

# LIFE

A man in a cowboy hat and vest is riding a mule on a hillside. The mule is carrying a large pack on its back. The background is a vast, open landscape under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The man is looking towards the left of the frame.

At 85 years old, Warner Glenn remains steadfast in his duties as a cattle rancher, and he can still track a mountain lion along the most rugged canyon rims or down the rockiest hillsides in southern Arizona.

By **KATE BRADLEY BYARS**

A familiar sight on the Malpai or J Bar A ranches is Warner Glenn, atop his mule, Brayer, followed by his loyal hounds.

# *on the* RIM



KELLY GLENN-KIMBRO

**F**EW LABELS adequately define Warner Glenn. The 85-year-old falls under several: rancher, conservationist, hunter, muleman, horseman, father and grandfather. What best describes the steely eyed, tall and slim man from Douglas, Arizona, is cowboy.

“I tell you what, when you say ‘cowboy’ people think it’s a rodeo hand or a gunslinger,” Warner says with a glint of laughter in his eye. “In my opinion, a cowboy is a fellow that will stay out there night and day to take care of livestock and take care of the country. That is a cowboy. They’re not lazy because there is always something to do.”

Working on the J Bar A Ranch high in the mountains above Douglas, Warner has exactly that—something to do. The fourth generation to make his living on the ranchland, he and his family now oversee three ranches. The Buckhorn—originally homesteaded in 1896 by Josiah Jefferson

*“He sees the country for what it is, for what its challenges are and for what it has to offer. It is never too rough, too steep or too untamed to stop his journey.”* –Kelly Glenn-Kimbro

Glenn, Warner’s great-grandfather—came back into family hands recently. The J Bar A was homesteaded by Ira Glenn, Warner’s grandfather, in 1907. The Malpai Ranch was established in 1960, the same year Warner married his wife, Wendy. Today, Glenn and his daughter, Kelly Glenn-Kimbro, and her daughter, Mackenzie Kimbro, work together on the Malpai Ranch, on the Arizona-Mexico border, as well as run cattle on the home ranches, the J Bar A and the Buckhorn, in the mountains.

Growing up, Warner’s family ranched and raised horses, but

predation by mountain lions deeply impacted their livelihood.

“My dad bought his first hound back in 1936, the year I was born, to hunt lions,” Warner recalls. “He couldn’t raise calves or colts on the original ranch, the J Bar A, because the cats would get them as fast as they hit the ground! They didn’t get them all, but they got enough to really cut the calf crop. They raised their own horses and raised about 10 a year, and it was given the lions would get half of them.”

Warner keeps 15 to 20 tracking dogs and is a contract hunter with Arizona’s Game and Fish Department.



KELLY GLENN KIMBRO

From mountain top terrain to rocky borderlands, Warner has ranched and lion hunted every square inch of the land his family first homesteaded in the late 1800s.

He hunts with his daughter, Kelly, to control lions preying on desert bighorn sheep in southwest New Mexico, as well as nuisance mountain lions on borderland ranches in southeast Arizona. His roots run deep in the Chiricahua Mountains that surround his ranches, allowing him to know the land a lion treads, as well as the animal itself.

"I have a lot of pictures of Dad, perched on a bluff or outcropping, hands behind his back or thumbs hooked in his belt, gazing out over the vast countryside," Kelly says. "He sees the country for what it is, for what its challenges are and for what it has to offer. It is never too rough, too steep or too untamed to stop his journey."

Warner's lifestyle is one of lore and Hollywood legend, but for Kelly and Mackenzie, it's simply a way of life that he's taught them by example.

## NECESSARY SERVICE

A cacophony of joyous sound greets Warner when he turns toward his dog pens each day. Both descendants of the family's first dogs and newcomers purchased through the years, these dogs know it is their time to run, as they do each day when Warner saddles a horse or a mule and takes them on a circle around the ranch.

Starting with a red bone hound, Warner's father, Marvin Glenn, learned the ways of a tracker. He was better able to track and harvest animals preying on his horses and cattle with the help of skilled dogs. Soon, area ranchers were calling to ask for assistance with their own predation problems.

Warner says that there were so many mountain lions when he was a boy and into his high school years, that the state of Arizona paid a bounty of \$50 per lion brought in. The bounty was lifted in 1972, but by then, the Glenns' had made a name for themselves as houndsmen and hunters, as well as ranchers.

The first lion taken off the J Bar A was in 1937, and in 1948, Marvin took his first paying client lion hunting on the ranch, recalls Warner. Since then, the family has guided hunters during the cool months.



KELLY GLENN KIMBRO

An important tool on the ranch, the hounds love Warner just as much as he loves them. To ensure the dogs aren't lost or too long on a trail, the Glenns use radio collars to keep track of them.

The hunting is on dry ground, which is tough hunting without a dog with a "good nose."

