

Diana: What are your names?

Steve: I'm Steve Hazen. I'm 61 years old, and I'm a farmer.

Kelly: I'm Kelly Hazen, 57, we're from Protection, Kansas. I'm a farm wife.

Diana: So where were you when you first became aware of the Starbuck Fire which we're going to call just "the fire" that happened on March 6, 2017?

Kelly: We were at home; we were just eating dinner.

Steve: Well, yeah, we started off real early that morning and weighed off some calves on wheat. We got up like at 5:00 in the morning. When we got that done, we were at home, and somebody said there was a fire.

Kelly: Yeah, Dustin called back and said Frosty and Faye Ediger's house was in danger.

Steve: We just took off in a pickup to go help them, you know, move something out. In route, we got about five or six miles from home and Kyle Kaltenbach, our nephew, called us and said, "Hey, can you bring your Ranger to Englewood and help move some cows of mom and dad's."

Kelly: Kyle called Dustin and Dustin called us.

Steve: Is that how it was?

Kelly: We had just gotten to Ashland when Dustin called. He was coming to town for fuel and his Ranger. So we turned around and went back to get our Ranger to go help Dustin. And that's when we stopped to get fuel in the pickup and the Ranger about 1:00 to 1:30. Haley pulled up the pumps, and I asked her, "Have you gotten anything out of the house yet?" She said, "Oh, it's not going to get that far."

I said, "I think you might ought to go back to school and tell the school to pay attention." And she kind of chuckled at us. So we went on then to help Kyle, and that's when...

Steve: We pulled up there and the fire that we saw, the smoke we saw was southwest of where we were. It looked like, you know fire is deceiving, smoke is deceiving. It honestly looked like it was 15 or 20 miles from us.

Kelly: We were three miles south of the 12-mile corner.

Steve: The wind was out of the northwest moving to the southeast. We was northeast of it a long ways, you know, there shouldn't be any way that... Kyle says, "What do you think?" I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "What about taking your Ranger and driving up on this sandhill and looking at it better. We could see it better."

I said, "Let's go." Well, I was driving, and he gets in there with me, and I took off. I said, "Shoot, what am I doing driving? You know this pasture and I don't." I got out, and I've said this many times, that was a mistake because he was driving one-handed going through this sagebrush in the sandhills wide open. He was talking on his phone, and the steering wheel was rattling, and I was hanging on with both hands on the rail.

Kelly: Anybody that's ever rode with Kyle!

Steve: We get to the top of the hill, and he said, "I don't see any flame." And I said, "I don't either." And he says, "What do you think?" And I said, "You know, Kyle, we're here. Why don't we just be safe instead of sorry? Let's go move them, and we'll bring them back if we need to."

"Okay, fair enough." But you know, we didn't think it was going to... I mean, I didn't think there was a

chance. We left there. We moved those cows and left there.

Kelly: We put the cows on Mike McCarty's wheat across the highway from Mark and Mary's house. And then we heard that Faye and Frosty's house, they had foamed it, it made it, and it burned everything but the house. It burned all around them. There was no need of trying to, well, we couldn't have gotten there. So we headed to Mike McCarty's. We called Mike, and Mike was in a pickle's what I've heard. He was farming, disking, I don't know where he was at. So we went to his house. Everything seemed to be good there. We left there to go to my mom's house, and we're on that dirt road, I can't think what road that is.

Diana: Road U, the road that goes by your mom's house.

Kelly: Well, no. This would have been where Mike McCarty used to live. Yeah, it might be U. It might be W Road. They've got all these nice names; I just go by Mike McCarty's old place! Anyway, we're going on that dirt road, and I don't see much smoke, and, "Oh, Mom's okay." Well, Dustin, I don't know how he or where he ended up, but somebody called Dustin and said, "Mark and Mary and Bouziden's, everybody's north is in trouble. There's a fire coming from the north." So we are then about to town, and we go to Mark and Mary's house. Frankly, it looked like it was going to miss them. It looked like the smoke and everything was east, so we did leave there and headed out to Mom's and got stuff out of mom's house. I got her car.

I was headed to Jule and Heidi's house then from Mom's house and you were headed there also. And that's when we got separated, and we never got back together. I ended up with Mother's car, and Heidi and I took... she had their big trailer, the rodeo trailer, full of household stuff and pets. We took that to my house and then got my car and Mother's car in our shed and then we came back to her house to get a pickup load of horses. She had already loaded all her horses. She had brought Haley's kids from town because Hailey got caught west of town and couldn't get back in to get them from Miss Jane when they evacuated Ashland. So Heidi had picked up Haley's two and her two and Kimberly Courtney's two kids, and she had them all out at her house, plus loading stuff from the house and the horses. Kimberly showed up and got her kids. We left with the horses, I'm going to say about 4:00 or 4:30. We'd been in the house and when we came out. It was like instant; it was just black smoke. We had not... There was no way that we thought it was that close. We thought we were just being careful; we had plenty of time, it wasn't going to get this far. Just kind of nonchalantly doing our thing and it was black outside. So we went to our house, and we ended up going on to Coldwater. Heidi, the horses, the kids, and then we ended up in Dodge with the horses and spent the night. So my story is... I didn't have the drama they had.

Diana: So how did you get to Dodge from Coldwater?

Kelly: We went north of Coldwater to Greensburg and then across through Bucklin. We had all of Jule's horses. My horses, I'd left shut up in the corral at our house. We didn't think the fire would ever get to there and Jule didn't want his horses back in the county. We were going to go to Kyle's with them, but he said, "No, that's not out of danger yet." So we just took them to the rodeo grounds. They'd told Jule that they'd be open and we got a room. Heidi's mother came the next day. Heidi's mom stayed with the kids. Then Heidi and I brought Hayley's kids and came home and went to do what we could do.

That's when we got separated and never got back together.

Diana: So where did you go?

Steve: You know, somewhere in there, I went to check on Carolyn's, Kelly's mother's place, and then I saw smoke and thought it looked like it was close to Jule's place. I was headed there on that Sitka road, hard. I saw smoke at about the **Jack Underwood** place. I saw smoke going across the road and I just kept going. There was cars coming out and they was driving really fast. The last car that I met was flashing its lights hard at me. I had **a trigger????** on with my Ranger and I took it for... you know, flashing lights! I just pulled out in a ditch, made a circle, and I went back through three quarters of a mile to the road that goes south down by Kenny Dome's. That's two miles south down there, and I was driving as hard as my pickup would go. And it's going across the road there.

Diana: At Kenny's? Because it of comes across from the north up here and it's going southeast right? And then it's gone across the highway; it's gone across the Sitka road, and now you're also going down by where Swayze's and Kenny Dome and Kirb Pike is?

Steve: It was pretty dark there but I went across there and when I got on the highway, it cleared up. When I got to get to Sitka, Jule was alright.

Diana: Had Kelly already gone?

