

## **Ranching Olis Goodnight**

*Diana:* Tell me your name?

*Olis:* Olis Goodnight.

*Diana:* And where do you live?

*Olis:* I live 12 miles northwest of Englewood.

*Diana:* When did your family come to Clark County?

*Olis:* My Grandpa Goodnight, come to Englewood in 1901. He'd originally come from El Dorado to Beaver, working for a cattle company. And then in 1902, in 1901, he moved to Englewood.

*Diana:* Do you know why he came to Englewood?

*Olis:* Well, he started the livery stable in Englewood and then he owned some other businesses. And then he owned a little bit of land, but he rented quite a lot of land and started out running cattle. Over the years, he ran a lot of cattle around Englewood.

*Diana:* What was his name?

*Olis:* Frank Goodnight.

*Diana:* Was he married at the time?

*Olis:* Yes, he married and had a family.

*Diana:* And how many children did he have?

*Olis:* Six or seven, six of them, I think. My dad was born in 1900. Then my grandpa later on went through the 30s and the Depression and the Dust Bowl days and got caught with a lot of cattle that got to be worthless and he ended up losing everything. So, he went through some really bad times.

*Diana:* Are you related to the Goodnights that had the Goodnight Trail? The cattle trail?

*Olis:* Yeah, we are distantly related. In fact, my brother Donald has got some letters that my Grandpa Goodnight corresponded with Charles Goodnight. We've got some of those letters where they wrote back and forth. My grandpa one time bought some buffalo from him and had them there at Englewood.

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*Olis:* I know Homer Thomas used to say when he was a kid, one of the big highlights was when Goodnight's buffaloes were out and they'd all get their horses and go gather them up.

*Diana:* So how far from town did your grandpa have land and which side?

*Olis:* At one time he probably rented a lot of land, for a few years he had leased what is known as the Theis Ranch that belonged to Perry. Perry sold it to another guy and my grandpa operated it for seven years.

*Diana:* You said he ran cattle. Do you know what type of cattle?

*Olis:* Well, he ran a lot of steers. He'd buy calves from ranchers around, and he ran mainly steers. But he had some cows and calves.

*Diana:* Where did he sell them?

*Olis:* Oh, he's shipped a lot of cattle to Kansas City.

*Diana:* Did he ship them out of Englewood?

*Olis:* He shipped them out of Englewood, yes. The train came to Englewood, then it was a dead-end.

*Diana:* It turned around there?

*Olis:* It turned around at Englewood and they had a big set of stockyards there on the east side of Englewood.

*Diana:* Did they have to ask for the shipping cars when they were ready to ship?

*Olis:* Oh, yes, they'd have to order cars in.

*Diana:* Where would they order them from?

*Olis:* Well, they had a depot there and the depot agent was in charge and he would order the cars.

*Diana:* Did he ride with the cattle to Kansas City?

*Olis:* Well, I'm sure he did sometimes, but at the time he probably didn't, because he probably couldn't get away that long.

*Diana:* Did he have hired hands?

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*Olis:* Oh, yeah. And then all those kids were growing up; they worked my dad and a couple other sons, you know.

*Diana:* Did they raise horses?

*Olis:* No.

*Diana:* Did they just use horses to gather?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* But they didn't have extras.

*Olis:* Well, they didn't have broodmares or anything, they just bought horses as they needed them. But they had horses.

*Diana:* Did he do any farming?

*Olis:* Yeah, he had a farm, too.

*Diana:* What type of crops did he grow?

*Olis:* Mainly wheat, some milo and feed.

*Diana:* How did he put the crops in? Did he use horses or did he have a tractor?

*Olis:* He did, but he had a tractor later on. He had more than one big Rumley, I think they called them. He had one of them and one-way plows.

*Diana:* So about how many acres, do you know?

*Olis:* I don't know how many my grandpa had.

*Diana:* Did your dad ranch and farm too.

*Olis:* My dad did. When I was growing up, he rented land and ran cattle and farmed. All us kids helped him with that.

*Diana:* When they rented, do you have an idea of how much they had to pay to rent land at that time?

*Olis:* Well, the farmland was mostly a third and two-thirds and the grassland was probably

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like a quarter, 25 cents an acre maybe. By the time I was a kid, it was up to probably 50 or 75 cents an acre.

*Diana:* Did your dad rent the same land that your grandpa did?

*Olis:* Some of it. Not all of it.

*Diana:* So about how many acres did they run?