"You want a dog that wants to hunt," Warner says. "Some don't. Some don't have the desire. Some are good at cold trailing, others on a hot track, or [some make a good] locator when you run a lion in these big canyons. Then, you've really got to have tree dogs. Once in a while, you'll get a dog good at all of that and you'll know they're worth it."

Warner knows dogs and understands their behavior when at play, chasing a rabbit or on the scent of a cat, like a mountain lion. It's something he's watched since he was a child.

"The first lion I was in on tracking, I was 6 years old, in June, and my dad and I were exercising the dogs," he says. "We hit a lion trail early and tracked all

day—it was awful hot—and I remember I was near bawling the entire time because I was supposed to be leading Daddy's horse and coming along behind. He was staying with the dogs, and it was rough country. He finally got that lion at 7 o'clock that night and we got home about 11. It's a wonder I ever went lion hunting again! I like to died that day.

"It's something that gets in your blood. I was looking forward to the next one."

It takes just one man to exercise the dogs, but it takes two on a hunt. Kelly accompanies Warner most often. While staying in earshot of the dogs is still how they prefer to track, radio collars allow the Glenns to know which way to head when the dogs disappear around a canyon wall or over a rocky bluff.



Kelly Glenn-Kimbro (far right) and her daughter, Mackenzie (left), share in the work it takes to run three ranches alongside Warner. The family is tight knit with an unsurpassed work ethic.

“I have spent my life ranching and hunting with Dad,” Kelly says. “I have looked at the back of his hat and jacket for decades. It is always assumed he is the leader. We will be trotting down a canyon on a fresh lion scent, hounds running ahead and Warner will glance back, issuing the order to ‘find the track, make sure we are going the right way.’ And so, I pull up, search the ground for the lion track, which is now under a multitude of hound tracks and Warner’s mule tracks! It will be there somewhere in a place none of them stepped.”

Few hunts include paying customers these days, unlike the hunts led in the 1970s, when the lion population boomed in the area after they were designated big game animals with a dedicated hunting season. While hunting is dangerous, it remains a necessity in the high country.

“You have to keep [lion numbers down],” Warner explains. “Usually, if it is domestic depredation, you can harvest that cat by going to the kill

and trailing that cat to be about 99 percent sure you’ll get the culprit. That gives the livestock operator the security and some piece of mind.

“The [Arizona Game and Fish] Department is good about that. They know that a rancher in this area is important. If we didn’t keep our livestock waters [working and flowing] in this dry country, the [wild] game would be in big trouble. A lot of people don’t know how important the relationship between rancher, game and the environment is, but the game department knows.”

The Glenns sometimes even delay work on their own ranchland for a day or more in order to track a predator wreaking havoc on a nearby ranch. It’s just the neighborly thing to do, Warner says.

### **DOGS, HORSES AND FAMILY**

The photographs lining the walls, sitting on shelves and filling the spaces in Warner’s office tell the tale of a life well-lived among family,

friends, dogs and horses. One person that is ever-present, though no longer with the family in person, is Warner’s late wife, Wendy.

In 1960 Warner married Wendy and the two made a home in the former John Slaughter Ranch house at the newly named Malpai Ranch. Kelly says the two actually met when Wendy was a few months old in a baby buggy at a picnic.

“Her parents were good friends of the Glenns,” Kelly says. “They owned a limestone quarry, they were hunters and they raised registered Herefords. With both my grandpas hunting lions together a lot, [they] spent weeks at a time at the ranch with the Glenns.”

Wendy did the behind-the-scenes work that keeps ranches running: cooking, running the books, managing the permitting, finalizing contracts and filing taxes. It was a true partnership.

“Honestly, Dad would not be the man he became without Wendy supporting him in everything he did

and wanted to do,” Kelly says. “I took over what she did when she passed and he continued ranching. Now, Mackenzie helps with anything business-related or horseback or hard labor with the ranches. She’s savvy, and someday will have to do it all.”

Kelly and Mackenzie live on the Malpai Ranch with Warner, working together to continue the Glenn family ranching heritage in Arizona. In addition, Mackenzie has published a cookbook, *Roots Run Deep, Our Ranching Tradition*, inspired by her love of the recipes she learned from Wendy and life on the ranch. She also spreads awareness of beef cattle and ranching operations through other endeavors in her Cola Blanca Productions, LLC company.

“My grandparents have always been my heroes,” says Mackenzie, the sixth generation to run and raise cattle on Glenn land. “Warner and Wendy were integral in the way I was raised and gave me the love and appreciation of this landscape and way of life. My grandparents instilled in all of us a work ethic, a respect for others and for our landscape, a knowledge of conservation and a love for every bit of this lifestyle, even in the harder times.”

The feeling is mutual, as Warner sees his wife reflected in his daughter and granddaughter.

