

The Pete Garvey Incident

By Wylie Grant Sherwin

This, I would like to say, is basically a true story as to the name of Pete Garvey and the location of his claim, and the details of his death, and the ordeal of his wife after his death. As to her name, I do not know it, but it was not Nellie. As to details, I have had to use my own imagination for some of them, and I know I have done a poor job as far as English goes, but I have long considered this one of the real true life stories of which I personally know. I knew Pete personally and all of this took place close to my home. I had to write it. W.G.S.

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Pete Garvey was a sheep herder, but not the usual kind of herder at that. You might say Pete was a shepherd only because he herded sheep. I make this distinction because herders as I knew them at that time were old broken down ranch hands, unable to do the ranch work anymore, or sometimes they were the hermit type who just naturally preferred the company of sheep rather than people. Most herders soon became completely indifferent as far as personal habits were concerned.

But Pete was different. In the first place, he was young, he was able, and he was, even in camp, clean and very presentable. Pete had come from the city somewhere in the east. He came west with the definite idea of finding a piece of land and homesteading, but you had to have a little money saved up, and you had to find the right piece of land, and Pete was a little too late to get a good homestead. So it served his purpose to herd sheep for a few years in order to save some money and he hoped by keeping his eyes and ears open that he might find a likely piece of land.

Winters were spent on the salt sage flats of the Bighorn Basin, and summers in the high cool country of the Bighorn Mountains. After several years of transferring from the mountains to the bad lands of the Basin and back to the mountains again, Pete decided the mountains were the place for him and furthermore he had his eye on the exact spot.

Each spring, after shearing and when the lambs were about a month old, usually about May first, all of the bands of sheep in the northeast part of the Basin would start to move toward the Bighorn River, cross by ferry, and proceed via Little Mountain on up the ridge and out onto the Bighorn proper. This move took weeks and it was usually June before they reached their ultimate summer range.

Now as the stock left Little Mountain to climb out onto the Bighorn Mountains, they were pinched in by Devil's Canyon on the northeast and by Cottonwood Canyon on the southwest, making it necessary to follow a comparatively narrow ridge. It wasn't a real hog's back, but a round grass and timber ridge about a half mile wide. This was at the top of a rather steep climb of a thousand feet or so and here the country changed considerably. Below it was quite open and rocky. The grass was poor, and stock was dependent on the dwindling snow banks of spring for water. But at this point, known as The Neck, all of a sudden there was good grass, there were

several springs, and lots of nice evergreen timber. And so it was a haven for the weary herder and for the cattlemen with their herds as well. And it was an unwritten law that no one, be he a cattle man or sheep man, allow his stock to linger longer than necessary at The Neck while passing through. To do so would have cleaned up the feed completely for those who would follow.

This was the piece of land that Pete had picked to homestead. True, no one could possibly farm it. It was steep and rough, cut up by ravines and over half timber. It was completely inaccessible by wagon or any wheeled vehicle, and for months on end each winter the snow was two to four feet deep. All of this together probably accounted for the fact that no one else had ever laid claim. Probably another reason was that it had so long been considered common property for all, that no one dared claim it for his own.

But Pete did. This was the most beautiful spot in the world to him, for he had come from the city. His parents had been land-hungry peasants from the old country who had never owned a foot of soil in their lives, and Pete had inherited their hunger to someday own a piece of land of his own. He was not a sheep man, nor was he a cow man. I guess you would say he was a “dude” sheep herder. So he went quietly about looking up the survey stakes until he was sure of the location of the land he wanted, then he made application and filed on 160 acres. Happy was the day when he received word from the land office in Cheyenne that his claim had been allowed. The notice came about the first of the year and Pete kept quiet about it and kept on with his job until the first of April, then he drew his pay and went into town and bought a whole new outfit of clothes, and the next day he took the train for home.

It was about a month later when Pete returned, and now he had with him a bride. “Nellie,” I will call her, but I don’t know her real name. And those who saw her said she was a pathetic little thing, young, of course, and dark, with jet black hair, and eyes so dark you could scarce make out the pupil. A pretty little thing in the face, they said, but it was her leg that everyone noticed, for she was badly crippled. Whether from birth or polio she never said, but one leg was short and weak and when she was in a hurry she took an extra hop on the good one to save the other.