*Olis:* Well, I don't know about my grandpa, what all he did have. My dad, when I was growing up, my dad and Lloyd Alexander were partners. And they had one pasture south of Englewood that had 3,000 acres in it, and then they had some other land around, mainly north and west of Englewood, that they rented. They had farmland on it and we farmed that. That went on till, probably... Well, I went in the Navy in 1950 and they were still partners when I got out of the Navy in '54; Lloyd was in bad health and they weren't partners anymore then.

*Diana:* So, you went to the Navy in 1950?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* Where were you stationed?

*Olis:* Well, I spent two years on a ship and then the next two years I spent in Alaska, Kodiak, Alaska.

*Diana:* Were you drafted or did you just enlist?

*Olis:* I was going to get drafted, so I joined the Navy.

*Diana:* What was occurring then? Was that Korea?

*Olis:* Yeah, the Korean War. Yeah. Or they never did call it a war. They called it a conflict.

*Diana:* What was the name of the ship you were on?

*Olis:* USS Coronado.

*Diana:* And how many people were on it?

*Olis:* Well, it was probably 5,000. It was a seaplane tender, is what it was.

*Diana:* What was your job?

*Olis:* Well, I was on the boat crew, most of the time. We had a 50-foot motor launch. We

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would be anchored out in the bay, most of the time, different places, and make runs back and forth to the shore.

*Diana:* Off what shore?

*Olis:* Well, wherever we were anchored. We spent time in Yokohama and Japan and quite a bit of time in Okinawa and the islands, just different places where the ship was sent. We'd be anchored out in the bay, so we'd have to transport everybody back and forth and haul supplies.

*Diana:* Did you get shore leave?

*Olis:* Not when I was over there, but if you got shore leave, there was no place to go.

*Diana:* Then after you were on the ship, you were stationed in Alaska. Where?

*Olis:* Well, no, I was transferred off the ship to the naval base in Kodiak, Alaska.

*Diana:* And then you retired from the Navy there?

*Olis:* Well, I got discharged there, when my time was up. In the meantime, I got Shirley up there, we'd gotten married. We got married in '52 in California, and then that's when I got shipped to Alaska.

*Diana:* So where did you meet Shirley?

*Olis:* I met her right here in Ashland. She was working for the Central office.

*Diana:* Oh, like the telephone office?

*Olis:* Yes, and I was working on the Profit Ranch up here, west of Ashland. I'd worked up there that year, and I come in here and joined the Ashland Roping Club and then I met her. So, she got to go to a lot of ropings.

*Diana:* Did you meet her at a dance?

*Olis:* Yeah, yeah.

*Diana:* Was it a VFW dance? Or was it the American Legion?

*Olis:* It was out at the fair ground.

*Diana:* Then you got married.

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*Olis:* We got married in California. Our ship came in and she'd went to California and was staying with her brother and his wife out there and she got a job there in San Diego. And our ship come into San Diego and we got married there.

*Diana:* Then how long was it before she could join you in Alaska?

*Olis:* About a year, probably. I got up there and there wasn't hardly any housing. I had to find a place to live and it took nearly a year to do that.

*Diana:* So, you lived off base?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* What was your job when you were there?

*Olis:* Oh, unloading ships mainly, loading and unloading. We had a lot of cargo ships come in there.

*Diana:* By the time you left Alaska, you had a family, right?

*Olis:* Yeah, our daughter Sherre, was born up there.

*Diana:* Where'd you come home to? Did you come to Englewood?

*Olis:* We came home to Englewood.

*Diana:* Where did you live?

*Olis:* Well, we rented a little house there in the north part of Englewood. We lived there for several years, a couple of years.

*Diana:* What did you do for work?

*Olis:* Well, I got a job out there on the Theis Ranch, for Charley Theis. I worked for him.

*Diana:* What did you do?

*Olis:* Well, just done ranch work and farming for them, but in the meantime, I was putting together some land, renting some land. My mom had a half-section of land she had inherited from her dad, and I rented that off of her. That was over in Meade County, about 14 miles from Englewood. So that was the distance to be traveling.

*Diana:* What do you have for transportation? Did you have a pickup?

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*Olis:* Well, I eventually bought an old pickup.

*Diana:* How did you get back and forth to work?

*Olis:* An old pickup. When I was working for Theis there in Englewood, they would come by and pick me up in the morning. Several people worked for them in Englewood, and they'd go around and pick everybody up and we would go to ranch. Then in the evening, they'd deliver everybody home.

*Diana:* So how many people did they have working for them? Was it a big operation?

