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THE STORY OF FOX ACRES

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For Raymond O. Stenzel
Fox Acres
Red Feather Lakes, Colorado

PREFACE

This report started out to be a history of enchanting Fox Acres up to the time Raymond O. Stenzel bought and began to improve the property. The narrative grew gradually into an account of the deluxe Country Club and vacation home area in the Colorado mountains. Perhaps the expansion of the story's time does not really take it out of the history classification; everything related, up to the time sales of homesites started, already begins to build up a new legend that, in only a few years, will be viewed as history.

In the course of preparation, the title of this work was changed from "The History of Fox Acres" to "The Story of Fox Acres." It was felt that the broader word better reflects these contents. The story begins with the historical background of the Red Feather Lakes area and the neighboring silver fox farm, which formed the nucleus of the acreage and inspired the name of today's Fox Acres. A little of the personal and business background of Mary and Ray Stenzel is covered. Then the story depicts the grand evolution of their plans from a limited private playground to a fabulous golf course and residential community. It delves with considerable detail into all elements of the attainment: early land acquisition and planning, the golf course, the clubhouse, utilities services, water development, lake management, construction and maintenance programs, and personnel. It concludes with a glimpse of the geology and wildlife of the area.

All this is not intended to be a sales brochure. Such a pamphlet may be issued for information purposes, although Mr. Stenzel will never take a flamboyant or gimmick approach to the marketing of Fox Acres residential tracts. He will keep the promotion low key and tasteful. Sales will be on an exclusively invitational basis, encouraged largely by word-of-mouth among the Stenzels' friends, then their friends' friends, in a widening circle.

Nevertheless, those associated with production of this piece hope it will stimulate interest among prospective buyers of Fox Acres property. Or, at least, it might whet the enthusiasm of Fox Acres homeowners, deepening their appreciation of the development of which they become a part.

Mr. Stenzel initially wanted a record of the fruition of his Fox Acres dream for himself, his family and friends. As the writing progressed and the subject matter broadened, he sensed that the report could interest a larger audience, including Fox Acres Country Club members and their friends, Red Feather Lakes residents and visitors, persons who have been associated with the Fox Acres development and their friends, Colorado history buffs, creators of (and those who would like to create) other golf course /country club /residential communities and anyone who savors a story of success growing out of a man's ingenuity and daring.

Ray Stenzel conceived the idea of assembling and recording the history and metamorphosis of Fox Acres, and he made major contributions to the content. Mary Stenzel added her support and input. Their good friends, Patricia and Clyde Gelwick, provided inspiration and encouragement for this work. The Gelwick's, a charming Boulder, Colo., couple, have a summer home at Red Feather Lakes and they have been close to the unfolding of Fox Acres from the beginning. Mr. Gelwick, one-time football teammate of Mr. Stenzel at the University of Colorado and retired manager of the Boulder Medical Center, has been Ray's good right hand in some aspects of the project, and the two men are frequent friendly adversaries on the golf course. Pat and Clyde - like Ray and the writer are graduates of the University of Colorado - made valuable suggestions for this account and helped make its preparation exciting fun.

The writer extends his appreciation to the Stenzels, the Gelwicks, and all the many others who have given information and who are quoted or cited in the narrative.

Fox Acres Country Club, a residential development of distinction in a Colorado mountain wonderland, evolved from a commercial fox farm – and from the vision, skill, business acumen and investment of an ambitious Colorado native, Raymond O. Stenzel.

Jeweled by 17 lakes – a challenge to golfers, joy of fishermen, source of tranquility for all residents and visitors – Fox Acres is a harmony of natural grandeur and gracious living. Abutting Roosevelt National Forest and the Red Feather Lakes community, it nestles in northwest Colorado scenic majesty about two and half hours by highway from Denver and one hour from Fort Collins.

Three skeins of history intertwine to weave the unique background of Fox Acres: the growth of the Red Feather Lakes resort community, the operation of a silver fox ranch

on land that was to become the nucleus of Fox Acres and to inspire the name of the development, and the Stenzel era in which the transformation of the area was conceived and matured.