Kelly: Yes, we were already gone.

Steve: They'd already left, and I went running back over to my house to check it. And I'm not really sure how Jule and I got together, but we were coming back to his house. We were driving right north of Sitka and Stan called Jule and Stan said his pickup was on fire. Could he come get him? Jule said, "Dad, we've got to go help Stan." He was up right there at the entrance to a wheat field, and I pulled in there, and we unloaded that Ranger right quick. We run over through that smoke, and it was really blowing across the road. You couldn't see anything, you know, and I told Jule, "You've got to get off." He said, "Dad, you can't go through there." I said, "Yeah, I can get through there." Jule said, "Dad, you can't go through there. You'll never make it."

I said, "Get off!" "But Dad!" I said, "Jule, get off!" He got off and I took off.

Diana: You're down on Sitka Road, correct? Is that where you're at?

Steve: Yeah, and you know, honestly, see that's where it was burning when I turned around when I met those cars. This is probably, I'm saying this might be 30 minutes later, and it's still burning. It's still going across the road, and I met the head fire two miles south. Logically, you wouldn't run through smoke. You shouldn't. And I didn't know; it could have been a mile wide. It was only, I suppose, 50 to 100 yards wide. I don't know, but it was pretty hot.

Diana: Was there fire on both sides of the road when you were going down there?

Steve: I couldn't really see any fire. You couldn't see.

Diana: You just saw smoke? Black smoke, not gray smoke.

Steve: It was black smoke.

Diana: Dark black, like night?

Diana: So how did you find Stan?

Steve:

Well, I don't know. He was standing out there in the middle of... His pickup was on fire, burning up. It was actually just melting the pickup, and there he sat. It was kind of in an open... And I pulled up, and I said, "Get on!" He just sat there.

It was like he was in shock or something. I said, "Stan, get on!" He got on, and we drove back to that the smoke again. I said, "You know, it's pretty intense, but it don't last very long." I covered up my face and said, "Let's go." So we went back through it.

Diana: What did you have to cover your face with?

Steve: Just my hand, I just held it over; that's all I did. I had sunglasses on, but we did get through, and Jule

was over there waiting on us. We ran back to the pickup, and we took Jule to his house and then we went to the Sitka Junction and headed east toward my house.

Diana: Nobody stopped you at the Sitka Junction?

Steve: No, there wasn't anybody there, and we get just to those hills east of Matt Wilson's, those tall hills, and the smoke come across there really hard.

Diana: Could you see fire?

Steve: No, just smoke, but you could feel the heat. You could sure feel that. We were driving and the next thing I know it's getting rough, you know, I'm off the highway. I said, "Stan, I can't see." He hollered, "Get right! Get right!" He could see a double yellow lines for no passing on the hills. He could see that in the center.

Kelly: You were on the wrong side!

Steve: I'm clear on the north ditch! And we drove across that thing on the wrong side of the road and because he could see those lines and he just kept me going. We got through that; we got to my house and it was good. We didn't see anything there, but we could see smoke down at his place. So we were flying down there. Well, as we got closer, I said, "Stan that thing's about to get you. Is your tractor down here? And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Have you got a disk?" and he said, "Yeah." I said, "Let's hook it on."

I guess I got a call, I know because there was a fire coming at my house and I needed to get back here, but I was going to take him to his house. You know, him not having a vehicle. And well, I helped him hook his disk on. And then you know the fire was getting close to his house. I ran up there in my pickup and tried to beat on it a little bit with a shovel. He got there, and the grass was short enough right around his house that it kept from going toward his house. It was burning some other stuff out there.

I talked to him and said, "I've got to get back to my house." So I left him and went back to our house. And you know, it's just kind of all scrambled. Some way or another, I went and got my disk. It was dark. You know it was nighttime then.

Diana: So you're not only in smoke, but it's also dark.

Steve: Yeah and I could see flames then, really big.

Diana: Getting close to where your house is?

Steve: And I went around there, and it was on the other side of the draw. I don't own this draw or the pasture, but we've had cattle in there before you know and we've rented it. It's kind of a nasty little draw; there's not many places to get across it. I was trying to shut it down, but the fire trucks were everywhere, you know. But there were none available for me right at the moment. So I was disking and knocking it down, and it was going to that draw. I thought it was... It looked to me like one of those places I could cross. I went and pulled into it slow, and the bottom fell out of it. If the disk hadn't have been on it, the tractor would have laid over. It was kind of unreal how it happened. The flames were coming at us, and the tractor would spin and then jerk and go forward ten foot and then it would spin and do that again. You know, in daylight if you go back and look where I was at, I shouldn't have never made out of there. But I did, and I got over on the road. I was going to go around get on the other side of the draw. And I got over there, and I thought, "Dad gum, I can't hardly see." The lights was getting dimmer; I looked to my right, and there was flames shooting up the side of my tractor. So I pulled into the ditch; I got out, and it was on fire. I got out, and I sat there for a little bit. I thought, "Shoot, it isn't burning on the left side."

So I go back to get my toolbox out of there, and I stepped on the steps to get in there, and I couldn't remember... You know I've been in that tractor a million times, but I couldn't remember where that door handle was. I think it probably because I was scared.

Diana: Okay, so Stan's been in the fire and lost his pickup. You have to go save him; You get him saved and get him home, and then you go home and get on a tractor and are plowing around to save things. You get kind of close to the fire and it sets your tractor on fire. How are you feeling about now?

Steve: Well, you know I didn't realize I was...I guess the adrenaline was going, you know, I didn't realize it.

Kelly: You didn't realize how scared you were.

Steve: Yeah, I didn't know.

Diana: So you're out there by yourself? There was nobody around? Anybody else coming on tractors? Or no fire trucks anywhere in sight?

Steve: No. I did open the door. I latched the toolbox lid and stepped down off there, and I made probably two steps when there was just a BOOM! and then flames shot up that left side right where I was at. It probably burned a fuel line in two, is what we think, and just shot but you know that was pretty intense heat. It wouldn't have been good if I'd still been up there getting that toolbox, I don't think. But a CMS truck came not too long after; the tractor was burning, and I was standing at the back of it when they pulled up. You couldn't go through. There were power poles down. They gave me a ride back around to my house, and then the fire trucks did show up.

Diana: So your house was okay, the fire hadn't gotten too close to it?

Steve: It was. There was another tractor that showed up and then some fire trucks. They got it put down enough that it quit burning. I think probably from that time on, I suspect there were six to ten times that there was new fire. The wind would change and it would go again.

Diana: So did the wind ever die down? Let's say from when you left town and were going down by Dome's. There was high wind and then when you came back to Jule's, it was still high?

Steve: Still high.

Diana: And when you were on the tractor?

Steve: Yeah, that was a night you know. But it would change. The wind would be out of the northwest, and the next thing you know, it would be out of the southwest.

Diana: So did the temperature ever change?

Steve: You know, I don't remember.

