





*Rising from the Ashes:
A Family's 5-Year Journey to Rebuild an Icon*

THE RUSTY PARROT LODGE AND SPA

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

A Legacy Forged in Jackson

In the late 1980s, Ron Harrison, a man with a passion for the West and a love of hospitality, set his sights on Jackson, Wyoming. His dream was simple yet profound: to create a lodge that felt like home, complete with warm cookies fresh from the oven and the kind of thoughtful touches that turn strangers into family.

Together with his teenage son, Brandon, Ron began building on a quiet corner across from a park, just a short walk from the lively town square. Stones pulled from a nearby creek became the fireplace, cast-iron cowboy lamps lit the guest rooms, and artwork from Western artists adorned the walls. By December 1990, the Rusty Parrot Lodge had opened its doors, immediately gaining the affection of locals and travelers alike.

For nearly 30 years, the Harrison family nurtured the property. Ron poured his heart into its operation, while Brandon and his sister grew into leadership roles—Brandon overseeing the lodge and his sister founding the Body Sage Spa. Together, they transformed The Rusty Parrot into a destination known for its understated luxury and unmistakable warmth. Then, in 2019, everything changed.

The Fire That Changed Everything

"It was a total loss," recalls Brandon Harrison, now General Manager and custodian of his father's vision. "All those years of work and memories—gone in one night."

The fire destroyed nearly every inch of the beloved property. Guests and staff were safe, but the Harrison family faced a decision no family-owned business ever wants to confront: walk away or start again from the ground up.

For Brandon, the choice was clear. “This was never just a hotel. It was our family’s story. Rebuilding wasn’t optional—it was necessary.”

Rebuilding with Purpose

What followed was a five-year journey defined by resilience, patience, and determination. The Harrisons saw not only an opportunity to restore what was lost, but to reimagine The Rusty Parrot for the future.

“We wanted to honor the character of the old building while learning from three decades of experience,” Brandon explains. “Our guests had been with us for 25 years or more. They wanted something familiar, but also fresh enough to carry us through the next 50 years.”

To achieve that balance, the family salvaged as much as possible from the ashes. The original wooden staircase, antler chandeliers, and pieces from Ron’s extensive Western art collection were preserved. “Almost all the artwork has a story,” says Brandon. “Many of the artists stayed with us. Some of the pieces were gifts. To see them back on the walls today feels like welcoming old friends home.”

A New Chapter in Luxury

In July 2024, The Rusty Parrot Lodge and Spa reopened with quiet fanfare, standing taller and more refined, yet no less inviting. The property expanded from 32 to 40 guest rooms and introduced new amenities, including underground parking, a rooftop bar, and a wildlife viewing deck.

“The main things really were about creating more space for guests,” Brandon shares. “By moving parking underground, we could expand the courtyard, add outdoor dining, and give the common areas that resort-like feel. We flipped the building’s footprint and raised the structure to enhance views from the guest rooms. Everything just feels more open and inviting.”

The design exudes understated mountain elegance, with lofty ceilings, rich woodwork, stone accents, and custom-crafted furniture that create a sense of rustic sophistication. Guest rooms are bathed in natural light, each featuring commissioned artwork, luxurious linens, and spa-inspired bathrooms with deep soaking tubs. Two expansive suites elevate the experience even further with vaulted ceilings, fireplaces, and private decks overlooking Jackson’s slopes.

“Every detail is deliberate,” Brandon notes. “We wanted finishes and textures that feel warm and welcoming, but also luxurious

enough that guests know they’re somewhere truly special.”

The Wild Sage Returns

One of the most anticipated comebacks was the AAA Diamond award-winning Wild Sage restaurant. Known for blending mountain-town warmth with sophisticated culinary innovation, the restaurant now boasts an open kitchen and patio seating.

At the helm is Chef Hugo Goodwin, who draws from seasonal bounty and local purveyors to craft dishes that are as beautiful as they are delicious. Guests may savor locally sourced beef tartare with chili oil and lovage, pan-roasted Long Island duck, or a smoked crème brûlée kissed with local whiskey. Even the breakfast menu, with dishes like ricotta pancakes with lemon curd or Snake River Rancheros, elevates morning dining into an experience.

“Wild Sage has always been about a relaxed interpretation of fine dining,” says Brandon. “It’s intimate, it’s personal, and it’s very much in the spirit of Jackson.”

The wine program reflects a similar devotion to refinement. Guests will find a carefully curated selection of old- and new-world vintages alongside craft cocktails and local brews, creating an experience that appeals to both the adventurous and the discerning.

The Body Sage Spa: A Family Touch

Equally beloved is the Body Sage Spa, now seamlessly integrated into the main lodge. The two-story sanctuary features six treatment rooms, a couples’ suite with a freestanding tub, and a terrace for yoga and relaxation.

Founded by Brandon’s sister, the spa continues its legacy of holistic care with treatments that draw from the surrounding landscape. Guests can indulge in restorative massages, CBD-infused scrubs, or the region’s first Glo2Facial. Plush robes, serene spaces, and an emphasis on ritual elevate every visit.

“It’s not just about pampering,” Brandon emphasizes. “It’s about healing and reconnecting—with yourself, with nature, with this place. Luxury here means feeling restored.”

Staying True to Tradition

While the lodge is undeniably new and more polished than ever, the soul of The Rusty Parrot remains unchanged. Guests still find fresh-baked cookies in the library at 3 p.m., still gather around the courtyard fire for stories, and still feel as though they have stepped into a home rather than a hotel.

“That sense of home was always my dad’s vision,” Brandon reflects. “He wanted people to feel cared for the moment they walked through the door. We’ve kept that alive.”

Rooted in Jackson

Set against the backdrop of the Tetons, The Rusty Parrot is ideally placed for both adventure and leisure. Wildlife tours, skiing, fly fishing, river floats, horseback riding, and art festivals are all within reach, while the hotel itself provides a serene counterbalance. From the rooftop deck, guests can watch deer and elk along the butte, or simply soak in the Wyoming sky with a glass of wine in hand.

For the Harrisons, this balance between rugged Western beauty and refined hospitality is what defines the lodge. “Jackson has always been the last of the Old West,” Brandon says. “But it’s also a place where modern travelers come to find meaning. We wanted to create a lodge that embodies both.”

Looking Ahead

The Rusty Parrot Lodge and Spa is more than a rebuilt hotel—it is a testament to the perseverance of a family and the loyalty of a community. For Brandon, carrying on his father’s vision is a responsibility and a privilege.

“We’re proud of what we’ve built,” he says. “But more than that, we’re proud of what we’ve preserved. The Rusty Parrot has always been about connection—between people, between past and future, between this incredible place and the people who love it. That hasn’t changed.”

And in that way, the fire that once seemed devastating has instead written a new chapter of resilience and renewal.

As guests step through the doors of the new Rusty Parrot, greeted by art with stories to tell, the scent of cookies wafting from the kitchen, and the warmth of a family who never gave up, they’ll discover what locals have always known: some icons aren’t lost to time or tragedy. They rise, stronger and more luxurious than before. ❖