From all that colorful foundation emerges the achievement that is the Fox Acres Country Club, 459 lovely acres including a breathtaking 120 acre championship golf course, luxurious clubhouse and sites for 225 living units – all representing, when development is completed, investments of some thirty million dollars.

Fox Acres was nearly 20 years in the making – a measure of the painstaking care that went into each step of the process – from the time the Stenzel's started creating their own vacation spot, through its evolution into an exclusive country club community for selected buyers of homesites.

PART I – RED FEATHER LAKES

The Red Feather Lakes resort area, venerable neighbor of glistening new Fox Acres, is starting its second century. Ten lakes are in the privately owned group: Hiawatha, Ramona, Papoose, Snake, Letitia, Apache, Shagwa, Nakomis, Erie and Red Feather. Six other lakes in the vicinity are public property, owned by the State of Colorado: Parvin, Dowdy, West, Bellaire, Creedmore and Lost.

An estimated 650 homes dot the area, most of them occupied only in the summer, others accommodating the approximately 125 year-around residents. The number of people in the area on a summer holiday weekend ranges up to perhaps 12,000, including some 400 to 750 occupants of their seasonal cabins, and the remainder fishermen, campers and other tourists. The numerical estimates are from Ted E. Dunning, who should be called “Mr. Red Feather” for his significant role, dating from 1940, in the community’s development and his continuing leadership and encyclopedic knowledge of the area.

The resort was named for Princess Tsianina Redfeather, well-known Colorado singer in the 1920’s and 1930’s. The mezzo-soprano won acclaim in concerts, recitals and opera in many parts of the nation. “Tsianina claimed to be a full-blooded Indian, the granddaughter of a Cherokee chief named Redfeather,” Olga Curtis wrote in the *Denver Post’s Empire Magazine* of January 2, 1977.

Her career was made possible, the *Post* article continued, by Charles Wakefield Cadman, a noted American composer of his day. He is best remembered for some of his romanticized “Indian” songs, particularly From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water and At Dawning.

In the early 1920’s, according to Olga Curtis, Tsianina and Cadman visited some of the men who were to incorporate the resort area in Larimer County, and “Tsianina’s ‘beauty and personal charm’ inspired the promoters into choosing Redfeather Lakes as the name of the area.”

Ted Dunning has an early promotional piece issued by the Redfeather Mountain Lakes Association, undated but published probably in the late 1920’s, which begins with:

The Legend of Redfeather

Many moons ago in the gentle Southland, where young Redfeather wooed his Cherokee sweetheart, the Great Spirit appeared in a vision and revealed the whereabouts of a veritable Fishing and Hunting Paradise, hidden from the covetous eyes of mortals, far toward the North Star in the home of the Bear, the Beaver and the Buffalo. 'Go, Redfeather,' he commanded, 'take the trail to the sunset that winds up into the clouds. There you will find golden sunshine, laughing waters filled with fishes and emerald forests crowded with game.' The vision was gloriously fulfilled. The Mountain Lakes Empire was claimed for the Cherokees by Redfeather, who was then made chief. So even to this day, courier winds carry a message promising reward to those who follow the trail of Redfeather.

From the time of the christening of the community, its name has been spelled either as one word or two words in official documents and general usage. The post office is officially designated Red Feather Lakes and that has become the most widely accepted form.

Following are some interesting highlights, chronologically, in Red Feather's history. Most of them are taken, by permission, from the excellent book, Red Feather Lakes – The First Hundred Years, by Evadene Burris Swanson with assistance from Ted Dunning, published by them at Fort Collins in 1971. The supply, for sale, of both hardcover and paperback versions has been exhausted, but copies are available in the Red Feather library and others.

John Hardin, who came to Colorado from Missouri, was the first settler in what is now the Red Feather Lakes vicinity. He built his cabin on South Lone Pine Creek in 1871 and began ranching and hauling lumber to builders in the valley below.

Two events in 1879 stimulated activity in the region: the first classes were held at Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical Arts College in Fort Collins (now the approximately 17,000 student Colorado State University), and gold was discovered at Lulu City, southwest of the Hardin ranch.

In 1888, Jake Mitchell began digging an irrigation ditch from the upper North Lone Pine Creek to the present Lake Hiawatha, establishing the water claim from which the whole Red Feather Lakes system evolved. The chain of reservoirs was known as Mitchell Lakes.