“Wendy was a world-beater at getting in and helping with any job we were doing, and Mackenzie has the same trait,” he says. “No task is too hard or too ugly, Kelly and Mackenzie are there.”

Mackenzie not only works with her grandfather to gather cows and brand calves, but also assists on hunts. Her half-sister, Carisa Kimbro, a lieutenant colonel in the Texas Army National Guard, has also helped.

“Carisa and her brother, Kyle, became part of our family when I married Kerry Kimbro in 1992,” Kelly says. “They both included a career in the military as part of their life’s plan. In recent years, Carisa has come to the rescue several times when I had two bad mule wrecks in the mountains and was laid up for weeks.

*“A lot of people don’t know how important the relationship between rancher, game and the environment is, but the game department knows.”* –Warner Glenn

Carisa is a good hand all around, cowboying or hunting, and she stepped in and helped Warner and Mackenzie shoulder the load.”

Kelly says the greatest lesson Warner’s taught her is perseverance and determination. She sees that reflected in Mackenzie.

“They [Warner and Mackenzie] have a wonderful relationship of mutual respect and admiration,” Kelly says. “I think he has taught her

perseverance and ‘staying in the hunt till the hunt is over!’ Whether the ‘hunt’ is a long day branding or fencing or hunting a calf-killing lion, she is tough and tough-minded.”

Perhaps she picked that up from one of the many mules she’s thrown a leg over since she was a child. Though known to be of their own minds, mules are the go-to ride when hunting lions or trekking the borderland ranch’s rough terrain.



Warner moves a mother cow in the right direction during spring gathering.

## ROCK-FOOTED RANCHER

The Glenn family raised horses that could handle the rocky landscape of the home ranch up until the 1960s, Warner says. About that time, mules the family had purchased in the late 1950s took their place at the top of the family's chosen mode of four-footed transportation.

Warner has both horses and mules today, but still prefers to ride a mule most days.

"You can't hardly beat a good mountain horse, but if you're trying to go through a country that a mule balks at, you better find a different route," Warner says. "A mule takes care of itself better than a horse in that rough country. When a mule knows a country and balks, it is taking care of you and there is bad cactus or slick rock or something."

With the ranch's proximity to the Mexican border, many mules that reside at the Malpai Ranch originate in Mexico. They are usually raised in rough country, Warner says, and typically take to the ranch with ease.

Long miles riding alongside the dogs desensitizes the mules to their traveling companions.

"These dogs don't bother a mule, but they run all around them," Warner says. "A mule—or a horse—has to get used to it. Some mules naturally don't pay attention [to the dogs], especially the ones we get out of Mexico."

Raising quality beef is top priority for Warner and his family, but caring for their dogs is a close second—a mule not safe with dogs doesn't stay long. Neither does a mule that can't carry a rider safely across a bluff pocketed with boulders.

"Those dogs and that mule, or horse, make you or break you on a hunt," Warner says. "One thing about it, every day you go hunt is a different



KATE BRADLEY BYARS

Wendy Glenn, Warner's late wife, was the rock in the family, handling the behind-the-scenes work needed to keep Warner outside ranching and hunting.

experience. There is always something new. Some of the more memorable ones are when the lion gets away from you. That happens to all of us. If you count the numbers you caught, you know you let twice as many get away.

"People think if you have a hound there is nothing to it, you tree it and that is it. That isn't it at all. Hunting in dry country or the snow, neither one is easy. There is no easy lion hunt."

And not many 85-year-olds would attempt to hunt lions. But Warner has never backed away from hard work, harsh weather or a challenge, says Kelly. Whether riding across open range or tracking afoot through brushy canyons, Warner's skill is unmatched.

"As Dad gets older, young lion hunters ask in awe, 'How does he still go afoot with the hounds?'" she

says. "Dad's answer is, 'I just have slower hounds now.' He has raised and ridden a lot of good mules and Quarter Horses. He has asked a lot of them and they have never failed him. I am not sure where he will be when he is 95, but I bet it is on a good mule rimmin' out or on a good, rock-footed horse gathering trotty cows."

The oppressive Arizona heat, the inevitable drought and the nuisance of mountain lion predation are all things that Warner accepts as part of his life. And while many would balk at carving out a livelihood on the border and in the rocks, Warner relishes in it.

"One reason we've stuck it out here so long is that we are doing what we love to do, that is cowboy-ing, ranch work and cattle," Warner says. "Anymore, running the dogs is the best part of my days—but again, any part of the day I'm up and moving is the best part for me. I wouldn't have wanted to do anything else with my life." **WH**

**KATE BRADLEY BYARS** is a *Western Horseman* contributing editor. Send comments on this article to [edit@westernhorseman.com](mailto:edit@westernhorseman.com).

*"If you're trying to go through a country that a mule balks at, you better find a different route. ... It is taking care of you."* —Warner Glenn