No one got really acquainted with Nellie that spring, for Pete bought three horses and took Nellie and went to his claim. There they set up a tent camp near one of their springs. It seems Nellie was a childhood sweetheart of Pete’s, and she had shared his dreams of a home in the west, and when he found it, he returned and brought her to share it with him. How she managed to ride that 80 miles with that crippled leg was a surprise to everyone. And this was the first that anyone knew of his homestead.

At first people thought they were crazy to go for a honeymoon in the mountains so early in the spring, then word got around that Pete was making regular trips to town, and packing such things as windows, short boards, and even a dismantled cook stove up the mountain. And then it dawned on some of the stockmen just what Pete was up to. He had staked a claim in The Neck, and if he fenced it, it could mean real trouble; trouble for the stockmen and probably trouble for Pete. So several of the stockmen got together and they sent a delegation to talk to Pete. But whatever Pete’s plans were they didn’t find out. He simply acted glad to see them, introduced

them to Nellie, and when they left, he asked them to stop by anytime. To this day, no one knows whether Pete planned to make trouble or not, but they do know that he didn't.

Under the homestead laws, the Homesteader agreed to put a certain amount of improvements on his claim within three years. He also agreed to make it his home. Thus a house of some sort was necessary and a fence usually came next. These two improvements were usually considered the minimum, but sufficient to allow a man to "prove up" on a claim. Until these provisions had been met and until three years had elapsed, the title or patent, as it was called, remained in the hands of the land office. Frequently, claims were filed and proved up on where the Homesteader had skimmed [on] these requirements, even to the point of spending one night a year in his shack and fencing his claim with one wire, which was soon removed once title was received. The next move was to sell the newly acquired land to his boss, for whom he took it in the first place.

But Pete, whatever his plans were for the future, planned to take no chances for the present. He didn't intend to leave room for someone to contest his claims. So when the law said live there, he planned to live there. All that spring and summer he busied himself toward that end, and when fall came, he and Nellie had a pretty comfortable cabin built for themselves. It was only one room, and the floor was hard packed earth, the roof was split poles and sod, the cracks were chinked neatly with split poles on the inside and daubed with cow dung mixed with grass on the outside. There were three small windows, and sufficient homemade furniture to be quite comfortable. Pete had made a large lean-to shed on the side where the door was, and each day he added to the wood supply until it was stuffed full.

In one corner of the room there was a hole some three feet square and about as deep, and in this they had stored their potatoes and a few other vegetables which they had raised in their first garden. Although they were at an altitude of about 8,000 feet, some hardy vegetables did real well.

When October came, and the cattle and sheep were going by every day on their way to the valleys below, Pete and Nellie were making themselves ready for the long winter they knew to be ahead, and Nellie had not once left the claim since she first set foot on it. She said she didn't care to make the long trip and she had no friends at the foot of the mountains anyway. Pete brought the mail whenever he went down and that was all there was for her. She had Tiny, Pete's little glass-eyed sheep dog for company, and there had been little time to get lonesome, for in spite of her handicap, she had been a great help in building and fixing up their new home.

When the word got around that Pete and Nellie were going to stay on their claim all winter, folks shook their heads and said, "Just like a crazy dude. Anyone should know better." And everyone said, "Poor Nellie! How can she stay in a place like that crippled as she is?" And occasionally one of the stock men coming by would try to reason with Pete that they were foolish to attempt such a thing, but Pete was stubborn and he was also suspicious that someone might manage in some way to get his claim if they should leave, so after one final trip with the pack horses to bring in the last load of supplies, Pete finally sent the horses out by a friend who came by and thus they cut themselves off from the valley below for the winter.