The first schoolhouse was built at Westlake in 1895. Though small, the structure also was a social center where "there were two-steps and waltzes and every fourth dance was a square dance. Bob Benton, a cowboy from Oklahoma who lived near Prairie Divide, was the best (square dance) caller in the high country. He could call all night and never repeat himself."

In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt established the national forest that now bears his name. It comprises 790,000 acres in north central Colorado, surrounding but not including Red Feather Lakes. "A few disgruntled saw mill operators tried to unite opposition but the advantage for water far outweighed the fear about lumber." Creation of the national forest brought such other benefits as environmental protection and outdoor recreational opportunities. It preserves, as well, a buffer of natural beauty for Fox Acres.

Development of a Red Feather Lakes summer resort started in the early 1900's. One of the first planners was Nettie Poore, who "built a pleasant cottage which still stands on Ramona Lake...She sold fish to a popular seafood restaurant, Pell's Oyster House, in Denver."

Competition for water increased. Its intensity was illustrated by an episode involving Catherine Lawder, known as "Lady Moon" because of her second marriage to Britisher Cecil Moon. In 1905 she filed for a reservoir to be used as a fishpond, agreeing to pay William Batterson \$5 for one night's run of water from the Elkhorn ditch. "She had stopped at the Batterson ranch and left a crate of cherries so she deducted the price of

the cherries from her payment. Because of this action, Batterson and William St. Clair came to her ranch in an ugly mood and threatened to kill her...Batterson and St. Clair posted bond and were released."

The first successful water well at Red Feather, the source of drinking water for the whole community for many years and a sociable meeting place, was at the Worley cabin on Hiawatha. The well site was located by the water-witching talent of Lou Young, perhaps the best-known and best-loved old settler. Known as Red Feather Lou, he was a versatile cowboy, inveterate fisherman and hunter, operator of a livery of cow ponies for tourists, collector of relics and curios from all over the mountains, a spinner of spellbinding tales.

One of the group of Red Feather Lakes is itself named Red Feather Lake. In 1922, ten men formed a group ownership plan for the 40 acres surrounding that lake. Ten families have maintained that system ever since, replacing by vote any who leave. The other lakes are administered by an association of property owners, first formed in 1923, as the Redfeather Mountain Lakes Association, by the incorporators who named the area for the singing Indian princess.

An ambitious plan for a resort was developed. Included in the proposals were a golf course, a silver fox farm, a hotel and a clubhouse (to which enterprises further reference will be made in subsequent sections of "The Story of Fox Acres").

In 1928 a clubhouse opened, work on the golf course progressed, playground equipment was installed and a fish hatchery was built. By that year, 250 cottages had been erected and 24 tourist cabins were under construction.

A pamphlet issued by the association to promote the sale of home sites with 50-foot frontage said: "Special offer for a limited time only. Two lots \$175. Regular price \$100 a lot." Those were the good old days.

The Redfeather Investment Co. was incorporated in 1928 by Morris Swedlow. After his death later that year, a new company was formed with John Ross and his son-in-law, A. D. Quaintance of Denver, among the directors. Most of the Fox Acres Country Club land is jointly owned by the Quaintance family and Ray Stenzel's company.

The Tunnel Water Co. was incorporated in 1938 to acquire the holdings of the Laramie-Poudre Irrigation Co., including the Red Feather Lakes. Ten years later, the

newly created Red Feather Storage and Irrigation Co. purchased the whole chain of reservoirs and three supply ditches from the Tunnel Water Co. for \$25,000. On the same day, the new company sold three of the lakes (West, Dowdy and Bellaire) and one supply ditch to the state Game and Fish Department for \$17,500.

Very few houses in the Red Feather Lakes community had electric generators when the Rural Electric Association (REA) brought commercial electric service to the community in 1952. Other advancements in the two decades between 1951 and 1971 included a community building, a fire station, a new schoolhouse, a library, a new post office, Protestant and Catholic chapels and a gourmet restaurant.