Diana: You don't remember it ever getting cold?

Steve: No, I don't.

Kelly: I remember it because I had little kids and we were out there putting the horses away. I had a coat. None of them had coats and it was cold. So the next morning, I went and got them clothes, and then Haley told us, and this was probably when they left her house to go to Mom's, she had a little pump-up sprayer, and the hose on it was froze up. Dustin looked at his phone and said, "Yeah, it's 28 degrees." And a lot of people have said, "I didn't realize it got that cold."

Diana: You didn't know what time it was, either.

Steve: That night, I know I didn't sleep a wink.

Diana: Were you at your house most of the night?

Steve: I would go from my house to Jule and Heidi's house to Carolyn's house, making a circle, because you could see it coming. You see the flames across there. I was pretty certain that Jule was getting it. And then they said it was over at Carolyn's. You know I think it really wasn't, it was pretty close, but they weren't ever...

Diana: Did you run into a lot of people with their own spray tanks out running up down the road.

Steve: That's what saved our place, was those guys. When it finally did get to our house, it was a road grader and farm pickups with tanks that saved it.

Kelly: So were firemen that showed up, but it was so scattered.

Kelly: You hate to say, "Yes, it was the farm pickups, and there wasn't firemen there." My Gosh, it wasn't like they were in town doing nothing. They just didn't happen to be there.

Diana: Were they Comanche County fire trucks or were they Clark County or were they somebody else's fire trucks? Could you tell?

Steve: I had more Comanche County fire trucks. For one thing, I had two farm pickups that I had there. They were friends of mine, and they'd called to check on me. And I said, "It's coming!" And they'd run back and shut it down for a while.

Kelly: Was that Scott Westrup?

Steve: It was Scott Westrup and Andrew Leaper and Cade.

Kelly: Randy Shrauner was with Scott.

Steve: Todd Price came with a road grader. I'm not sure if I ever did see Clark County, you know, there just so many people. You asked if the wind ever went down. The second day, that evening, they'd been out there fighting it, and the wind just quit. The pasture north of my house, what we call the "Horse Pasture" it hadn't burned. If the wind changed and it came out of there, it could be coming at my house, you know. And so one of those guys suggest a backfire, burn it up. So that is what we did. We had a good fire going, you know it wasn't hardly moving at all. It was just perfect, and here come the Army. These guys was from the...

Diana: Were they the strike team that came in?

Kelly: I guess you'd call them that, there were 10 or 12 rigs.

Steve: They were from Mulvane and over at Ark City, but they had kind of Army truck looking deals. Holy smokes. They just blew by. They about run over one of the firefighters. It was Protection that was out there.

Kelly: Them and some farmers from Wilmore. They all have their own rigs over that way, Cade, Woolfolks.

Steve: Tyler. Anyway, they come in there, and one of the firefighters said, "Hey, we're backfiring here." They said, "We were told to put this out." "Well, we're trying to backfire." And they said, "We'll go to the next one." But they about ran over us.

Kelly: They came in there like... I mean, you've got to appreciate them.

Steve: Oh absolutely.

Kelly: You don't dare say anything wrong.

Diana: Okay, Tuesday morning when he got up.

Kelly: He never did sleep.

Diana: He didn't really go to sleep, but the next morning when the sun comes up, let's say, what could you see from your house?

Steve: There was smoke in all directions.

Diana: Was there fire that you could see?

Steve: I had fire. Let's see, that was Tuesday morning, that was before. See, we backfired Tuesday night. It was Tuesday morning, and there was fire everywhere. There was one that was coming at me and I called those guys again and said, "Hey, this thing's coming." There was some big old cottonwood trees down here and it got into those.

Kelly: That draw where he ran the tractor off is in that pasture.

Steve: That dad gum thing, there was enough grass left for fuel and anytime that wind would blow those embers, boom, here it came again. They watered it down pretty good. And then I guess it was about noon when you showed up.

Kelly: I got here about nine.

Steve: Oh really?

Kelly: You didn't know the time of anything. So Heidi and I had gotten back from Dodge and that's when it was all black. I don't remember seeing so much flame, other than the pasture behind us with some old trees burning but it just was all black.

Diana: So did you come down 160 out of town?

Kelly: Yeah.

Diana: What did you think? What were your reactions when you went by all those places?

Kelly: Well, you know we really didn't see burn. I'm trying to think where we ran into the first burn because Kyle's house was fine. We were told that, you know we talked off and on all night, too, between him and Jule and Haley and Dustin. We couldn't believe Kyle was okay and then I can't think where we hit the burn, because it appeared that the Krier tree row wasn't burnt either. We hit it just about Garth's, I guess, is where we kind of ran into burn. And at that time Heidi and I weren't in the same vehicle, and I had just met Haley with the girls, so I was here. Yeah, you were just in awe and surprised that Ashland had made it and I came through town going home. Well, I think I talked to you, and they were still fighting that (we call it the Mormon Pasture) behind us.

And you hadn't slept and anyway, when I got home we ended up going to town for breakfast. We were sitting in there eating breakfast at Don's with Jeremy and Stan. And that's when... No, that was the next morning, Wednesday. Anyway, when I got in, it was 10:00 or so, and you said, "I'm going to take a nap. I haven't been to sleep yet." I said, "Okay." And you said, "You got to keep an eye on that tree." I said, "All right, I can do that." So I got the Ranger, and I have a tank of water that I put in the back of the Ranger to spray weeds and spot spray stuff. So I went to that Ranger and filled it with water. There was no wind at that time. He went to bed, and I went over and sat at this tree and was just piddling with this tree. And about noon or 1:00 or so, Dustin called and said Bryce had just called and he was up north of town fighting. He'd

taken a tanker trailer up there with water for the fire that was coming from the north of Protection. And I said, "Oh really?" I was down in the bottom and I said, "It's windy?" And he said, "Yes, the wind's coming up again." And I said, "Shoot it real pretty where I'm at." There was no wind; I just kind of playing with this tree, just trying to keep it... I wanted the tree to go ahead and burn out. I thought I'd move, I'd taken a rake and a shovel and moved stuff around that tree, and I had it pretty wet with my little spray tank.

And he said, "Well, Brice's horses are in town; they're evacuating Protection again and this is Dustin." He said, "Could there be any way you guys could go get his horses. They're in the trailer; they're ready to go." And I said, "Sure." So I ran into the house, got him up and we got to town, where I got Brice's pickup. By then, Protection was full of smoke, and you could see it coming. So we hurried home, and when we came over Red Hill at the bridge, I thought our houses were gone because that tree had started back up and the flames were... With the smoke, you couldn't see the house hardly. You could see the old white house, but you could barely see that. And we pulled in the drive, and he had the car pulled up to the house to get the dog out of the house. I was surprised it wasn't burned up. It just looked like it was in flames. The flames that we saw were the fence row, what is it, a hundred yards of wheat field between our house and that pasture? And how did Randy say it?

