

Jim Arnold, interview begun in progress of video, March of 2020

Jim: Pretty near, everybody. There was Charlie Yant.

Interviewer: Charlie Yant. Who was he?.

Jim: Oh, he lived right there west of Medicine, where you get up on top there and make that curve. He lived right there. Some of his... I think his daughter-in-law or somebody, they've still got that place. But about everybody raised horses for the army. You could get \$165 for one that could pass. That was quite a bit money, back then. Dad and some of them, they would start them as polo horses. They would play stick and ball with them, and you'd get \$300 to \$500 for one that would make a polo horse.

Interviewer: Who had money for polo horses back then?

Jim: They'd come there from Wichita and Kansas City, they'd come there from all over. Kochs. Oh, there was, I think, six of them oil men and one real-estate man, they had polo horses there. Rube Goodnight, one of the Goodnights from down here, he trained horses for Hartman's there.

Interviewer: How did you end up in Clark County? That's a ways away.

Jim: Oh. I went to Montana for Fred Koch, from up at Wichita. He'd bought a ranch up there up there at Dillon. Don and Less had went together. And they kind of lent/leased me up there when he bought that deal, and I went up there and helped get it started. Then when I come back from up there, I come out here and we leased the place that Bouzidons got first and then we wound up with the Box Ranch over south of Protection and leased a bunch of other country around here. And then we'd summer a thousand of those Matador heifers out at the Green Ranch.

Interviewer: What's a Matador heifer?

Jim: That Matador Ranch down there at Matador, Texas. Fred Koch, well, the Koch brothers, they still own it. And then it wound up that Les had the Dunn Ranch for oh, 20 years, I guess. And then he bought the two Abel ranches up here.

Then they got old and died and it all folded up. None of their kids wanted nothing to do with it. Don and Les had both started with nothing. But their kids and grandkids, when I was up there to Hutchinson, his boy and grandson had a bunch of mares up there. Les come out there and we was loping, and he said, "Oh, I wish some of my kids would..." but they wouldn't, none of them. Then he said, "My grandkids was raised in them country clubs, playing golf. They never worked a day in their life. Not a one of them."

Interviewer: How many years did you spend in Clark County then?

Jim: 30 some, I guess.

Interviewer: Are you retired?

Jim: Yeah!

Interviewer: Okay.

Jim: Yes, I finally did. I didn't want to, really. But you get to where you can't do it.

Interviewer: Now, I understand that one of your grandsons, no, excuse me, your son competes in rodeos still.

Jim: Yeah, I got several of them.

Interviewer: Who are they? Tell us about them.

Jim: Well, there's Dusty, my grandson, he's Perry's boy. He rodeos. And then his two boys, Coy and Zain, they both rope pretty good, and then my youngest daughter, her boys, they live up in North Central Missouri and they rodeo, just weekends. But Dusty and Coy and them, they rope pretty hard. Coy, he ropes, he's roping really good.

Interviewer: Is this something you did when you were younger?

Jim: I rode bucking horses and roped. None of them went to the riding events. Now when Coy was in junior high, he rode steers, and it was just easy for him to ride steers, but when they got in high school, riding bulls, he said, "I rope too good. I ain't riding no bull."

He does rope good, but boy, he's worked hard at it too. Because he's real little, but his horses help him and he gets by. He only weighs 140 pounds, but he's fast.

Interviewer: Well, where did you raise your family?

Jim: Right here.

Interviewer: Okay. About that time, who were you working for?

Jim: Young and Cooper.

Interviewer: OK, tell me more, because I don't know Young and Cooper.

Jim: Well, they were traders out of Wichita and they got really big. They had a lot of country over in the Flint Hills, and they had three feedlots and 25 trucks, two packing houses and then they had two ranches leased over at... One at Belvidere and one at Sun City and one at Fargo. They got really big.

Interviewer: What did you do for them?

Jim: I run them ranches for them.

Interviewer: When you say you "run a ranch," what does that mean?

Jim: I just managed it, neither one of them were ranchers. They were just traders.

Interviewer: So are you running cows, heifers, stockers?

Jim: The only place where we run cows was down at Fargo. We ran yearlings on the rest of the country. They had over a hundred thousand acres leased around here at one time.

Interviewer: Who fixed all that fence?

Jim: Oh, whoever was working on the places! But I had good help, a lot of good help. But they'd let me pay pretty good and furnish their houses and utilities and meat and whatever. We had nice horses to ride. Less and I had 20 head of mares and we raised our own horses.

Interviewer: You sold your own colts?

Jim: No, we would sell them some of them fillies, but them 20 mares kept all the ranches in horses here and back east, both. I'd break them and get them started and then get them broke pretty good before I'd send them back there.