Red Feather Lakes preserves a rustic charm. It is not a municipality; the “government” stems from the state, county, school district, fire protection district and the Red Feather Lakes Property Owners Association. The “main drag” – a couple of blocks long except there are no blocks – boasts the post office, a half-dozen stores offering groceries, fishing supplies, sundries, liquor and antiques; gasoline pumps the village water pump (now electrically operated), small restaurants in some of the general stores (and larger restaurants elsewhere in the vicinity). Also “downtown” are the community house, library, fire station, thrift shop and a lumber and construction business that carried some hardware.

You might say the elevation of Red Feather is 8,300 feet above sea level. You might, but Ted Dunning wouldn't: ask him and he'll tell you the elevation is 8,363.67 at the corner of his office adjoining his home on Lake Ramona.

Besides being former postmaster of Red Feather Lakes, real estate and insurance broker, federal census-taker and wearer of assorted other hats, Ted also was Red Feather's observer for the U.S. Weather Bureau for years. He likes to say, with a twinkle in his eye, that the highest temperature he ever recorded there was 89.5 degrees Fahrenheit (not just 89 degrees, mind you, and not – Heaven forbid! – 90). However, official weather data, covering about 25 years of observations, show a record of 97, reached in 1954, and highs of 94 and 93 in other years. Ted and other Red Feather loyalists seriously question that 97 figure. Certainly it is clear that readings above 90 are very rare and usually last only an hour or so.

National Weather Service records, in the agency's office at the edge of the Denver airport, support the boast of Red Feather Lakes permanent residents, seasonal cabin owners and visitors that the weather's generally delightful.

Maximum monthly temperatures average 73.5 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and 67.2 in the half-year from spring to fall. The annual mean maximum is 53.0. The average minimum is 42.2 degrees in the summer months, 36.8 from May to October and 25.2 for the year. Stated more simply, summer days average around 74 degrees and summer nights around 42.

The highest temperatures on record were mentioned above. The all-time low was 39 degrees below zero in January 1963, and the months from October through April, in one or more years, have brought sub-zero temperatures. The climate is dry, the low humidity generally making days of temperature extremes quite tolerable.

Rainfall averages 1.96 inches in each of the summer months and 1.77 per month from spring to fall, while the annual precipitation (rain and snow) average 17.37 inches. The number of days with measurable precipitation (0.1 of an inch or more) averages 6.4 in each summer month and 53.1 days a year (slightly over one day a week).

Average monthly snowfall ranges from zero in July and August and a mere 1-inch in June to 22.1 inches in April. April has seen as much as 65.5 inches of snow, with a maximum of 28 inches on the ground at one time. The yearly snow total averages 110.8 inches.

There are no official records of the Red Feather area's sunshine – number of days or hours – but a reasonable guess might be 300 predominantly sunny days a year. Neither does the Weather Service have wind records for Red Feather Lakes, but no one recalls a severe windstorm; breezes – gentle to brisk – occur some time almost every day.

So much for the first century of the Red Feather community. When its second hundred years are recorded, surely a cardinal part of the story will be the remarkable enhancement of the region by an individual who brought the bold pioneer spirit to the creation of the Fox Acres Country Club in Red Feather's neighbor area that was once a fox farm.

PART II – THE FOX FARM

Appropriately, a touch of elegance from the past is a link to the luster of today's sumptuous Fox Acres. Luxurious silver fox and platinum fox fur adorned fashionable ladies in the second quarter of this century, particularly. One homeland of the sleek, beautiful animals that furnished the long-haired pelts was the acreage which was to be the core of the Fox Acres Country Club property and suggested its name.

The Red Feather Lakes area always has been primarily a mountain home and recreation site, but a major industry years ago was the commercial fox operation. Such an enterprise was envisioned in the development plan conceived by area planners in the early 1900's, and it was launched in 1925 at a location a mile east of Red Feather village.

The Abstract of Title to that part of the Ramona Heights Subdivision shows the Redfeather Mountain Lakes Association sold the 37.9 acres in 1925 to L. G. Gupton for use as "a first class Silver Fox Farm." The deed, incidentally, prohibited occupancy of any residence on the property "by persons other than of the Caucasian race (servant help excepted)." A deed of similar vintage to another part of Ramona Heights barred the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquor on the premises.