Pete killed a deer and hung it in the shed as part of their winter food supply, for there would be no chance later. All game would leave soon for the foothills. And then the snow came. It snowed all day and all night and before it cleared, there was over two feet on the ground. But Pete and Nellie loved it. They were snug and warm in their log cabin and the snow only helped to blanket them. It was November now, and Pete made himself a sled so that he could cut and haul posts to be used next spring. He took advantage of the snow to slide the posts out along the line where the fence would be. He had had the good sense to provide himself with a pair of snow shoes and now they were coming in handy. In fact, he would have been unable to get around without them. They had only the one pair, for Nellie being crippled as she was wouldn't be able to use them. And then fate stepped in to deal her first blow. Nellie discovered that she was pregnant.

At first this was quite a shock and they were both scared. Pete was all for going out then to get the horses and take her out. It still would have been possible. But both Nellie and Pete had come from sturdy peasant stock, where having babies was nothing to get excited about. The baby wouldn't be due until June and by that time, or long before, Nellie could be in town to await her time.

Christmas came and went, and then the New Year. Pete busied himself with his post and log cutting whenever the weather would permit, and on nice days, Nellie would get out around the cabin and follow the packed trails, and in this way she was able to get some exercise. There was a pair of Clark's Crows (camp robbers) which would follow from tree to tree wherever she went, and if she would put a scrap of food on her head, they would dart by and grab it and then there would be a noisy scuffle to see who got to eat it.

Sometimes on clear quiet days, they could even hear the whistle of a train far, far away, down below in the valley. It seemed to bring the outside world a little closer. So far, all was well, everything seemed to be working out fine. Nellie had had no trouble and even felt better than ever before. Of course, she was beginning to feel the burden of carrying her child, but her health was good and her spirits high. She had Pete, and they had their land, and someday, somehow, it would be worth what they were now doing in order to secure title to it.

There was one small worry, though. That was the food. It wasn't quite working out as they had planned. They still had plenty of flour and potatoes and beans. The vegetables they had stored in the hole in the floor had kept pretty good, although they were getting low, but the big thing was the meat. Pete had figured that he would be able to kill a few rabbits, a grouse now and then, and maybe even a deer. However, this hadn't been so easy, and once the deer he had killed in the fall was used up, they found they had to rely more and more on their supply of bacon and salt pork.

By late February this situation had become rather acute. Pete decided he must make a desperate effort to get some venison. He had been watching the country on the far side of Devil's Canyon where it was a southwest slope, and the snow was beginning to thin a little, and with his glasses he had been able to pick out several bunches of deer. It wasn't really so far, perhaps a mile and a half as the crow flies, but he would have to go up country a short ways to where the old Sioux Trail crossed Devil's Canyon, then down the switch-back trail in order to cross over. It would be a hard day, but he knew he could do it.

By watching one bunch of deer for several days, he observed that they traveled very little. They always spent the middle of the day lying in the sun in a little coulee and with his glasses he picked out the exact approach he would make once he was on that side. It was necessary to do this in order to save time and energy so as to make the trip in one day. Pete told Nellie of his plan. He gave her all of the details so that she would not worry. He would start early the next morning and not to worry if it was late before he returned. It might even be necessary for him to lay out all night by a campfire if he found he couldn't make it.

The next morning Nellie watched Pete as he fastened his webs and slung his gun on his shoulder, then taking his stick, he struck off toward the Canyon. Tiny whined, for she wanted to go too, but Pete sent her in the cabin, telling her to look after Nellie while he was gone. And Nellie closed the door, never to see Pete alive again.

When it started to grow dark, Nellie lighted the lamp and stuffed the stove with wood. She tested the bean soup which was boiling there and added a pinch of salt. The table was set as she knew Pete would be tired and hungry when he returned. Tiny kept cocking an ear and watching the door, but there was never a sound except the wind in the pines, for it had turned colder, and just before dark it had started to snow. Nellie remembered what Pete had said, and she tried not to worry, for she had confidence in his ability to take care of himself. But the weather had changed for the worse rather suddenly and she hated to think of him out there in the storm. Maybe, as he said, he would even have to stay out all night.

So they waited, Nellie and Tiny. Along about ten o'clock Nellie gave up for the night and after eating her bowl of bean soup, she filled the stove again and went to bed. But it was well on toward morning before she finally went to sleep.

