

# for the love of music & this place

## A connection turned into a dream for Peter Gottfried.

By **CLIFFORD FEWEL**  
FEATURE WRITER

If you happened by the minor intersection of Red Barn Lane and Bald Mountain Road west of town this past summer and heard music, chances are it was from Peter Gottfried's dream.

Peter is a 68-year-old non-musician, an environmental scientist from Florida, who had a plan with his late wife, Susan— a classically trained pianist— to plant second-home stakes in the Upper Wind River Valley. They had met in 1971 at CM Ranch— he a ranch guest, she a ranch worker.

"My mom took me out to CM Ranch when I was 18," he says, "to see the place where my uncle (Harry DuBois Goetchius) had been coming to fly fish since 1937. In fact, my uncle is the fly fisherman on Jakey's Fork in a watercolor by the famous artist Ogden Pleissner.

"Anyway," Peter continues, "the help's not supposed to mingle with the dudes and the dudes aren't supposed to mingle with the help, but these things happen. Three years later, Susan and I were married."

The marriage lasted 40 years and the couple raised their two boys, Chris, now 39, and Alex, 32, in Winter Park, Florida, and kept coming back to Wyoming. "My boys worked at CM Ranch when they were teenagers," he says. "We bought this place in 2006 with the thought of building a cabin here as a second home. But then Susan died at 62 of heart failure."

Depressed, and his dream deflated, Peter decided he would sell the five-acre parcel along the river that had once been a part of Walt Disney's cow-calf operation. Fate stepped in shortly thereafter back in Winter Park, where Peter says he was always "heavy into local politics."

"I ran into Kim Allen three months after Susan died," he says. "We are both political animals, and she had some questions about a town issue I was dealing with. So we went to dinner to discuss it and we just sort of clicked."

Peter says he had to give his sons plenty of time to adjust to the reality that their dad had found a companion so soon after their mother's passing.

"Everybody grieves differently," he says, "and to lose a mother is to lose an irreplaceable person— the

most important person— in your life. But Kim was very good for me. We kind of worked through things together."

There was still the matter of the land along the river.

"Kim encouraged me to continue that thought process of building the cabin as a family legacy that started with my wife," he says. "She even helped me position lawn chairs on the vacant land where the cabin might go to get a perspective on things."

Once their cabin was built, Peter's attention turned to Disney's old calving barn. "My first thought was to make a habitable space out of a big, old ugly garage," he says. "I'm not a musician myself, but I love music and musicians— not the crazy ones— and I know there are a lot of musicians around here. The idea was to get all those musicians who are hiding under rocks and give them a safe place to play that is technically sound and with great acoustics."

What is now dubbed "The Barn at Wind River" is just such a space— and more.

Half of the structure remains as it was: a dark, cavernous place with rough timber beams and walls where vehicles share space with all manner of old ranch stuff. But to pass through an ordinary door to the other side is to see the work of a man with a vision and the resources to do it right.

The equipped modern kitchen gives way to a great room filled with comfy couches (most from The Opportunity Shop, beautifully restored), a dining table for 10, and a mixing board— each oriented toward the large trapezoidal stage bearing a Yamaha grand piano and all the microphones and instrument pickups a band could want. Upstairs is a cozy loft with twin beds and views of the studio below and mountains to the west. He lets it out as an vacation rental when it's not booked otherwise, but the



**Peter Gottfried struck a pose next to the Yamaha grand, on which he is teaching himself to play, onstage in The Barn at Wind River.**

PHOTO BY MOLLY MOORE

goal remains musical.

"We had neighborhood jams over the summer," Peter says with a smile. Owing to his prowess as an internet marketer and networker, he adds, "We were able to attract musicians traveling through to other places. The acoustics and the lighting are all professionally done by guys out of Jackson. It's not an event center, but a great place where musicians can feel comfortable doing their thing when they're not on tour, or needing a break from Nashville or L.A."

Peter says The Barn is designed to fit in with a changing Dubois.

"I think Dubois is changing," he says. "You're seeing nicer shops and more young people coming in. It's going to take a hardy bunch with our winters, but there are a lot of people who want to get out of big cities and come to a place like this. Let's face it: We're all here because we didn't want to be somewhere else."

The bulk of Peter's time is spent running his small environmental services firm that provides assessments and permitting

assistance for real estate developers and, increasingly, for the Bureau of Land Management. "We do a lot of work for the BLM in Montana, Wyoming and Nevada," he says, "doing vegetative stream analysis as they seek to grant grazing leases to cattle ranchers.

"We also signed a big contract with a U.S. Geological Survey service center in the northeast. They need scientists to study bird activity. We help them find contract staff who will work out of government offices. It's a quick way for them to find good people."

As Peter spoke, packed and waiting in the other half of The Barn was his fully restored 1959 Keystone travel trailer attached to his 2019 Ford Ranger pickup. The next day he would be off to Florida to check on a property and to Kentucky and West Virginia to scout some rebuilt cabins that he's thinking about bringing back to Wyoming.

When asked what's right and wrong with the world today, Peter does not hesitate.

"What's right with the world is

we're alive and the beauty of the place we're in," he says. "We're making advances to help humanity into the future with our technical superiority. I'm a big believer that technology will save our ass. It always has. I'm not fearful of Armageddon.

"What's wrong with the world," he continues, "is that people— human beings— are very tribal. We have evolved as tribal beings, originally, to protect ourselves from evil people who come over the hill to grab our food. That tribalism is showing itself to be troubling, with divisions developing in this country and in the world. Unless we get ahold of that, this will not end well. Dealing with extremism in any form is tough."

Asked to share something about himself that few people know, Peter says, "I'm Hispanic. I had a Mexican grandmother. My dad was born in Mexico City. My grandfather was born in Peru. My mom came from an old New England family that's been voting Republican since Abraham Lincoln. Real Republicans."



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