Interviewer: Did you remain whole pretty well through all this? Did you ever get hurt? The stuff you're describing sounds a little bit physically dangerous.

Jim: Oh, yeah. I had a lot of wrecks.

Interviewer: What kind of wrecks did you get into?

Jim: Oh, just falling and stuff like that. I never did get hurt bad. And I never did get hurt riding bucking horses. You'd get bruised up once in a while, but it wasn't nothing.

Interviewer: When did you have to quit riding?

Jim: Oh, I quit riding bucking horses in the 50s.

Interviewer: Do you miss it?

Jim: Oh, yeah. I liked riding them bucking horses, especially when I'd go up north where them bucking horses are big and stout horses that would sure enough buck. I liked that.

I didn't like for the ranch horses to buck, but we had a lot of work for them. We had good ones.

Interviewer: What was your favorite part of managing a ranch? What did you enjoy the most?

Jim: All the fun we had.

Interviewer: What was fun?

Jim: Oh, well, we was always pulling stuff on each other and we done a lot of work, but we made fun out of it. You know, you could make it hard, if you wanted to.

Interviewer: Who did you work with?

Jim: Oh, here I had Duke Crane, Windy Spurgeon, and Bernard Moon. Oh, I don't know, I had a lot of them, off and on. A lot of them had a tendency to come and go, you know. Pat Mason.

Interviewer: Tell us about some of the people you worked with on the ranches that you ran?

Jim: Yeah, Windy Spurgeon was down on the Box (Ranch). All the time we had it, nearly. Let's see who else was down there after him? I don't remember for sure, who else was down there. I just don't remember who was there. He was there nearly all the time we had it. He was raised down at Gage.

Interviewer: How's he related to Delroy?

Jim: Uncle. Yeah, he's an uncle to Delroy. Bill Spurgeon, his brother, and I were good friends. Bill was really a good horseman, he roped really good. Good cowboy. And then we had Duke Crane, I think he was up here nearly 14 or 15 years. He was raised right here. And then we had Pat Mason, he was down at Fargo. Richard Degnan, he helped me a lot when he was a kid. Then we neighbored with everybody. We didn't have a whole lot of help. Some of those guys did day work, Pat Jacobs, they did day work when they was kids. I had a lot of fun with them. And everybody neighbored come shipping time and branding time.

Jim: We fed with mules up until, I guess, in the late 60s, when them four-wheel drive pickups come around. I liked feeding with them mules

Interviewer: Where did you get work mules?

Jim: I bought them off Brumbines, out west between Dodge and Garden. They raised a lot of mules out there, Mr. Brumbine did.

Interviewer: Did you have to break them?

Jim: Oh, sometimes I'd buy bronc mules. And by the time we worked them, I'd take them back up there and he'd buy them back, broke.

Interviewer: What's the difference between working a mule and a horse?

Jim: Oh, I just liked to work a mule a lot better. They are tougher and, I don't know, you could just get around a lot quicker. For one thing, you didn't have no mercy on a mule.

Jim: A mule, everybody had an old bronc mare or one that wouldn't work out or something, and somebody would say, "What do you do with that old mare?"

Jim: And, "Oh, I bred her to a jack." And that's what you got, was brones. And a mule would take care of theirselves a lot better. A lot of people didn't like to work mules, but I did.

Interviewer: Did you have a favorite horse?

Jim: Oh, I had several, really, one of the best ranch horses was a big bay horse. He was out of a King Ranch stud that Harry Shepler had and out of a Handcock mare.

He was really a good horse. And we hauled him to some ropings too, and he was just a super good ranch horse. As a matter of fact, we had some buffalo up there, and that old bull, in the fall, he'd want to go south.

Man, I think I roped him three or four times on this horse. He could run to him and handle him after you got him caught.

Interviewer: Oh, I didn't know you could rope buffalo.

Jim: I did him!

Interviewer: All by yourself?

Jim: Yeah, and well, the first time was right down here south of town. I had him caught and they had a truck backed up to a bank. Jack Gray was training cutting horses right there at the old Berryman place, and he come over there and he got a rope up on him too. He couldn't pull him, but he could hold him straight enough to where I got him in the truck.

Interviewer: Where'd you take him?

Jim: Took him home, penned him up for a while, and finally the last time I caught him, he was clear out there west of the corrals at the mile corner of Juanita Abel's.

I loaded them all and took them to Dodge and sold them. Don Young had bought them and sent them down there (in the first place). He was bidding on them, and Jack Steinmetz said, "Hey," he said, "You know whose buffalo them are?"

And he said, "No."