When Nellie woke the next morning, the cabin was cold and she could hear the wind howling outside. It no longer whispered in the tree tops, it screamed, and when Nellie looked out the window, she couldn't even see the nearest trees, the air was that full of snow. Now, suddenly, Nellie was filled with terror, for she knew wherever Pete was he was in danger and he could never make it home in a storm like this. She was so scared that it was all she could do to climb back in bed and pull the covers around her. She didn't lie down but sat there, with her back against the wall, shivering with cold and with fright. But finally, she told herself she must be calm, she must get a fire started, and warm the cabin, for Pete might stumble in out of that storm any minute. She must be ready with hot water for coffee, and somehow she did these things. Pete had left the big wood box behind the stove full of wood and kindling. The water buckets were still full, and once the fire was going good, it didn't take long to warm the place up. Nellie wasn't hungry but there was a pot of prunes on the stove so she dished some up and forced herself to eat them.

Nellie spent that day first stoking the stove then standing by the window peering into the storm, then back to the stove to warm up a bit and add more wood and back to the window. She looked so hard that her eyes began to play tricks on her and when the wind would slack for a moment she was sure she saw Pete, but it was only a bush. Once she was so sure that she shouted his name and rushed to the door. But when she flung it open it was not Pete but the blizzard that rushed in.

When dark finally came again, Nellie slowly turned from the window and went and sat down by the fire. She dropped her head in her hands and gave way completely, for she now realized what she wouldn't admit before, that Pete wasn't going to come home. Two days and two nights in that storm – it was too much to expect.

Then, for the first time, she thought of her own plight. What would she do? It was only the first of March; it would be two months before anyone would come there. She knew she could never walk out of there through all of this snow and she wasn't even sure she could find the way, for she had only been over the trail once, and that was in fair weather and bare ground.

Nellie sat by the stove the whole night through, completely overcome with grief, fear and despair. She forced herself to rouse when she got cold to fill the stove once in a while. She hadn't even bothered to light a lamp and her only light was the glow of the coals from the open draft on the stove.

Finally daylight came and Nellie got up to let Tiny out. When she opened the door, she was surprised to find that it was a beautiful morning. The wind had quieted and the sky was clear. The sun would soon be up and except for the large snow drift in front of the door, it was hard to realize how bad the storm had been.

With the dawning of a bright new day, Nellie's hopes began to rise. She told herself Pete would be home today. Of course, he couldn't make it during the storm, but now he could, and he could be coming any time. But while she told herself these things, deep down she knew he wouldn't. Pete would never leave her alone that long in such a storm, she knew he wouldn't.

Nellie reached in the box for another stick of wood and suddenly it dawned on her that the box was empty. She held in her hand the very last stick. In the box there only remained an accumulation of chips and bark and dirt. This was the first time since they had moved into the cabin that the box had ever been empty, for it held sufficient wood for several days and it had been Pete's habit, each day, to split and carry in a fresh supply so that the box was always piled high. Although the shed was full of wood, it wasn't split fine enough to go in the stove. It was all in huge blocks sawed from large fir logs. But she knew she must do something right away, she dared not wait. So she bundled herself up, for although it was clear, it was very cold, and she opened the door once more.

Pete always kept the shovel and the ax just outside the door. At first glance she could not even see the wood under the shed; it all looked like one big bank of snow. By taking the shovel and prodding around she was able to uncover the first tier of chunks. She managed to get one of these into the kitchen, then after removing her wraps, she took the ax and tried to do as she had seen Pete do so often. It looked so easy when he swung the ax and split the wood, but try as she did she was unable to make any impression on that chunk of log. And so after ten or fifteen minutes she just had to give it up. There wasn't any use.

Now this was a real emergency. One that must be dealt with now—not one that she must face some day, but now. Nellie went back outside. She looked the wood rick over more closely and

decided there were a few pieces which were small enough to go in the stove without splitting and so she set to work sorting these out and putting them in the wood box. She knew these hard round sticks would not burn very well, and would be no good at all to start a fire, but at the moment she could think of nothing else.