Steve: Randy Shrauner said, "How many acres of wheat in this field, Steve?" I said, "Fifteen." He said, "That might be the most valuable 15 acres of wheat you ever planted."

Kelly: It's safe but, you know, we have evergreens, and it was so hot. We sat back there behind the Ranger and just sat there and prayed. I just kept waiting for one of those evergreens to go, "Woosh." And it didn't. We lucked out. Todd called Steve, we got the dog out, and we parked the car and everything out in the field. We was running back up to the house to get the Ranger and Todd called you and said, "Steve you need help?" And you said, "Yes." He must've been coming down the dirt road by the gas plant.

Diana: To be that close?

Kelly: He came in there, and we had a hotwire around the house. He come to us like this, and I went, "NO! You've run over my..." Anyway, he saved us. He plowed along that fence line on our side of the fence and stopped a lot of the fire. And then he went back around and Steve, somebody said they saw you out there with a shovel beating a bunch of it out. Todd went back on the other side the fence line and plowed again. You know, he just went right through it, I can't believe it. And then the fire trucks showed up, right behind him and that road grader.

Diana: So they're there, and then later you decide to do a backburn?

Kelly: Yeah, that evening is when the horse pasture caught fire. The wind changed again, and it was coming north of our house up the draw through that horse pasture. So that's when we decided to go because it was evening then, 4:00 or 5:00, and then they decided to go ahead and just let it burn and be done with it. And there was eight trucks in there, you know, letting it burn. Well frankly, they were setting it too, just to be done with it. We were without electricity, and it was burning back toward the burned ground. It couldn't burn anymore headed east, so it was back to the west. It hit about a hundred yards of wheat.

We went to Kelly's mom's place and took a shower.

Diana: She had electricity?

Steve: Yeah, she had electricity and we went out there and took a shower. Then we headed back over there. We popped a hill, and fire trucks were going by like a bat out of heck.

Kelly: They were pulling into that Mormon Pasture, and that pasture burned for like three days. There were a lot old dead trees in there, lots of weeds, lots of fuel in that old pasture. We wished they would have just let it burn out that day, but they kept putting it out. We kept saying, "Just let it burn." There was no wind, and everything around it had of been burned. We didn't think it would go anywhere. They fought it for three

or four days. They kept putting trees out. But that's what they were there for.

Diana: So did you get a night's sleep on Tuesday night or were you up all night?

Kelly: We spent the night at Mom's; Mom was in Arizona. So we spent the night at Mom's Tuesday night. It was Wednesday morning, and we were going home. We went by Jule's house because they still weren't out of danger. David and Jule, that was all still burning around there, and it was backburning into them from behind them then; it was coming back from the east. We hated to call everybody because you know everybody still asleep, so we just drove by their house. It looked good. So we went to Don's to eat breakfast and ran into Jeremy and Stan, and we all were eating with them. And that's when a friend of Jule's had seen Sitka on fire.

I can't believe David and Jule's houses are still there.

Diana: And Eldora's.

Kelly: Yeah, you saved three of those houses.

Diana: Did you see the picture of the elevator?

Kelly: That's a picture that Jule got as a text, and he sent Steve the text. We were all eating breakfast, and Steve just sat there with his phone. He just slid it over to me, and it says, "Jule's House," on the text. We just left Don's running and headed to Sitka. Well, we get to the Y, and Jule calls Steve and says, "What about that picture?" And Steve says, "Isn't that your house?" He goes, "No, Stockton had seen it on the news, so he took a picture of it with his phone, texted it to Jule, titled it, 'Jule's House, and Jule texted it to us. Jeremy Hazen says, "Well, when I looked at the picture, I thought it was still dark." I said, "I've taken a lot of daytime pictures with my phone that were dark," and then when you really look at it, you can see the elevator, you can see... You've seen the picture; you can see what it is. It wasn't Jule's house, it was the social club, in the sunrise. And we thought it was his house.

Steve: With the title, "Jule's House," I didn't have to look very hard. I saw it and was gone.

Diana: Kayla thought it was David's house in the picture. Look at the direction that the picture's taken. South.

Kelly: Yeah, but you couldn't see. Until you focused on what you were looking at, it was hard to tell.

Steve: Like I said, the title said, "Jule's House," I didn't look at anything else.

Kelly: Why were their houses spared? Any of those, like you say, it just, because that CRP and Myron's farm ground north of him which was CRP, had enough growing on it that I can't believe it didn't burn.

Steve: One time on time Monday night, I was running over to get... because it looked like Jule or Carolyn's place was on fire, it looked like it was about to hit them. I looked down and looked to the north at Myron's house. There was a place... It was dark down there, and was flames was shooting up not very far from his house. The road's terrible rough down to his place, and I drove down there just as hard as I could go because I was wanting to get over to check our stuff, you know, and there was a deal just right north of his house that was on fire and it just kept getting bigger. I hollered at him, or I honked, I guess, and Myron came to the door and looked up, and he saw the fire. He went and grabbed pants and jumped on his skid loader. He had a flashlight that he stuck in his mouth and was using that for light to see to drive that skid loader. I've got a spotlight on top of my pickup, and I got it turned on. Anyway, he put dirt on this fire got it out, and I waved at him and took off from there. But like all those places, there were places I thought was... you know, those ties right across from Jules house were on fire at that time. If the wind would have switched there, it could have been a bad deal.

Diana: Did they have some times when the fire did cross the road and come close over by their house?

Kelly: I don't know. It did get in around, you know, there's a lot of brick and stuff from the old buildings, like that old welding shop and all that that used to set there. It did burn into that a little bit. You know, that's Tuesday morning. I think it was... it wasn't Tuesday morning, because that's when Heidi and I had gotten a bunch of groceries at Dodge before we came home and I took some to their house. Sandwich meats to build sandwiches, you know, and then tubs to take to our house. It couldn't have been Tuesday. It was Wednesday when T.C. Dawson was there with his rig. Then Jule the commented, he said, "I don't know how Tyler did it," but he said, "I called Tyler through the night. It's getting close again, and Tyler will be back." He said, "I don't know where he come from." And then come to find out, they were in trouble down there, but he said Tyler always seemed to be there. T.C. sat in his yard that next day, when it was backburning into all of them there, across Jim Cox's pasture behind Jule's house. And Heidi said Jule was taking a nap and she was to keep track of it. There was fire trucks out there, and she said it was hard, but they had been up all night long. Now I took the garden hose from our bins to Jule's house to help. Heidi didn't have enough hose. I can't think when I did that, oh, it was when I took Mom's car over there. We have a bunch of hose for the winter when we have cattle on wheat pasture. Anyway, we got a whole bunch of hose from down there and dragged it over to Heidi's.

Diana: You didn't have any cattle close to your house. So at your house, what you lost was pasture and fence and a tractor. Do you know about how much fence you lost?