And Jack said, "They're yours. And if I was you, I wouldn't send them back down there either."

And that bull broke out up there at the sale barn, and they called me and wanted to know if I'd come up there and catch him. And I said, "No, I ain't going to go up there and catch him in town." Well, they shot him, I guess.

Interviewer: So you were a buffalo rancher there for a while!

Jim: Yeah, I only had four or five cows.

Interviewer: What do you do with the calves?

Jim: Oh, we ate some of them.

Them guys, we'd pull some bad tricks on each other. Gaylord Dowling, we was going to work out there, and I had to go down there and receive some cattle at Wayne Alexander's. Duke took my horse and stuff out there. I had a brand new saddle. When I got back, my horse was there. My saddle was gone. I got to looking around, and there was a cupola on the top of that barn. There was my saddle, tied clear in the top of that cupola.

Jim: They had an old ladder, and I finally got up and got it down. We was always doing something.

Interviewer: Would you have left it if it had been an old saddle?

Jim: No.

Interviewer: What stunts did you pull?

Jim: Oh, Virgil, we was out there on that lake. Gaylord Allen had that leased and where that spillway run over, it made a great big hole there. And Virgil, we was sitting there looking at it, and Virgil said, "I bet there's nobody here got enough guts to ride off in there with me."

I said, "Get in." And just as soon as he left, I left right on top of him. It took him under. He wasn't very happy for a while, when he come out of there.

And they were, oh, somebody was always sneaking up behind somebody and "rimfiring" them. They'd take a rope between two horses, it caused some pretty good wrecks.

One time, we was gathering up at the Hackberry up there. It was a big, rough old son of a gun. Perry was in high school, my oldest boy; him and Windy, they were a mess. We left that morning, and he had an old army coat, and for some reason, he took it. I didn't think much about it. I dropped everybody off and we kept Perry in between me and Windy.

We kept topping out, and no Perry. Finally, Windy and I trotted over to each other and, "I ain't seen him."

So we took off and we found him. There he was, laying out there. So Windy, he was loping up there to him, and he was under that old army coat and he jumped up and roared. That old wall-eyed..., bucked him off! The fight was on. We done a lot of stuff like that.

Interviewer: You didn't feel pain in those days.

Jim: Nah, we didn't. Old Doc Gary, he knew we was crazy. We'd go in there and he'd sew us up or something. He wouldn't give us nothing, you know. He'd say, "Does that hurt?" And we'd say, "That's all right." And he'd say, "How about that!" And he was a good old guy, Doc Gary was.

Interviewer: You went to him pretty often?

Jim: Oh, yeah. We got to where we wouldn't bother with him. My youngest boy, he started and he said, "I ain't going in there." He'd sew himself up.

Interviewer: Good days.

Jim: Yeah. We didn't make no money, but we sure had a lot of fun.

Tell them guys now about feeding with mules or trotting ten or fifteen miles in the dark to get somewhere and you know, they think we were crazy.

Now they'll load their four wheelers and haul 'em and ride in their air-conditioned pickup to go fifteen miles.

Interviewer: Would you do it over again?

Jim: Oh, yeah. Heck, yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think are the biggest changes that have happened in ranching in your lifetime?

Jim: Oh, it's got so much more complicated, I guess. You have to keep a lot better books. It's always been a tough business, but then the equipment. My gosh, we was feeding with mules. We'd bind that feed and shock it and then load it. We'd load cake on the front of the wagon and bundles on the back. When we'd run out of bundles, we'd feed them little square bales, you know. Now they haul round bales and have fancy balers and air-conditioned tractors. It's a heap nicer as far as that goes.

Interviewer: Do you think it's as much fun now?

Jim: Nah, it's just a job. Most of them, they don't care about making money for anybody. It's just a job.

Oh, I always tried to make them ranch's better. Get the grass better or water better. Les bought that North Abel Ranch out there. It didn't have no water on it, or very little water.

He called me and said he bought it, and I said, "You done what?"

Jim: He said, "I bought that north Abel Ranch." I said, "Man, there ain't no water on it."

So Kenny Allison was helping me out there and we went to work hunting water and we found a real good well up there at the north end and pipelined it. Of course, they was saying, "That crazy cowboy ain't gonna find no water up there." Then Bouziden, he come over there to see if we could find him some. He got water. And Denton's west of us, they got water. And Giles, up there where Rod, up there at Jim's. That whole country's pipelined now. And it made good country out of it. As good as there is.

Interviewer: How far can each cow travel to water and still do well?

Jim: Oh, really not very far, three or four miles and you can get by, but it's not good. And like that Abel place there, after we got that water on it, we re-fenced a bunch of it. Some of that old rough country, they wouldn't go back there, it was too rough.