Gupton soon sold the fox farm site to The Redfeather Silver Fox Farms, Inc., of which R. N. White was president and William G. Edwards secretary, the Abstract continues. In 1928 the title passed to Redfeather Fur Farms, which had been incorporated by White, Edwards and J. Harper Hertel. That company sold most of the property in 1934 to White, who conveyed a one-third interest to Harold L. Blincow. In 1946, Blincow bought White's remaining two-thirds. Finally Harold and his wife Adeline became the sole owners.

At the beginning of the project in 1925, "Twenty pairs of foxes were purchased from Windswept Farms of Henderson, New York, and a manager was brought from there also," according to Red Feather Lakes – The First Hundred Years. The manager was Merle Sanborn, who remained in that capacity until 1937 when he started his own fox ranch in the Red Feather vicinity.

Before Sanborn left the Redfeather Silver Fox Farm, Harold Blincow came from Downey, Calif., to be manager. He had no experience in fox raising but he worked with Sanborn for about a year to learn the business.

“Harold was a wizard with foxes,” Ted Dunning remembers. “I helped him some. He’d catch a fox and tie its mouth so it couldn’t bite us with its needle-like teeth, and Mrs. Blincow would hold the animal while I tattooed a number in its right ear (for recordkeeping of mating production). Then we would clip tendons in the animal’s front feet so it couldn’t dig under the fence of the pens and escape.”

One time, while waiting for the next fox to be caught for tattooing, Ted “got a feel of how that fox felt.” He used the electric needle to tattoo a monogrammed TED on his left forearm, where it remains as a memoir of the silver fox farm days.

“Harold could skin 25 or 30 foxes a day,” Dunning continued, “and prime pelts brought as much as \$200 each.” Asked about the annual volume of business at the fox farm, Ted guessed, “\$50,000 would have been a very good year.”

Blincow increased the original 60 breeding pens to more than 100, and production reached 350 to 400 pelts a year at the peak.

He estimated the pens and runways occupied three or four acres. A shed that had been a barracks at the Red Feather Lakes Civilian Conservation Corps camp was moved to the ranch and converted to a fox kennel unit. “We used a Model A truck and a trailer to haul the building, in sections about three miles from the CCC site on Deadman Hill to the ranch,” Harold says. The long structure was to become Ray Stenzel’s first equipment shed.

A log house with a lookout cupola was built about the time the fox ranch was started in 1925, and two rooms were added in the early 1930’s.

The purpose of the cupola was to give the operators an unobtrusive vantage point for observation of fox mating. During his 17 years on the ranch, Blincow allowed visitors to watch the foxes from the tower and “it was quite an attraction.”

The little tower assumed added importance when Blincow undertook an experiment in fox breeding. “In the early days,” he relates, “it was presumed that one male would mate only one female. Later I found out that, with proper handling, I could breed several females to one male. We examined each female every third day, and when

we found one ready to mate, we took a male to her and then watched closely from the cupola to be sure that mating occurred.”

The farm started with silver foxes, which were first ranched on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

“In the late ‘30’s and early ‘40’s,” Blincow reports, “platinum, white-faced mutants showed up from the silver strain. These beautiful foxes were bred and raised on the Red Feather fox farm along with the silver. The fur primed and the animals were pelted in November and December each year. Most of the pelts were sold at auction in New York City, or sometimes in Denver.”

Silver and platinum foxes were descendants of red foxes, a breed still seen regularly in the Fox Acres area.

Harold points out that food for his foxes was prepared right on the ranch. The ration consisted of red meat (horse and rabbit), canned fish, fruit (figs, apples, etc.), vegetable (carrots, lettuce, etc.), grain cereals and ground bone.

“I fed the foxes at 5 o’clock on the dot each evening,” Harold recalls, “and they expected me to come in the gate at that time. Each day at 5 they would be sitting on top of their kennels waiting for me. Some foxes were so tame I could reach in the kennel and take them out. Others would just dare me to stick my hand in there – and I didn’t.

“We raised one little orphan by hand and called him Oscar. He became very tame. When he got the chance, he’d come in our house and go up the stairs to the lookout tower. We kept some foxes for several years and got to know them pretty well – I liked some more than others – but we never named any of them except Oscar.”

