Deane Murphy moved from Denver to Grand County in 1971 when her father purchased a Granby-area ranch known as the Barnard Place. Deane's father was raised in Wyoming and had been the owner of Redstone Castle, located near Mt. Sopris south of Carbondale, Colorado.

Deane met Leigh Murphy when he put up the hay on her father's ranch. Leigh and Deane married in 1972 and, moved to the ranch in the Fraser Valley that had been purchased by Leigh's parents, Jim and Punk Murphy in 1934. That ranch, with headquarters located on GCR 5 is still owned and operated by the Murphy family.

Leigh and Deane also own a ranch near Roswell, New Mexico and they split their time between the two cattle ranches. The Murphy family has found a good balance of ranching between the New Mexico and Colorado cattle operations as they ship their yearlings from New Mexico to Colorado. The climate conditions are certainly different in the two locations with Colorado having the advantage of irrigation. The location in New Mexico is located in the high desert and it is strictly a dryland operation.

Their daughter Sabrina and her husband Justin, and two sons, Bridger and Pike, live at and operate the New Mexico operation, while their son Andy, his wife Paige and their son, Dustin, manage the Colorado ranch. Leigh and Deane help in both places and enjoy their three grandchildren.

Deane was the leader of the Flying Heels 4-H Club for many years and was the secretary for the annual quarter horse sale when it was a part of the fair in the 1980s.

Leigh and Deane were honored as Citizens of the Year in 2012 in appreciation of their service and support for 4-H and the annual county fair held in Kremmling.

Like their parents, Sabrina and Andy showed and sold 4-H animals at the Middle Park Fair and participated in the rodeo events. Sabrina continues to barrel race as a professional and reached the National Finals in 2013. One of her sons is finding success as a team roper and the other son shows goats.

When she had a chance, Deane said she loved to ski and to ski jour.

Deane joins her husband as a Pioneer of the Year, as Leigh was selected by the Middle Park Fair and Rodeo in 2020. Plans are for the two to be honored at a banquet held in the honor of all 2020 and 2021 Pioneers and Citizens of the Year at this year's Middle Park Fair in August.

When Leigh was selected last year, he said he has always enjoyed ranching and living in Middle Park. He noted it is becoming increasingly difficult to ranch in the Fraser Valley as the number of people grows and development encroaches on land that was previously dedicated to agriculture.

Deane echoed that assessment as she listed the biggest change, she has seen in Middle Park has been the influx of people and a non-agricultural culture, particularly in the Fraser Valley. "It isn't a ranch community anymore," she added. She laments not being able to recognize many people in the post office, in restaurants, and around the Valley. She noted they seem to have more in common with people in the Kremmling area, which still has a significant ranching community.

One of the consequences of "being found" Deane notes, are the inevitable changes that are part of that process. She fully understands the changes that have been made to the Middle Park Fair and Rodeo to provide an event that more reflects those changes in Middle Park. She does, however, miss some of the traditional events like the hay contest, the pen of three replacement heifers, and the horse sale.

Congratulations Deane on being named a 2021 Pioneer of the Year by the Middle Park Fair and Rodeo. That move to Grand County in the early 1970s may have been a surprise to you personally, but you quickly immersed yourself in the local ranching community and helped to carry on the legacy and history of agriculture and pioneer life in Middle Park. Your children have picked up the reins and are caring that tradition forward in the Fraser Valley as well as developing a legacy in New Mexico.

We look forward to celebrating with your family at this year's Fair and Rodeo. - written by Larry Banman