During the next few days Nellie suffered more than any woman ever should. She cried until her eyes were swollen almost shut, and she prayed, oh how she prayed. She had never been too concerned about religion, although as a girl she had attended Sunday School rather often, but now she felt the urgent need for prayer. She hadn't the strength to meet all this trouble alone.

Her grief for Pete was crushing, but added to that was her fear for herself and for their child. And she was completely bewildered. But now that her tears had finally run dry, she was becoming obsessed with the idea that somehow she must get out and get help, not for herself, but someone had to find Pete and she must save his child.

By this time she had burned every stick of wood she could get in the stove. She had even burned the wood box and there only remained the table and benches and the boards over the vegetable hole. Two more days at most.

During these days Nellie had eaten very little but now she knew she must eat if she was to have the strength to go for help. There was plenty of bread, dried fruit and beans, and although she had no appetite for any of them, she did eat, and she began to lay her plans. She knew from what Pete had told her that the Flying M Ranch lay at the foot of the trail. It was only about five miles distant, but the difference in elevation was some four thousand feet, and the fact that the snow drifts made horse travel out of the question accounted for their isolation. Nellie also knew that the trail dropped steeply all the way and that long before she reached the bottom the snow would thin out and eventually the ground would be bare, but what she didn't know was how long it would take her to get down the mountain, or even if she could make it at all. But she must try. To stay was impossible.

For two days Nellie worked on the clothes she was to wear. She cut off and otherwise altered a pair of Pete's wool pants. She made warm mittens from some of Pete's heavy wool socks. They were left long so that she could pull them over her coat sleeves to keep the snow out. Her trousers were to be tied at the ankles for the same reason. While the weather had remained clear, it was still very cold each night and only slightly warmer in the days.

It was on the morning of the eighth day of Pete's absence that Nellie finally left the cabin to try to make her way down the mountain. She had forced herself to eat a good breakfast of cornmeal mush with bacon fat, a dish of dried fruit, and bread. She saw to it that Tiny also had all she would eat. Then Nellie filled her pockets with dried fruit and what bread there was left. She put some matches in a bottle and put these inside her shirt pocket and buttoned the flap securely.

On the evening before, Nellie wrote a letter telling the details of her plight, her intentions, and all she knew about where and when Pete had gone. She had made a copy of this letter and one she left in the cabin, the other she now placed in another small bottle and fastened with a string to Tiny's collar. It was her hope that if she failed to reach help, at least Tiny would. Now, after all

these preparations, Nellie spoke to Tiny and lifted the latch on the door and they stepped out into the early dawn.

What a surprise they received, for instead of the bitter cold of the last week, there was a soft gentle breeze blowing. It had no bite or sting at all. It was as though fate, having tested her to the very limit and beyond was now ready to lend a hand and Nellie thought this must be the answer to her prayers. And so she started out. She detoured [around] the largest drifts to some shallower place wherever she could. She didn't have as much trouble locating the trail as she had feared, for actually it was a series of trails and some of them were always visible between the drifts. Then she discovered that most of the larger drifts would hold her weight except at the very edge, so instead of avoiding them, she made use of them. It was sometimes very hard for her to get to the crusted part, but once there, she could make pretty good time for a short ways, then the crust would give way and she would find herself mired in snow sometimes to her knees or as much as to her waist. It was often necessary to crawl or roll until she reached solid footing again for she could not lift her crippled leg very far, and her pregnant condition made matters even worse. But she was making some headway, slow though it was. Tiny thought all of this was great fun, and when Nellie would roll down a drift, she would romp and bark alongside.

It was necessary for Nellie to rest often and each time she would look longingly back at the cabin and after two hours she could still see a friendly smoke drifting up through the trees and how she longed to be back there preparing a meal for Pete.

By now the sun was high in the sky, but off to the north and west clouds were beginning to appear. They were not the gray snow clouds of winter, but more like the billowing clouds of spring and summer, and now Nellie found that for the present at least, she was dressed far too warm and she was perspiring a good deal. Her garb did not permit much adjustment to compensate for the changes in the weather.

