



by Sharon Wood

This month's cover depicts a scene from the Heroes & Horses ranch outside of Bozeman, Montana with four American veterans and their cowboy (in the black hat) training them in horsemanship. This is just one of 14 nonprofits who benefited from the carefully targeted grants provided by the estate of WWII veteran and longtime Evergreen barber Bill Ackerman, who passed away in 2020.



Bill Ackerman

Bill was born during the Great Depression, and his birth mother literally left him on the doorstep of his future caretaker when he was around a year old. Bill grew up in a home with his basic needs taken care of, but he never felt a full sense of belonging and learned to depend only on himself as he grew into a young man. Without knowing his exact date of birth, Bill claimed he was 17 and joined the Navy during World War II, serving in the Pacific on Guam as a military guard. According to Bill, he never fired his weapon during his deployment and realized how lucky he was to come home without a scratch. He spoke little about his military service but felt a special sense of loyalty and gratitude toward his fellow sailors who fought in the Pacific theater in some of the bloodiest battles in the history of warfare, in places such as Tarawa, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

**“...we selected the projects we felt he would be most proud and happy to support.”**

#### Building a Life in Evergreen

Bill and his wife, Barbara, moved from Denver to the small mountain town of Evergreen

in the early 50s and had four children. Known as a private man of few words, it was ironic that Bill became the barber in town who cut the hair of hundreds of men from Evergreen and surrounding areas, including prominent businessmen and real estate developers. Bill learned about his new growing community one haircut at a time, and eventually discovered investment opportunities. He bought land, a gas station, a carwash, a liquor store and a bar.

Bill became a shrewd businessman and his investments and patience paid off over the decades, steadily growing his estate. Bill enjoyed sailing, flying, wintering in Costa Rica, and tinkering with several interesting cars and trucks, but he generally continued his humble lifestyle.

As Bill aged into his late 80s, he started to talk about directing his life savings toward worthy projects. He wanted to focus his charitable efforts on providing a hand-up, not a handout. He wanted to come alongside “orphans” like himself and he wanted to honor the veterans he served with.

#### Hiring Professionals to Help

While Bill did have an emerging vision for his legacy when he was alive, he died before it really took shape. Bill made a very wise decision—he found a wonderful trustee who was committed to turning his vision into a long-lasting legacy aligned with his values. However, she found the task of liquidating a large estate of complex assets and effectively purposing it for children and veterans to be a complicated and technical one. After a year of her efforts, only a fraction of the estate had been gifted, leaving real estate, partnership interests, an extensive coin collection, and a basket of commodities in the estate.

The trustee hired Generational Family Wealth (GFW) in July of 2021 to help her keep her promises to Bill. GFW assembled a network of professionals including attorneys, appraisers, coin wholesalers, and a board of four community leaders with deep expertise in nonprofits focusing on those serving children and veterans. Over a period of nine months, this team liquidated the estate and completed the meticulous process to identify 14 truly worthy grant recipients. Here is a quick look at four of them:

#### Heroes & Horses

“Veterans don’t need more help; they need better help, which is why we created our 41-day, intensive program for returning veterans. The Ackerman grant helped activate our donor base, which matched it 100 percent and funded the construction of the lodge, which will be the central gathering place for the cohorts of veterans who are connecting with their post-military purpose.”

—Micah Fink, retired U.S. Navy SEAL and founder of Heroes & Horses

# The Barber of Evergreen's Lasting Legacy

#### Hope House of Colorado

“The Ackerman grant, with 100 percent matching from our other donors, paved the way to provide full-time childcare for the teen moms that we serve. This new Early Learning Center will allow our moms to work or attend school full time—a critical step in creating self-sufficiency. This is in alignment with Bill’s desire to help those who are asking for help and willing to do their part.”

—Lisa Steven, Founder of Hope House of Colorado



Hope House of Colorado

#### CrossPurpose

“CrossPurpose is an outcomes-oriented nonprofit that helps individuals gain the skills they need to succeed in an impactful career. Just like Bill, CrossPurpose is passionate about seeing the people they serve lead their own change out of poverty, saying, ‘We don’t help people who need help, we help people who want help.’”

—Jason Janz, Founder of CrossPurpose



CrossPurpose

#### Camp Comfort

“Camp Comfort is in its 28<sup>th</sup> year of supporting grieving children, and with the help of the grant from Bill Ackerman, our goal of providing camp to all families at no cost to them has been realized, and in 2022, we reached our capacity!”

—Sallie Wandling, founder of Camp Comfort



Camp Comfort

#### Ten Additional Beneficiaries

The additional nonprofits selected to benefit from Bill Ackerman’s estate include Fathers in the Field, Project Sanctuary, Mountain Resource Center, Denver Kids, Activate, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Clear

Creek Rock House, Sox Place, Bootstraps, and the Denver Scholarship Foundation. We imagined Bill sitting at the table with us as we discussed and considered each grant request, and we selected the projects we felt he would be most proud and happy to support.

#### Lessons Learned

**Don’t wait! Give while you’re still here on earth.** Bill missed out on the joy of seeing first-hand how his vision would positively affect the causes he cared about. Bill would have loved meeting Navy SEAL hero Micah Fink and walking the ground where the lodge will be built. Bill would have loved to walk the grounds where the new Early Learning Center for the Hope House of Colorado will be built in Arvada. Bill would also have received very meaningful tax benefits if he had gifted even a small portion of his assets while he was still alive, and it would have saved his trustee over a year of effort.

**Understand, articulate and share your values** with your family to ensure if something unexpected happens to you, they will have clarity on how you would want your wealth to be purposed.

At Generational Family Wealth, we help you build an intentional legacy by guiding you to discover your values and vision and align those to everything from charitable giving to estate planning to maintaining family unity for generations. We offer a complimentary consultation to understand your desired outcomes when it comes to your legacy and the transfer of all forms of wealth—financial and non-financial. **Don’t leave your legacy to chance.** Visit [GenerationalFamilyWealth.com](http://GenerationalFamilyWealth.com) or call us at 303.332.7242.



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*Sharon is the founder and legacy coach at Generational Family Wealth, LLC. She creates customized solutions for families to successfully transition wealth, stories, values, vision, and leadership from one generation to the next.*