Steve: Seven or eight miles or so.

Diana: How many acres pasture-wise?

Steve: About seven to eight hundred acres.

Kelly: We're still down how many papers, we still haven't counted, you know. So I have to think about it.

Steve: You know, it was Monday night when I went down... I've got a bull pasture, and the fire was... You know, I'd been up around my house so much and I finally got down to the bull pasture, and I could see embers out there. The fire had already went through there right at this one corner; it wasn't burned, that was where there was a gate to go into a wheat field. And I opened the gate, and I hollered and hollered and hollered to those bulls, thinking they'd come to cake. I didn't see them. I was pretty certain they was gone. And we went down there the next morning or the next day with a gun, thinking that we'd have to put something out of its misery, you know, probably. And they were just... there were eight heifers that we were going to stick one of those bulls with, you know, our choosing what bull it was going to be. But anyway, we opened that gate where if they were in there, they could go in with those heifers on wheat. Out of the four bulls, three of them was out there. The fourth wasn't too far; he just hadn't seen the gate! And they were just then getting out there, but they was all right.

Kelly: That would be south of Sugar Loaf, or a mile south, on the road that goes by Sugar Loaf.

Steve: And it wasn't those heifers, they surely got bred, and it wasn't the way we wanted, but they were alive.

Diana: So did you lose any cattle.

Steve: Not a one.

Did you help people shoot cattle afterward?

Steve: I didn't. She helped.

Kelly: I didn't help Mary.

Diana: Did she have to shoot a whole bunch?

Kelly: I didn't help her shoot any. She did it herself. She shot all of them herself. I say, but I think Kellenberger might have helped her some, but she did it. Heidi went and helped her one day. And Heidi came home that night rather frustrated because Mary was doing this and needed help dragging dead. You had to pile them up and get pictures. She said, "We need more help." I said, "Okay, tomorrow we'll go." That's when Eli and I took the Ranger and an old four-wheel drive pickup over, and Heidi and he drug the calves, and we drug the cows.

Diana: So how long did that take? A couple of days?

Kelly: We did it all day that day, all day. We did all that day, and Mary and Heidi had done it all the day before. It was the most morbid scene that I had ever seen. I just can't imagine how scared those poor animals were, and caught in the fence. How many of them we had to cut out of the fence and drag them off. Caught in that fence and couldn't get away and went right by a pond. And you know Matt and Janae Wilson's cows, luckily for them, Praise the Lord, they lost one cow, I think. I don't know for sure what the count was. But I think out of 80 head, they found a pond, and Mary's cows come down a hill right by a pond and went right by it, couldn't see it, didn't find it. That that was sixty-seven head we dragged up and piled up. I don't know the count, she can tell you. She lost more than that.

Steve: You know, at the very start of this story, when we first went over and moved those cows, the fire was that far away. Not a chance in the world for it to get there. Forty-five minutes later, Kyle called and said, "There's not a brown stretch of grass in that pasture. It's all black. Every bit of it, and like I said, it is a long ways from it.

Diana: Have you had any experience with wildfires before? Have you fought any before? Can you kind of give an idea of how previous fires were different than this fire? How this fire was so much bigger?

Steve: You know the wind and humidity right. You know, just like they say, it was a perfect storm. You know, the wind was so high, and the CRP was so big. Even the pasture grass was big. We'd had rain and the fuel was there. It was just unreal. I could be out there by myself, watching this fire, and it would be going away from me and then all at once the wind would switch. I could feel it hit me on a different part on my arm. I looked back where it was coming from, and there would be flames. It just, it was just one after another like that. It changed I don't know how many times. I've ever seen it change like it. You know, I didn't fight it in a truck, but I've heard numerous stories about those guys driving as hard as they could go to get out of there. You know, to get in front of it. It came across there so hard, and it was just unreal. You know, it's surreal, you know. She said that Haley asked her mom, "Is this the end of it?"

Kelly: When I was headed to Coldwater, Haley called. They were sitting at the 12 Mile Corner and watching from that direction. She called and said, "Mom, is it the end of the world?" And I said, "It might be." You know, I didn't know what to say."

Steve: In the Bible, the end-times, that's what's going to happen.

Kelly: It looked pretty evident, and when we went to Mary's yard earlier in our trip, she had weighed Kyle's boy because he had been sick. We decided, I said, "Mary, let's go move those cows." We had that Ranger, and she had a cake pickup. And we sat there looked at the smoke and, "I think it's all going northeast of us. We're okay" And the weather, you know for two days the weather had told us it was going to be windy that day. That's why we shipped those cattle that morning. We got it done when it was calm.

Diana: So when did you find out that there were two fires?

Kelly: That was then.

Diana: When you were at Mary's?

Kelly: Yeah. When Dustin called said there was one in the north and Bouziden's and Mary and Charlie Mosshart, all of that in there was in trouble.

Steve: Everything in your mind said, can it get there? You know, we just saw it.

Kelly: And here we thought Mom was in trouble. And here she didn't, and you know as we drove across that road, we thought, "Well, it isn't going to get to Mother's." Well, the one from the north was the one that came down to get Mom and that got Mary. We left Mary's yard and she said, "No, just go get Mom's stuff. I've got mine loaded. I've got Wade loaded, and it looks like it's going east of us." And she called the 30 or 45 minutes later, I was headed to Sitka then with Mom's stuff, and Mary said, "I don't think I have a house left. I got out of the yard just in time."

I said, "You what? I just left there!" And she said, "Yeah. It came through fast." And you've got her story; plant fescue grass, she said.

Diana: So when did you go from fighting fire to repairing and rescue and having people come help?

Steve: I think the next day was when our first fencing crews showed up.

Diana: Like Wednesday or Thursday?

Kelly: I think it was Thursday because they were here through the weekend. They worked through Sunday; they got here Thursday or Friday.

Steve: They got here Thursday morning. They showed up with material, a skid loader, a posthole digger, they had water and Quick-crete.

Diana: Where'd they come from?

Steve: They came from Porter, Oklahoma. They were a friend of ours that lives down by Lawton. This guy was a friend of hers in college. She heard about us and she's... Anyway him and another guy, he's the ag teacher at Porter. He got another guy and it was four boys. There were six of them, and they come down. I mean, we were the drop point for hay. And they, you know, they was in a hurry and wanted to start. They went to jerking fence out. You know, they'd have something done before I could be there. There would be other hay coming in and they'd call me and I'd need to go over and unload hay.

Kelly: We didn't know where to start or what to do. They just came in and did it for us.

Steve: Yeah, they just blew through stuff and did an excellent job. Everything was donated! People down there, Wheeler Metals down there, they donated all the pipe. It was just unreal.

Kelly: How they got ready so fast. How they got to us so quick when we're standing here going, "Where do we start?" And the hay was coming, and you didn't know where to go with supplies and friends bringing stuff. You wanted to be there when they got there. And these guys just came and went to work building fence.

