

Castle Hot Springs

Elisabeth F. Ruffner

PHOTO - Caption - ELINORE CHAMPIE, RANCHWOMAN

Not every girl born into a ranch family is privileged to become the wife of a rancher, and enjoy the life of her grandparents and parents as a grown woman. Mary Elinore Stewart was born in Prescott, a third generation in the family cattle ranch, the Cross Triangle, in Williamson Valley. Her grandfather, James Willard Stewart, had founded the brand in the 1870s when he acquired the original land. Elinore grew up in the life celebrated by Harold Bell Wright in the classic book of the '30s, "When A Man's A Man", in which her parents Clarence and Estella Cook Stewart were portrayed as Dean and Stella.

Elinore, with her siblings and other ranch kids, "came to town" for school. They boarded at <sup>Sf. Joseph's Academy</sup> ~~Sacred Heart School~~ until someone became old enough to drive and then they drove. Elinore then attended Prescott High School, from which she graduated in 1935. Ranch kids also attend rodeos, and Elinore not only had a crush on Lawton Champie, World Champion cowboy, when she was thirteen, she married him at a rodeo in Globe, Arizona in 1935 when she was 19.

The Champies owned the LC Ranch at Castle Hot Springs for many years and Elinore was not only a gracious hostess and party giver and devoted dancer, she ran a kitchen in her home where she fed the cowboys in the early morning,

started supper, and went out on the range with midday meals for all, during ranch working seasons, year after year. She worked as a cowhand on the ranch and with neighbors as well, and was a member of the Arizona Cattle Growers, the Yavapai Cattle Growers, and the Yavapai Cowbellees of Arizona.

Elinore served on the Champie School board for many years and kept that school running as a county school district, often with only a few students. This building, one room with a teacherage attached, built in 1930, was on land owned by Elinore's mother-in-law. Elizabeth Lee Champie, who deeded the land to the county with the proviso that the land revert to her heirs, should the district be dissolved.

PHOTO-VIA EMAIL -- caption -- CHAMPIE SCHOOL

Earlier this year, the victim of a land dispute, the schoolhouse was demolished, leaving not only a hole in the ground, but a hole in the hearts of all who cherish history and the memories of days gone by. Countless former students, residents and visitors to Castle Hot Springs in central Arizona, recall the gatherings for the whole region at the schoolhouse, dances and meetings, and social events of all kinds, and now mourn the loss.

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