*Olis:* Well, yeah, it was a pretty big operation. It was an 18,000-acre ranch, farmland and grassland. When I worked out there, there were four to five guys working there.

*Diana:* How'd you get paid? Did you get paid just wages or did you get beef?

*Olis:* I got paid by the hour.

*Diana:* By the hour. Did you get weekends off?

*Olis:* Well, in the wintertime, I didn't get much time off because we were feeding cattle, but usually we'd get Sundays off. It was a pretty steady job. We'd go to work at 7:00 in the morning and get off at 6:00 in the evening

*Diana:* What kind of feed did you feed the cattle? Was it cake?

*Olis:* Mostly cake. They'd run cattle on grass or if we had to cake them. We did quite a bit of it with a team of horses.

*Diana:* What type of horses?

*Olis:* They were Percheron horses. They weren't real big horses. They were horses that could move out and travel pretty good.

*Diana:* No mules?

*Olis:* Not there. No.

*Diana:* Did they have a tractor?

*Olis:* Yeah. They had good machinery. They had Caterpillar tractors, farm tractors. They had good equipment.

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*Diana:* Caterpillar tractors were pretty popular at one time, weren't they?

*Olis:* Well, there weren't very many of them used for farming.

*Diana:* My grandpa had one.

*Olis:* Yeah, well, there were some around, but not a lot of them.

*Diana:* So about how many cattle did they run on the Theis Ranch?

*Olis:* Well, they'd get a lot of cattle out of New Mexico, calves and yearlings. They had a big ranch down there north of Tampa, Texas. They had 50 sections. I think they have about 14 or 1,500 head of cows down there. A lot of times they'd bring the calves up here and run them. Yeah, it's hard to say how many they did have.

*Diana:* Did you help brand and doctor and all that. How did you do that? Was it all on horseback and roping them?

*Olis:* No, we had trails and a pen and a chute. Of course, a big part of that was roping.

*Diana:* What were the main medicines or things that they had to doctor for back then?

*Olis:* That's it, there weren't a whole lot, but penicillin had just finally come out and that was be a big boost, but one of the worst things back then in the early 50s, 40s and 50s, was screwworm. You'd get an open wound and you'd get screw flies in it. That was a big problem, but they eradicated that, and that really made a difference.

*Diana:* Was there one time when they did dips where they dipped all the cattle through? What was that for?

*Olis:* That was for ticks, lice and ticks.

*Diana:* That became kind of prevalent there for a while?

*Olis:* Well, yeah. And even one time, they had scabies. Everybody was quarantined, you had to dip all the cattle. They even come out with box sprays, if you didn't have a dipping vat or didn't have one available, you had to put your cattle in the box sprays, it was all run by the state people.

*Diana:* They came out and set everything up?

*Olis:* They set everything up, and they set it up there at the stockyards there in Englewood



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and we drove cattle in there and run them through that box. But the Theis Ranch, they had a big dipping vat. We dipped a lot of cattle there.

*Diana:* So, it would take all the crew to get all the cattle rounded up to ship or doctor?

*Olis:* It would take several, yeah.

*Diana:* Did they use neighbors or were they so big they didn't really?

*Olis:* Not on that ranch, they pretty well had their own help, but they did neighbor some.

*Diana:* When did you start branching out more on your own?

*Olis:* Well, I started renting land. I had those two quarters my mom owned and I rented them off of her there in '55. I put out some milo the next spring and that fall I planted a little bit of wheat. But I bought an old tractor, an old McCormick-Deering tractor that had come out on steel but had been converted to rubber. At the time I bought it, you had to crank it to start it, but that's what I farmed with when I first started.

*Olis:* Later on, I got a chance to rent some other land from Stacey Burns, Stacey lived here in Ashland.

*Diana:* He was married to Beula and had the daughters

*Olis:* Yes, he had three daughters.

*Diana:* So about how many acres was that?

*Olis:* Well, Stacy had a little over 2,000 acres. So that really boosted me, helped me a lot. And then Stacy ended up selling me his machinery. That got me started.

*Diana:* What do you purchase? A tractor?

*Olis:* Yeah, he had a little AR John Deere and another little tractor, a couple one-ways, a drill...

*Diana:* Did he have a combine?

*Olis:* No, no, combine. But he sold that to me then, and he had this place, the Stacy Burns place about five miles northwest of Englewood. It had a house on it, and a barn and corals. So, we moved out there to that house and nobody had lived in it for a long time. But we've cleaned it up and fixed it up and lived there for several years.