As Nellie sat resting and looking on down toward the foot of the mountain, she was almost overcome with despair. It looked so very, very far and she had made such little headway, and already she was so tired she could hardly move. Her leg was like lead and almost more of a burden than help, but she forced herself to get up and push on.

By noon she had gone perhaps two miles, but she had come a long way down and the snow drifts were much farther apart now and not nearly so deep, and she told herself it was a good thing for she could not have battled like that much longer.

Close at the side of the trail there was a large fir tree. She was nearing the last of the timber and from here on it would be rocks and sage brush with an occasional Juniper bush, and she crawled over to the tree and sat with her back against its trunk. Her body was wet with perspiration and her clothes were soaked from the outside from having wallowed in the snow drifts so long. And she was tired, oh so tired! Tiny came and sat by her side and Nellie laid her arm around her and from sheer exhaustion, and in no time at all, they were both sound asleep.

While they slept, the clouds thickened, the sun disappeared and when Nellie woke with a start. It was beginning to sprinkle. She didn't know how long she had slept, but she was cold and stiff and could hardly get to her feet and she felt as though the baby weighed a hundred pounds.

Ahead, the country was less steep for the next mile while she crossed over to the brink of Little Mountain, and because there was less snow and no timber, the trails were swept practically clear. Now, although walking was hard for her at best, she did find that she could make much better time and she hurried to cross this open country before dark. She knew now that she would have to find some sort of shelter for the night very soon. It was raining now, not hard, but steady, as though it had come to stay at least all night. It was cold and at times the wind freshened and drove the rain in her face. Tiny kept close to her side; she no longer thought it fun either.

When Nellie reached the brink of Little Mountain, she could see the trails tacking back and forth for miles until they finally reached the flats below and way out there she could see the Flying M Ranch. How she wished she were there! However she knew that her problem now was to find the driest place possible out of the wind where she could wait for morning for she could go no farther and could not trust herself to travel after dark anyway.

Along the brink of Little Mountain there is a limestone ledge and this is full of caves and overhangs and pockets of various sizes, but Nellie didn't know this, and so she considered herself very lucky when, without much trouble, she found a small room-sized pocket with a good overhang and facing away from the wind. She looked no farther but huddled there in the dry and shelter. She didn't sit long before she began to feel cold. She had never started a fire in the open in her life and she wasn't sure she could, although she had become quite expert at starting one in their stove in the cabin. That was much different, though, than starting a fire in the outdoors on a rainy night.

Wood wasn't a problem, for there were lots of juniper bushes all around and where there is juniper there is always lots of dead wood. While it was still light she forced herself to gather a pile and put it inside her shelter. Then she got out her matches. She broke off a handful of twigs and tried to light them, but they were damp and although she held the match among them until it burned her fingers, they would not start. She tried again and again but the results were always the same, some smoke but no fire. She used up most of her matches and she was getting colder and colder. Finally she gave up in despair and burst into tears. It had been days now since she had allowed herself to cry, but life was too cruel; she felt she just could not go on. How could she live this night through? She was near exhaustion, wet and chilled to the bone, she could not get a fire started and she was too discouraged even to try to eat the dried fruit and bread which she had in her pockets.

In the mountains there are lots of pack rats. They like to build their nests in crevices in the rocks quite a ways up on the side of a ledge where they are safe from bobcats or coyotes, and another favorite place is in a cave or under an overhang. They sometimes build their nests in the very roof of such a place where it doesn't seem possible. If they have room they will pile up a bunch of sticks and grass as large as a washtub. This pile is usually well mixed with pads from cactus or prickly pear. I think this is just another precaution against predators.

When Nellie blacked out, she had fallen over. She wasn't out very long, but when she came to she was lying on the ground and all she could see was the roof of the overhang. She couldn't recall where she was for a bit, and then remembered she was trying to start a fire. All of a sudden she sat up with a start, got to her feet and grabbed a stick, for there was her kindling, right up in the roof over her head – a packrat nest! Dry grass and bark and twigs. She pulled down a big bunch with her stick and with one match, she had her fire started.