Diana: Talk about the letters that you got from kids from other areas.

Kelly: We stopped down here at Ashland Feed and Seed. I can't think what we got that day, and Jeff comes over. Mom had gotten some stuff, and he handed us a few letters. And they came from a grade school in Missouri. Unfortunately, the letter I got didn't have a return address. It was from a student that wanted to have sent ten dollars. She had done something and made ten dollars. I can't remember what she'd done, but she would have sure liked to have sent her ten dollars with her letter so that would help us with something

from the fire. Just the cutest little old letter, colored little pictures on it. And, "I hope this make you smile." One of them had a joke in it that, "I hope this makes you laugh." It was just sweet. And then a month later, we had a bucket calf to feed, not from the fire.

One of the cows had a calf that wasn't getting enough milk. So we bring it back to the house, and I can't find a bottle for the calf. I did find it, but he was at the feed store like a couple days later. He saw some bottles, and he grabbed one. He said, "This one." Jeff said, "No take that whole box." Steve said, "All I need is one."

Anyway, he ended up with a whole case by time he came home. Jeff stuck this box in. He gets a bottle of home and I open one of these bottles. In each bottle (was there eight bottles in there?) there was a letter from a grade school where that box of bottles came from. They colored pictures and put those in there. It was cute! These little notes. Oh yeah. The Fourth grade class from, it has an address on it. And we got salt feeders they made, pretty nice salt feeders, and the kids had wrote with magic marker on them, you know, whatever their name was and, "Hope this cheers you up."

Kelly: Little scriptures. Some of them had scriptures on them. Those come out of Missouri.

Steve: The second group of guys, I mean just two guys, they came from Ellis and Hill City. The guy from Ellis was 73 years old, and his name was Leroy. He was just exactly what we needed. We could laugh.

Kelly: They were good guys.

Steve: They were really a lot of fun.

Kelly: Kind of characters. And you know, Kim would call, and at the time I think Holly had gone on... She had a conference to go, so Kim took over what Holly was doing. Kim would call and had people... Here were this group of guys come from Porter, and we worked from Thursday and they left Sunday evening. We were exhausted.

Steve: Worn out.

Kelly: Then she called Monday morning and said, "Hey I've got a couple guys. Can you use them? And I said, "I'm tired." And he goes, "Don't turn them down; they're here." So I came over and got Leroy and Daris (that was his name). And anyway, they followed me back over here and they just turned out... We stay in touch with them. Super nice guys.

Steve: Leroy, like I said, he was 73 years old. It was on Monday, and Don's is closed. So Kelly fixes dinner at home. We go to the house, and you know, we're walking in the ashes. We're black. We kind of knocked our clothes off and we took our shoes and boots off out on the porch. There's chairs everywhere out there. Anyway, we go in and eat dinner. We come back out, and I'm sitting down putting my shoes on. Leroy's standing up putting his on and tying them while he's standing. I said, "Leroy, there's a chair here." He said, "I'm not that old." That's the kind of guy was. He was super good people, you know. I told him I just can't believe all the things that's happened, all the coincidences. He said, "Steve. There's not a coincidence. God has done all this.

Diana: So did you come to town to the camp and sit visit with them and eat?

Kelly: They stayed at the camp and Leroy, it turns out, has hiked the Grand Canyon 17 times. He's a goer, and they worked from Monday till Thursday with us, so we would go eat supper with them at the camp. Or one night I fixed them a steak at home. How do you thank these people? You want to thank them the best you can. Anyway, they were leaving Thursday because Friday was his birthday and they were going to be at home. He had lost his wife a few years before that, two or three years before that, and he was struggling to tell about her. They were special to each other. Anyway, he left and then was it Friday? Daris or Leroy, how did you find out?

Steve: Leroy called me.

Kelly: Going home Thursday, he said he just felt tired. He said, "I'm just never tired." But he kept telling himself it was because they worked hard and he just said, "I'm just tired." And the next morning he said he felt kind of funny still and he called the doctor and they told him to come in. They put him in the hospital Friday afternoon and Monday he had five bypasses. So he was a goer, and we drove up and saw him.

Steve: We drove up Sunday before he had the operation.

Kelly: He was at Hays.

Steve: He put it on Facebook how much he appreciated us coming all the way up there to see him. I chuckled and said, "You know, I look back and say, "How can you say that we drove all the way up there? How about you driving all the way down here to help us fix fence?"

Kelly: You asked about if we ate down here, and Stan, I think, is the one that made the comment one night when we were down there eating. "Nobody wanted this fire here. But of all the communities to have the fire at, how fortunate were we to have that camp, that facility, to put up these people and our local people provide the food and the work and the labor that they did." I mean, it all happened here. It's like Leroy said, "There's no coincidence. It all happened."

Diana: So who were some of the people or agencies that proved most helpful during the fire after the fire? Anybody that sticks out in your mind or any specific group that came in or agency that helped?

Kelly: The Mennonite guys brought in a load of people one day and worked a day.

Steve: This deal at the church camp and Kim and Holly. That was probably most beneficial to us.

Kelly: They helped locate people.

Steve: They'd line us up with people to help.

Kelly: That had to be mind-boggling.

Steve: Toward the end is when the Amish boys came. They brought their own cooks. They weren't Amish, but they lived right there with them, these two ladies. Anyway, they prepared their meals down at the Methodist Church.

Kelly: That's when the camp was getting remodeled. They could stay there, but they couldn't use the kitchen.

Steve: You know, one of the cook's sons, him and I talked. He was of the leader of the bunch, and some of those guys came and helped us. They wanted me to come and eat supper with them, and I did eat supper with them. I think I ate breakfast the next morning.

Kelly: Along with the Amish, at the same time the Amish got here from Pennsylvania, Father Novak from St. Mary's was here, and he had four boys with him and another fellow.

And that's how you got them, Kim called, because we were kind of at a standstill at building fence. Other things were happening. We were needing to farm, and we were needing to do other things. She called and said she had Paul, the little Mennonite fellow, and the boy that was with him and then father Novak and a boy. The rest of them went with the Amish to go help Jab Pike in Englewood. Anyway, that's how we got into them because Father Novak helped us build fence and we got done. He said, "A bunch of these boys are helping Brad Pike. We need to go help them because we have a tractor with a posthole digger." They were

digging all the holes by hand, so Father Novak talked us into it. He asked us, and we went, shoot, we'll go help Brad. That's where we met the Amish boy and the fellow that was kind of their leader, the man in charge of them. He wasn't Amish, I can't think of his name, and that's when we started eating at the Methodist Church with them. You ate a couple times, breakfast and supper. They'd invite Steve.