I done the same thing on that Bailey Ranch out there at Lakin and made it good.

Interviewer: What did it cost to put in a mile of fence back then?

Jim: About \$2,000.

Interviewer: They're telling me it's 10 grand now.

Jim: Yeah, yeah, I had a fencing outfit down at Tampa. They re-fenced that whole ranch down there at Fargo. They stayed there all winter and re-fenced that. And we re-fenced a lot up there on that Abel.

Interviewer: It's all new now.

Jim: Yeah. Well, a lot of it needed to be new, especially the cross fences.

Interviewer: Somebody told me this generation now won't know how to fix fence.

Jim: Oh, they'll hire it done.

Interviewer: Well, it's all new.

Jim: Yeah, it's all new and it'll be good for... And they got it fixed now to where if it burns again, they won't lose near as much.

Interviewer: What did you do the day of the Starbuck Fire? Where were you?

Jim: I was here. I couldn't help much, but I knew every bit of that country and who it belonged to and I could take and pick them up down there and show them where to go.

Interviewer: You helped them know where to put fence in?

Jim: Yeah, I could take them to those ranches. There was a lot of good people come here and helped. Man, really good. There was a bunch of kids from Minnesota, a whole busload of them. I had a lot of fun with them. They kept wanting to get some rattles and they didn't find no snakes or didn't kill them. Anyway, that one kid up there, I sent him some rattles and he wrote me a really nice letter and thanked me for them. Said he'd scattered them out up there to them other kids.

Jim: Oh Lord, them kids worked their rears off.

Interviewer: What did they do?

Jim: Mostly, they were tearing out old fence. They'd come in coal-black every night.

And we had, well, my daughter out there in Missouri, she keeps books there at the sale barn, she put a lot of hay together and a lot of money together and sent them.

Interviewer: What is your daughter's name?

Jim: Jimmy Lou Hinkle. That was quite a deal.

Interviewer: Where did you raise your family? Where were you living when you raised your kids?

Jim: Right here.

Interviewer: In town?

Jim: No. Out there at Bouziden's, where Bouziden's headquarters are, there was a two story rockhouse there. It burned. Well, we were in the process of moving out to Lakin when it burned. Then Dave built a new house out there and it burned.

He built a new place up in the canyon there. I asked him why he built it up there, and he said, "Well, your house burned, my house burned and that's enough!" But if it burns, that one will burn too.

But he sure picked a nice place to build it up there. There's a pond right there, and he's got two stinking old oil wells there.

Interviewer: They're not ugly!

Jim: They make cow business good.

Interviewer: How many kids do you have?

Jim: Five. Yeah, I have three girls and two boys.

Interviewer: Who did you marry?

Jim: Vesta Goodrich.

Interviewer: Was she raised here?

Jim: No. She was raised in Wichita.

Interviewer: How'd you get her to come out here?

Jim: Forced her! I never will forget when we come out here, we'd come through Medicine and across there and we got out here three for four miles and, "Man," she says, "I don't know about this." But she really liked it here. It was a good place to raise them kids. We worked together and hunted and fished together and roped together.

Interviewer: So she got to like it here.

Jim: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Do any of your kids still live in this area?

Jim: Yeah. My youngest boy lives here in town, Terry Wayne.

Interviewer: He must not be a library person.

Jim: No, you'd never get him away from here.

Interviewer: Are you glad you stayed?

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: You went out to Lakin. Did you run a ranch out there?

Jim: Yeah, Young and Cooper bought some country out there and then we was running twelve to fifteen thousand on wheat pasture out there in the wintertime on wheat pasture and beets and burned-up milo.

Then when they sold out out there, we had that Beatty Ranch leased out out there and I went to partnering with Tony Beatty. He had that ranch and I owned half the cows. Turned out it was a good deal for me. He was really good to me, but I made him money too! But he was a tough old son-of-a-gun. Everybody said, man, you don't want to mess with him. But I had his ranch leased, and I got along with him great. He was super good to me.

Interviewer: Why did you come back to Clark County?

Jim: Well, I come back here when my grandson got hurt playing football, he was quadraplegic and so I come back here. Tony sold that ranch and I was to stay there and run it for Tate's. When he got hurt, I come back down here to the Abel place for Less.

Then after they got some money for him, they went up to Hutchinson because they couldn't get nurses and stuff here, they moved up there. Then J.R. and I, we bought a few mares, really good mares, and they got started and we wound up with 85 mares up there.

They've only got about a dozen mares left up there, and then my daughter up in Missouri, I've got some mares up there and a stud. Yeah, this is a good place to live.