



When you are here, you are part of our story.

On a warm summer day in 1962, Ray and Ruth Lewis, Gary and Rose Neeleman, the Lewis children and the Neeleman grandchildren gazed for the first time in to Zion National Park. Their lives were about to change dramatically.

Ray Lewis was born in a small town in northeastern Utah. Always an entrepreneur, he moved his large family of nine children to southern California to pursue new business opportunities. He and his wife Ruth prospered in California with their family catering business, but Ray never stopped dreaming of the day when he would return home to Utah. He dreamed of owning a ranch similar to the one in the Uintah Mountains where he was born.

In 1957, Ray's oldest daughter, Rose, married Gary Neeleman. The couple soon moved to Brazil so Gary could work as a foreign correspondent with the world news agency United Press International. They resided in Sao Paulo for seven years. In August of 1962, the Neelemans brought their three children back to the U.S. to spend two weeks with their Lewis grandparents in Los Angeles. Ray once again expressed his passionate desire to return to Utah. That evening, as Gary thumbed through the LA Times, he noticed a classified ad offering 4,000 acres of deeded land and 4,500 acres of BLM Land in Utah. The ad described the ranch as "...high desert property, covered with Ponderosa Pine, Utah Juniper, Pinion Pine and Manzenita."

Although not exactly what he had been dreaming of, Ray's curiosity got the best of him and within hours the entire family was on their way to Zion National Park to see the property that would soon become "Zion Ponderosa Ranch." The dusty, 11-mile road from Highway 9 to the ranch property would have discouraged a less visionary man, but not Ray Lewis. He was so impressed with what he saw that he put down \$1,000 in earnest money that very afternoon.

The Zion Ponderosa Ranch purchased by Ray Lewis that day was a patchwork of pioneer homesteads, where hearty settlers had scratched out a living for over half a century. As Ray Lewis stood on Pine Knoll, the highest point on the ranch, and looked southwest into Zion National Park, his imagination soared. He envisioned a natural sanctuary, only a few hours drive from metropolitan areas like Salt Lake City, as Vegas and even Los Angeles. Ray imagined a place where people could enjoy a mountain cabin, hike, explore, watch wildlife and inhale the scent of juniper and ponderosa pine, literally on the edge of one of the most spectacular natural wonders of the world, Zion National Park.

Ray passed away on December 31, 1995 but his dream lives on in the legacy he left to his children and grandchildren. Today, Zion Ponderosa Ranch Resort is an integral part of the history of this amazing land. The Neeleman and Lewis Families feel continuously blessed to be stewards of this great legacy. The experiences had here are impactful and long lasting. We strive to connect with each guest in an Entertaining, Educational and Emotional way as we share our story. We invite all guests and staff alike to come experience our story and create your own.

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The Ponderosa Ranch was more than just a big piece of land to Ray and Ruth Lewis. Ray firmly believed that God meant for him to care for it and preserve it for generations to come. His dream began to materialize once he convinced Kane County to allow him to create one of the last dry subdivisions in Utah. As he gently cut the roads through the property into sub-divided lots, he made every effort to preserve the huge, 500-year-old trees and went out of his way to maintain the unusual rock formations.

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**ZION
PONDEROSA**
RANCH RESORT