Steve: When we finished our fence and went up there to help Brad with my tractor, some of the Amish were there. Brad and I was the same age, and we've known each other forever. Anyway, we cut up and have a good time. Those Amish boys were getting a kick out of how we sparred and talked. One of those Amish boys, in particular, he kind of hung around me, and I liked him. He was fun to be around. We talked and the next morning I went over there to eat breakfast

They wanted me to come eat breakfast with them. And when I came over here, and Junior, which was this Amish boy's name, he was standing there, and he had flip-flops on. I said, "What in the world do you have flip-flops for? You can't build fence in them." He said, "I'm going home." I said, "Oh, you are." I knew half of them were going to go. He said, "Yep." I could tell it was bothering him. I sat down and ate breakfast with them. So they gathered up and was going out there to put the stuff in the van and take off. And I walked out there and said, "Where's Junior?" They said he was already on there. This lady said, "He doesn't want to talk to you." And I thought, "All right." You know, they'd all left, and she said, "Have you got a minute?" She told me, "Do you remember when the Amish schoolgirls were murdered?" I said, "Oh yeah. I remember reading about it." She said, Junior was ten years old when that happened, he was one of the boys in the school, and one of his sisters was one of the girls that was murdered. He had been basically a recluse since then. He had read about this fire and said, "I want to get a group together." The whole community got behind him. He had been so quiet about this and, you know, it was just a big deal to them. And anyway, Junior told me about it a little. And you know, it was hard for him.

Diana: It's hard for you too. So talk on the phone! Do you keep in touch?

Steve: Yeah, we do. You know, I consider him a really good friend. And you know he was the last... I haven't talked to him for a while, but the last time I talked to him, he was at Riverton, Wyoming. It was right during harvest, and he was wanting me to see if there were any bus routes from there to Dodge City. I said, "What do you want to go to Dodge City for?" He said, "So I can come see my friend Steve Hazen.

Kelly: We didn't find a bus route.

Diana: There aren't very many are there?

Kelly: It was during harvest it was just too hard.

Steve: Several of those boys gave me their names and addresses, and I need to write them. There was an older Amish man that was kind of the leader of them. The first night, before I talked to Junior, he down and he said, "Are you Steve Hazen?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I've heard about you." And I said, "I'm sorry!" He laughed and said, "No, it's good." I'm not even sure what... He didn't go on from there, but he said, "I want you to have my name and address." So I need to correspond with them.

Diana: Did you guys get interviewed a lot by reporters during the fire or after the fire?

Steve: Several.

Kelly: Yes. We happened upon a couple taking pictures of the tractor that was burned. They interviewed us and they were from K State. They didn't know how our interview would end up being printed; they didn't know what they were doing with it when they interviewed us. It ended up in a little story with something they put out.

Steve: That lady said, "We're not really sure whether or not it will be printed." I mean, we're doing this for history. This the first time in history that something like this has happened. 100 years from now, people need

to know how we made it.

Kelly: Amy Bickle from the Hutchinson News came down.

Steve: She did it a couple times.

Kelly: Yeah, she interviewed us a couple of times and took pictures.

Steve: You know we became friends through that. I haven't talked to her for a while either, but we're all Facebook friends. I speak to her through that. I can't remember who it was she called me about. Anyway, about wherever she's been, I've known somebody from there. It's a pretty small world.

Diana: So what's your most vivid memory of the fire? The thing that you'll never forget?

Steve: When it was when it was right by my house, and I was beating on it with a shovel. You know, Kelly said what do? And I said, "Pray."

Diana: What's yours?

Kelly: There's two of them. When we went back to Heidi's house to get more stuff, we didn't think we were in trouble. We hadn't been in the house five minutes, and when we came out, it was just black. That's the first of the closest fire we'd gotten to. When we left there, she left ahead of me with the horses; I had kids in the car and she was in the pickup. When we got to Sitka Hill, you could see the lights. All of our people from town leaving.

I mean, a stream of cars and they stopped and let her go with those horses in front of them. It could have been a 30 car pileup but everybody stopped and she went first. We don't understand why they did that because, to me, the fire was right behind them. They were in trouble. They should have been in terror. I mean, that's kind of them! And it was black all the way to Coldwater; I mean it wasn't "black". I thought, "My house is fine. We'll just get these horses to our house and get them in the corral. We're okay. Get them out, and they will be okay." When we got to my house, it was getting just as black, and it wasn't too long after that, we were headed to Coldwater when you called that, and Janae and Matt's houses had gone up. By then I already knew Mary's house had gone up.

Diana: But it hadn't?

Kelly: No, she thought it had but she had it hadn't. And you know, Hayley and Dustin couldn't get back to theirs, and it was like, "There's no way it didn't." You just think of that all the way. The little kids, the little girls, Matt and Janae had lost their house, and I got emotional. I don't get emotional very often. Usually, if the little kids see me emotional, it's because I'm after them. And I got to crying and the little kids go, "Granny, are we going to be okay?" I said, "Darn right, we're going to be okay. There ain't nothing going to happen to you guys." But I shouldn't have gotten emotional in front of them. They shouldn't have seen me weak. But it was scary all the way to Coldwater because it was following us. That soot, there was soot in Coldwater.

Diana: When you left Sitka, was there anything on fire south of the elevator?

Kelly: No. South wasn't on fire yet. I think it was just getting there. I think you weren't very far on the road coming from Mom's in the pickup. John and Diane Humphreys saw Jule somewhere in there, on the road or in his yard, I don't know where they met. Diane said, "I've never seen Jule look so solemn." She said, "He's always just kind of cheery. When we went by him," she said, "John, this is bad. He's scared." She said, "I've just never seen him look so stern."

The only time I ever saw fire was when we started at 1:00 or 1:30. I just saw it for a little bit from a long ways away. We just kept knowing, because on the news the day before, they told us for two days we're

going to have high winds that day, and we just kept looking on the phone, "When's it going to come from the north. If it came from the north, we thought we'd all be okay, because then it was going to blow all that back south, hopefully back in the one it already burned.

Diana: Is there anything positive that you perceive having resulted from this fire.

Steve: The friendship, the kindness, is unbelievable. We live along the highway there, and I'd be at the Bends running water for cattle or whatnot, and you'd see those loads of hay going by and thinking what those people gave up to come and help you. How many miles they traveled. It wasn't easy for them. And what they gave to us. And then when you look at the grass. Where we live, it's helped our grass. Englewood, the sandhills, they're going to hurt for several years. It was ugly over there, it what I think.

Steve: The friendship. It wasn't on the major networks about our fire. But the Facebook guys said, "We don't need Washington D.C. We need each other, and that's what we did."

Kelly: Well, and the people out here. It says so much for people. In the city, if they burn a block or they have storms or hurricanes, people are looting. Out here, they were giving things to each other, feeding each other. Cattle have been sent. Money has been sent. It's just a total opposite of what goes on in the city.

Steve: Yeah, and the friendship. We had people from Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan... Practically all of them have come back and seen us. Jenny and Nick and John, John Culp and Adam came from Pennsylvania. Nick and Jenny came from Minnesota. They were all here a month ago and spent three days just to see it all again. The posts on our fence along the highway are brown with red tips. Kim or Holly, I'm not sure who, I think it was Kim that morning, said, "Hey I've got two guys. Could you come get them?"