The foxes were bred in February or March and, with a 51-day gestation period, most of the pups were born in April, a few in May. “At whelping time, we had to keep everything very quiet because unusual noise would cause a female to kill off her young,” Harold explains. “No visitors were ever allowed inside the guard fence at that time.” One spring, road builders set off dynamite in the area, and Blincow hurried to the scene and obtained the crew’s cooperation in delaying further blasting, and he does not recall losing any fox pups as a result of that noise.

Pups began coming outdoors when they were about 30 days old, and they were given a pill to prevent worms. At two or three months, the ears were tattooed and the front feet tendons clipped, as Ted Dunning related.

In the early days of the business, water was pumped by hand from a spring for the foxes and for home use. A hydraulic ram was installed below the spring about 1939, according to Blincow, "and it furnished water – from water power alone. Quite an improvement!"

Harold tells of one winter when snow drifted so high some foxes walked over the top of the 8-foot pens. Blincow gave Evadene Burris Swanson, author of the Red Feather history, other recollections of winters: "We did not have much for roads – no snow removal equipment and sometimes we were snowed in for a while, but everyone kept a good supply of food and fuel on hand. The population of Red Feather was very few but we were very close knit. If anyone needed help, it was sure to come...Our years at Red Feather were the most enjoyable of our lives."

The fox fur business began weakening in the late 1940's. Two factors were primary: the United States lifted its import quotas on foxes from Russia and other countries, and short fur such as mink and beaver became more fashionable than fox fur.

Harold Blincow closed down the business in 1950, pelting the remaining foxes. So that the house would not stand vacant, Blincow asked Glenn Scott and his wife, residents of Red Feather, to occupy the cabin, and they did so for several years.

On Aug. 27, 1960, Harold and Adeline Blincow sold the nearly 38 acres of land, plus the log house and sheds, to Ray Stenzel, then a resident of Kansas City. How he became interested in the property is related in the next section.

Mr. and Mrs. Blincow moved to Oxford, Neb., where he was born and raised. They entered the restaurant business and branched into turkey raising and general farming until they retired in 1974. The couple still lives at Oxford. Their daughter, Nancy, was born at Fort Collins in 1943 while they were living at the fox ranch.

The log house with the cupola became, with modernization, the first Fox Acres residence of the Stenzels. Later the fox farmhouse was a guest home for family and friends of the Stenzels. It was called "The Lodge." The structure still stands, at this writing, near the main entrance to Fox Acres; Ray has not decided on its destiny.

PART III – THE STENZEL ERA

Summering at the former Red Feather fox ranch was homecoming for Mary and Ray Stenzel. They had honeymooned nearby.

It is Mary whose roots reach into the early days of pleasant Red Feather. She was one of three daughters of George Galloup, a druggist in Greeley and Windsor, two northeastern Colorado towns. The family had summer outings in Estes Park until, as Mrs. Swanson relates in her history of Red Feather lakes, Mr. Galloup found “Estes Park was growing too civilized, so he was delighted with the more primitive conditions at Red Feather. He chose a site high on the hill north of Hiawatha [Lake], and his little girls like to believe that the rock formation in that lake called ‘The Three Sisters’ referred to them.” The Galloup cabin was built in 1923.

Among visitors there was the famed defense attorney Clarence Darrow. *The First Hundred Years* says of this: “The girls enjoyed the occasional visits of celebrity Clarence Darrow, who dispensed quarters to small fry as Rockefeller had dimes!”

“Everyone helped with the household chores...The Galloup girls carried water in Karo syrup pails from the Worleys’ well each day.”

Mary’s sisters, Gladys (Mrs. Linn Herring) and Georgia (Mrs. Gordon Clyde) still summer in the area, and great-grandchildren of George Galloup still use his cabin on Lake Hiawatha.

Mary and Ray started going together when they were sophomores at Windsor High School. His parents, John and Amalia Stenzel, had lived in the little town since 1913. George and Galloup moved there in 1928. Windsor then had a population of about 1,500.