Nellie used her wood sparingly and as the warmth from the fire began to creep into her body, her courage and spirit also began to return. She ate some of her food and she dozed until the fire burned low, then after putting on more wood she dozed again and her clothes began to dry some too.

By morning Nellie was ready to move on. It had been a long night and she had not rested well, but she did have some of her strength back. It was still raining lightly outside and she hated to leave her fire, but she knew from yesterday's experiences that she would need all of this day if she were going to reach help. She also knew it would be today or never. She would not have the strength to survive another night in the open.

When Nellie left her shelter that morning, she encountered a new hazard. Now instead of snow it was mud. Not deep mud, for the trail was too rocky for that, but nevertheless sticky, slick mud. She slipped and slid down the steep trail, favoring her crippled leg and relying on her staff to help her keep her feet. She hadn't gone far until she slipped and fell. She got to her feet covered with mud, and that was but the first of many falls that day, for the rain continued to come down relentlessly. It was nothing short of a miracle that she reached the foot of the mountain at all, let alone without breaking any bones, but she did, and it was after she reached the foot of the hill that she finally fell for the last time and had neither the strength nor courage to rise again.

Dick Barnett, who worked for the Flying M happened to be riding out that way that day, and he heard a dog bark. It was half bark and half howl, and he thought someone's dog was probably caught in a coyote trap, so he rode over toward the sound. It was Tiny, and that's how they came to find Nellie. Dick said she was so covered with mud he almost missed seeing her at all, and wouldn't have if the dog hadn't tried to lick her face.

Dick jumped off his horse and tried to rouse her, but he thought she was dead, so he raced as fast as his horse could go to the ranch a mile or so away. There they got a spring wagon and went out and brought her in. It was a full day before they brought her around, but they found the message on Tiny's collar and four men went to look for Pete. With the help of Nellie's message, it wasn't too hard to find him, and from the signs they figured out just about what had happened.

Pete had reached the bottom of Devil's Canyon in good shape. There he took off his webs and left them under a tree because there was very little snow on the far side of the canyon. He had stalked the deer as he had planned, but the one he shot had not fallen on the spot. Instead it had climbed much higher before finally falling. That was one of the delaying factors. Pete had dressed it and dragged and carried it in one piece to the bottom of the canyon, however at that point he was some half mile or more down the canyon from where he had crossed on his way

over, and that far from his webs. In the bottom he found the snow a couple of feet deep and he needed the webs badly. He cut the deer in half and took only the hind quarters.

It was evident that he had had quite a time struggling through the snow with that half deer. And then the storm must have struck and he missed his snow shoes. He struggled on up the bottom part where he should have started to climb out of the canyon. Finally he cut the quarters in two and hung one in a tree, taking the one and going on. Then he tried to climb out of the canyon in an impossible place. They found him there face down with a quarter of deer across his neck, and they called it exhaustion, or maybe heart failure. And that is what they had to report to Nellie. A few days later she lost her baby and as soon as she was able, she said goodbye to everyone and went back to the city.

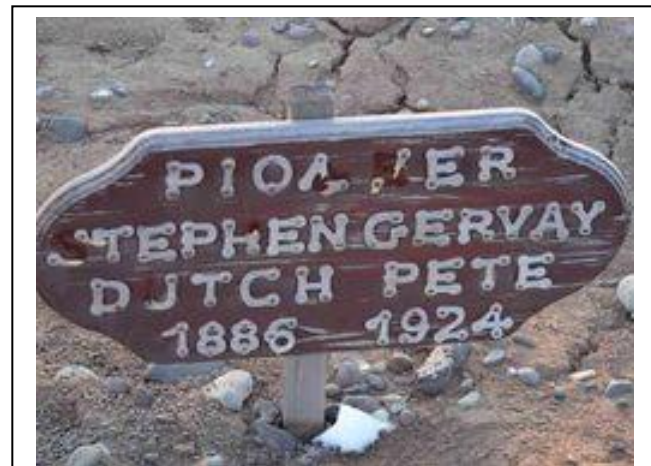


Photo: - Pete Garvey's headstone; here spelled "Gervay" in the Kane, Wyoming cemetery.

The End