Okay, I get over here, and she said, "There's four of them." This couple Nick and Jenny and then John and Adam. Anyway, they get over there Nick and Jenny had a pickup of a cover on the bed. They raised it, and they had posts and wire. They said, "We didn't know for sure where we were going to get sent, but this is what we brought." So that along the highway is their fence. That's the Minnesota fence. They're good kids; they're good people. They came back for three days, and we just had a blast with them.

Steve: You know, what was ironic about that. I was at Spott's getting something, and Sue asked me about what help we had or something. I said, "We've got a couple people from Minnesota and a couple guys from Pennsylvania." She said, "Minnesota! That's where I came from." I said, "Oh really?" "Yeah. Ask them where they're from." So I just got on the phone, and I said, "Where are you guys from?" They named a little old town, and Sue says, "That's my hometown. Ask them if they know Annie..." I did, and Annie had run the cafe there, they ate there every day. And this guy, her husband, helps them quite a bit on the farm.

Kelly: It's a small world.

Steve: It's just crazy.

Diana: So do you have anything you think you need to do to consider or prepare for something like this again or that the community needs to do to prepare for something like this? A disaster?

Steve: I can about bet that as long as I'm alive. I'm going to have wheat on the west side of my house. I'm going to plant that to wheat every year. I'll probably mow a little bit more. Part of the problem, I've heard people say and one guy in particular said that he felt like probably the biggest problem we had is the CRP. They wouldn't let us... they was worried about the bird habitat. They let it get away there was too much fuel.

Kelly: They regulate our ground too strict when the people who own the ground, operate on the ground and know how to operate it. There wouldn't have been that much fuel had the farmer and rancher gotten to use his CRP like he'd like to use it. I understand what the fishing game and those guys are wanting to do...

Steve: But we need to work together better.

Kelly: The wildlife lives on the farm ground too. The birds are nesting out in the wheat field. They're nesting when you're farming, and the deer population are in our milo. We don't hurt the deer population. That's what that one guy said, "You managed to kill more animals in 48 hours by leaving all this fuel than what you've tried to protect over how many years the CRP has been here." In two days they killed more animals and how many years have we had CRP.

Steve: That's pretty true, I think.

Kelly: The deer, the coyotes, when we were dragging those calves, you'd find remains, and you'd wonder, was this a calf or was this a coyote? What was this? The rabbits. You didn't know what it was.

Steve: You know, another thing that we kind of went by, that I appreciate, was the school being open and serving the meals and all of us going down there and eating, and all of the stuff that was given.

Kelly: And how have the school teachers, those that work here. School teachers worked their buns off. A lot of them were down there just as many hours as the firemen were out fighting. And they could come in to eat any time of day and they fed them. I forgot about that. We ate there the first two nights when we didn't have electricity. We came in, and one night we got there, and they were out of food in the kitchen. I think Rick Price bought 90 some pizzas from Phove and took them down there and fed people through the night. More food came and they were cooking more, but it wasn't ready at every shift.

Steve: The whole community, all of these little communities, really banded together. Matt Wilson's cows was out of grass, and the Snyder boys over at Coldwater didn't get burned out. They took all his cows in. We heard about it and took my truck over there hauled cattle.

Kelly: We ended up at Roy Hoffman's at Coldwater. We sat at the grocery store, Heidi and the kids and I got Lunchables, and we ended up with Roy Hoffman's. Kim called and said that Roy had a little rental house. We ended up there. I don't know where the food came from that was there.

Diana: Diane Humphreys had a roast that they took with them.

Kelly: That's what I thought! They didn't cook that in 20 minutes; it was a crock pot. That's where it came from. But there was a huge pan of lasagna that was this long and salad and bread. We had already eaten the Lunchables with the kids at the grocery store, but I was like, where did the food come from that was for us here.

Diana: Maybe that was Teresa Jellison, but I'm not sure.

Kelly: That might have been Teresa. I don't know.

Steve: Everywhere you turned there were people helping us. On Facebook anyway, it will tell you on the "Sharing the memories" from a year ago. On March 28, it had a picture of me. I had taken a picture of my truck with a load of hay going to Medicine Lodge a year ago. The first load of hay truck, the second day was another load of hay that I was going to Medicine Lodge with. I captioned it, "It's pretty sad when you pull up to a place, and they've lost, and they're thankful. They cried." I said, "Exactly one year ago today, I'm doing the same thing."

Diana: Getting the same kind of help.

Steve: Just exactly the same. Doing the same thing.

Kelly: Some of the some of the first bales that came in were from a guy over at Sun City. So we were talking, and he said, "I thought I knew you." I think you delivered this hay to me at the Anderson Creek Fire. This is what's left of it; we haven't fed it up." So we unload it! We unloaded a lot of hay. He sent a lot out of

there to different places. A lot of people got burned out. Lots of loads of hay went to Buffalo. Chet Bratcher, the Huck Ranch. I don't know how many. Jeff would send them to here. What the Kays did, that was really great. There's not enough words to say what they did. It could increase their business over the years, but for three or four months it probably hurt them, and they feed a lot of people here in town.

Steve: There's not just anybody could do it, to have the manpower and do what they did.

Kelly: And to think, and I know that it happened, that people would give them grief. And they've had grief over it. And I think those that gave them grief, karma will come around. They didn't deserve the grief that they've got because they donated a lot to the community. Our community foundation, those people and the hours they have spent. I can't imagine, "Who gets what?" The idea, you know, all this money and how do you divide that up? I said, and we had our loss and Roger Giles, I look at what their loss was, and I said, "Roger, my loss doesn't compare. I can't even complain." He said, "It's still your loss. It still hurts you as bad as my loss hurts me." And yeah, "You're probably right, Roger," but there is no way you can compare and here this community foundation had to divide the money up amongst families that lost that. I can't imagine the stress they went through. I don't know if you're on that committee. I don't know who is, or I don't know all of them, but they need to be commended.

Diana: Do you have any other thoughts that you'd like to include about this experience?

Kelly: I hope we never have to go through this again. I was good scared. I was terribly scared.

Kelly: And he doesn't scare easily. I felt helpless. I can't believe I left; I'm not one to leave. And then I ended up with little girls. That just was kind of out of sorts.

Steve: She's usually not very far from me.

Kelly: I felt helpless. I'm sitting in Dodge in a motel room, and they're down here running for their lives, scared to death. I hope we never have to go through it again.

Steve: I missed her a lot.

Kelly: I didn't see the scare they had. Did you see the fire?

Diana: Yes.

Kelly: When you were leaving town?

Diana: No. When we were leaving Sitka to go to Buffalo, there were flames halfway up that elevator on the south side.

Diana: Thank you for everything!