After graduation from Windsor High School in the 1930 class of 30 students, Mary went to Colorado State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Colorado) at Greeley, while Ray entered the University of Colorado at Boulder. He was a fullback and blocking back on the Varsity football teams of 1931, 1932 and 1933. He was graduated in 1934 from the School of Business with a major in accounting and a

minor in geology. The Business School honored him in 1952 as an "Outstanding Graduate."

After Mary and Ray were married in September 1934, spending their honeymoon at the Galloup cabin at Red Feather Lakes, they lived in Boulder and Denver for a time. Ray became manager of the liquor division of McKesson-Robbins, large wholesale drug company, at Denver headquarters in 1937 and was transferred to Kansas City, Mo., in 1942 in the same capacity.

Stenzel entered business for himself in 1943, forming R. O. Stenzel and Co., wholesale liquor distributors. Its success led to establishment of a branch at Joplin, Mo., under the name of Stenzel, Inc.

Looking for a new business investment opportunity, Ray, on his own initiative, set his eye – and his heart – on the McPike Drug Co., wholesalers in Kansas City since 1856. He felt the company's aging owner, Avis McPike, might consider selling his business. Ray's first approach to Mr. McPike met a chilly reception but he managed to keep the door open. While playing golf with a banker friend, Ray made the initial arrangements for financing, later obtaining assistance from the federal government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). Still it took continued persistence to convince Avis McPike, who finally sold his business to Stenzel in 1950.

"I got my check from RFC less than an hour before Mr. McPike's deadline," Ray remembers. "I was really sweating because I stood to lose not only the deal but my deposit under the purchase agreement. But all turned out well."

Well, indeed. McPike, Inc., the name Stenzel gave the company, is the largest volume independent wholesale drug facility in the nation. More than 23,000 items in its inventory include pharmaceuticals, hospital and sickroom supplies, over-the-counter remedies, cosmetics, fragrances and sundries. McPike Inc. also offers customers a computerized information system and marketing and promotion services for pharmacies. Merle C. Sperry heads the 200-member staff as president, while Ray is chairman of the board and his sons, John R. Stenzel and William G. Stenzel, are vice-presidents. Those four men comprise the board of directors.

A quarter-million square foot warehouse for McPike won an industrial architecture award for Ralph Myers, of the Kansas City firm of Kivett and Myers. Myers

was to win still another award for the Kansas City home of Mr. and Mrs. Stenzel, built in 1951-53. He also was the architect for the Stenzels' appealing home at Fox Acres, which, if it hasn't won an award by now, should have.

R. O. Stenzel and Co., the liquor business, was discontinued in 1955. For a dozen years, Ray operated Niles & Moser and subsidiaries, exclusive distributors in 11 states of the famous brand cigars of the American Tobacco Company. McPike Inc. remained the flagship of the Stenzel business fleet.

Much later, another Stenzel company was to become the principal holder of the Fox Acres property. It is the Campbell Development Co., wholly owned subsidiary of McPike Incorporated.

Ray explains how Campbell Development got into the picture: E. J. (Jerry) Campbell had been a friend of Ray since both were in the liquor business in Denver. In the early 1950's, Jerry built a home in the Cherry Hills area at the edge of Denver, near the well-known Cherry Hills Country Club. Later on, he decided he wanted to subdivide 60 acres of his land (all but his own home site) and develop it as a residential subdivision. He formed Campbell Development Co. for that purpose.

In the course of the financing, Stenzel bought a 20% interest in that company, and ultimately bought all the stock. Ray is chairman and president of Campbell Development. Jerry Campbell died in 1978.

Mary and Ray transferred ownership of their property in Fox Acres to Campbell Development in 1968.

Besides the Colorado and Missouri background of the Stenzel's, they also have a California connection. In 1967 they built a winter home on the Pauma Valley Country Club golf course, in the San Diego area near Escondido. Two years later, Mary and Ray (or actually the Campbell Development Co.) bought two Pauma Valley ranches and combined them into one 900-acre spread including 300 acres of citrus fruit and avocados. The hillside groves are commercial producers of oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons and avocados.

The Stenzels now spend most of the year at Fox Acres. The magnetism of the mountain place and the growing sense of permanency influenced them to become voting residents of the Red Feather lakes precinct.