. She, her husband Don and young sons John and Jackson appreciate the wonderful quality of life. "My entire social circle are members there," she says. "We take up giant tables of 20 at dinner, and the kids run around outside in a safe perimeter. It's like living at summer camp, a really wonderful homespun community. In no other place would I have been able to forge this level of friendships."

What visitors and residents discover, in addition to fabulous golf, is a welcoming lack of pretention. For example, the club's Cowboy Bar lets guests "build their own" burgers and grilled cheese sandwiches. When Scotty orders the latter and the server asks what kind of cheese he would like, he replies: "Melted."

The Powder Horn's food is top-notch, as are its two tennis courts, fitness center, pool facility, basketball court and fly-fishing along two private miles of Little Goose Creek. Two miles of nature trails attract joggers and birdwatchers. The nearby Big Horn Mountains, Bighorn National Forest and Cloud Peak Wilderness abound with meadows, streams, alpine lakes and trails brimming with hikers, backpackers, anglers and horseback riders.

Skiers may soon arrive as well. Located 59 miles from Sheridan and shuttered for 15 years, Antelope Butte Ski Area is slated to reopen this winter with a remodeled lodge, 250 skiable acres, 1,000 feet of vertical, three lifts and 23 trails.

SHERIDAN

To many Sheridan residents, the lack of world-class skiing is the only thing that

HIT THE RANGE:
The Big Horns rise
up from beyond the
grazing lands.

PHOTOGRAPH BY FLASH PARKER



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has kept the city from becoming the next Jackson Hole. That cuts two ways.

Although he says he'd like to get into the "same fly zone" as the coveted Wyoming address, Scotty says "you couldn't pay me to live there. It's nice to visit but it's tough if you're looking for serenity. Plus, they're at 6,500 feet, so their seasons are shorter than ours and they have less oxygen than we do."

Sheridan's location on the Montana border leads to a misperception about the weather. "People think this is the frozen tundra," Gould says. "But we get these winter Chinooks, and it can climb into the 60s and 70s in January. It feels like the Northwest."

Sheridan also has more of a connection to The Powder Horn than most cities have to their nearby private enclaves. Having grown up in Sheridan and invested heavily in the community, Scotty justifiably takes great pride in his hometown of 17,500.

A walk down the historic Main Street bears him out. There's nary an empty storefront or chain establishment. That is, except for the J.C. Penney Company store that has occupied the same modest brick building since 1907.

Other downtown attractions include the 93-year-old WYO Theater, an ornate

structure with an Art Deco façade that stages all manner of films, concerts, dance and theatrical performances; Frackelton's, a dynamite restaurant specializing in high-quality steaks, seafood and adventurous pastas; and The Mint, a long, dark, tin-ceilinged bar with a neon cowboy over the entrance and more than 100 years' worth of photographs and taxidermy festooning every inch of wall space.

Sheridan, astonishingly enough, even has its own winery. Sourcing grapes and fermenting juices from California and other regions, Weston Winery cellars and blends its own wines, which it sells under the 307 (the state's area code) label. On June 30, Weston opened its eponymous taproom in an old bank building at 112 Main Street, where it serves 14 wines—as well as cider and mead—on tap and by the bottle. Not only is it surprising that Wyoming produces wines; the wines it produces are surprisingly good.

The 86th Sheridan Wyo Rodeo takes place July 13-16 at the Sheridan County Fairgrounds, highlighted, as always, by the electrifying Indian Relay Races. On Sept. 3, the Cowboy State Elite Rodeo arrives with the sport's biggest names in action.

Some of the biggest names in



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Air service between Denver International Airport and Sheridan County Airport occurs daily via Denver Air Connection aboard a 30-seat Dornier jet aircraft. Two flights leave in each direction every day, with one being a direct 80 minutes from Sheridan to Denver; the other three require a stop in Riverton, making the total trip 2:18. For schedule and fare information, visit flysheridan.com

PHOTOGRAPH BY FLASH PAREN

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international polo also come every July and August to compete in matches at the Flying H Polo Club, one of only three summer venues in the United States to offer high goal polo. Flying H neighbors the Big Horn Polo Club, founded in 1893 and one of the 10 largest polo clubs in the country.

Both clubs are in the town Big Horn, which is three miles closer to The Powder Horn than downtown Sheridan is.

Big Horn's Brinton Museum showcases the nation's largest collection of Western and Native American art, thanks in large part to the new three-story, 24,000-square-foot Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building named for the confectionery heir who donated \$15.8 million for its construction.

Equally as noteworthy, albeit in a different way, is Big Horn's bitty Last Chance Saloon. As Wyoming's oldest bar, it manages legally to maintain a drive-through window where customers can grab one for the road.

"WESTERN PARADISE"

Big Horn and Sheridan both invest in making their communities strong, vibrant places to live. The money doesn't just come from the seven billionaires who live there.

A striking K-12 campus with robust

technology and low student-teacher ratios just earned Big Horn High a U.S. *News & World Report* distinction as Wyoming's top high school. The two-year Sheridan Community College will debut its \$20 million Whitney Center for the Arts this month. The YMCA is about to build a \$15 million aquatic center. Another \$6 million in sponsorships and donations has converted the outdoor ice rink into an indoor facility.

"It's a Western paradise," Gould says. "There's just enough urbanism—hip coffee shops, cool stores—to go along with the surrounding natural beauty. Quality of life is embedded here. It's like people from their mid-30s to their 50s have discovered the secret to the good life." 🍷

Jon Rizzi is *Colorado AvidGolfer's* editor. For more information on The Powder Horn: thepowderhorn.com; 307-674-9545.



ART HOUSE: The new Forrest E. Mars Jr. Building at the Brinton Museum.

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