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*Diana:* Did you always grow milo and feed and wheat; did you move to planting more wheat acres?

*Olis:* Well, yeah, I accumulated more land and planted more wheat. We lived there on Stacy's place till '63, I think, 1963. Then we leased Harvey Easterday's land which was on further northwest over in the edge of Meade County. That was about another 2,500 acres that we leased off of Mr. Easterday. It was farmland and grass and then we moved over there to a bigger house. We moved over there, but I kept Stacy's place, too.

*Diana:* Tell me a little bit about the land. What type it is, you said it is mostly pasture. Is it rolling hills? Is it...

*Olis:* And it's not real big hills, but it's hills and valleys. It's pretty sandy-- some hard ground or quite a bit of hard ground. It's a lot of different types of soil down there.

*Diana:* Is your farm ground all kinds of different land, I mean, types of soil?

*Olis:* Mostly pretty good farmland.

*Diana:* Always make a good bushels off of it?

*Olis:* Well, we went through a lot of bad years, but we've had a few good years.

*Diana:* It's kind of like, did it rain this year?

*Olis:* It finally did.

*Diana:* So, at the same time, were you running cattle?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* And what type of cattle did you do cow/calf or did you...?

*Olis:* Well, I started out, I bought some heifer calves and grew them into cows. I had a cow herd and I build them up to probably about 120 head at one time.

*Diana:* What breed?

*Olis:* Herefords, but when I retired, when I got to be 65, I turned it over to Greg and I sold all my cows. Along with the cows, I was running a lot of yearling calves, growing them into feeders.

*Diana:* Where did you sell them?

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*Olis:* Well, if I sold them at a sale, I usually took them to Dodge City. But later on, I sold a lot to cattle buyers in the country.

*Diana:* Did you purchase them from buyers, too?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. Yeah. When I got to running quite a lot of cattle, I'd go to order buyers.

*Diana:* So where did you get most of your cattle from?

*Olis:* Oh, they come from Texas, New Mexico, from everywhere, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas.

*Diana:* Did you deal with just one or two cattle buyers or did you use several through the years?

*Olis:* Over the years, I dealt with several. And then I've sold a lot of cattle in the country to buyers who came around here out of Dodge and different places.

*Diana:* Do you still run Herefords or have you switched?

*Olis:* Oh, I don't have any cattle anymore. Even when I was buying cattle, we would buy different colors. There for several years, I would buy colored cattle, the reds and blacks.

*Diana:* Has the make-up of the cattle changed?

*Olis:* Yeah, they changed a lot. Well, when I was a kid, all the cattle in this whole country was Herefords. And then I went from Herefords and started putting black bulls on them and getting the black baldies. That was a really good cross. What has really changed all over the whole country is the Angus breed. They really changed that breed. And now most of the cattle are black. Greg buys a lot of black calves.

*Diana:* What about the profile?

*Olis:* Well, they're a lot better.

*Diana:* Are they bigger, more pounds?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. Gain ability is a lot better.

*Diana:* What would have been a good steer when you first started? What would it weigh when you got it and what would it be when you sold it?

*Olis:* There were good Hereford cattle, and then when they crossed them with the Angus and

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then the Charolais cattle, they're all good cattle. They've got a lot of good cattle now. They raised the gain ability.

*Diana:* A good variety. Tell me about your pastures, what type of grasses are in your pastures?

*Olis:* Well, the native grasses, Blue Grama and buffalo grass are the main native grasses. Now, there's other grasses, too, there's a variety of grasses down in our country.

*Diana:* Lots of nutrition for the cows to use to get bigger?

*Olis:* Yes, our grass is pretty strong and it's good, good grass.

*Diana:* Do you have any trouble with it getting too short? Do you have a way that you manage the pastures?

*Olis:* Well, we try not to graze it plumb into the ground. We try to leave some grass.

*Diana:* Cut down on the amount of cattle you use in each pasture.

*Olis:* Yeah, you got to take care of your land. It depends on the year. You know, a lot depends on the year.

*Diana:* When you first started, did you have any outside help or was it just you? Did you work with Stacy some?

*Olis:* For quite a few years, I worked on a ranch while I was getting this all started. I worked full time doing that. But then later on when I got on my own and got quite a bit of land, I got the Theis Ranch leased, and then I had to have help, but by that time Greg was big enough to help and all my girls grew up running tractors, riding horses and farming. They done the work.

*Diana:* They were hired hands.

*Olis:* And after they were grown, we had grandsons that worked for us during the summer. I'd have three or four grandsons working, but by that time we had a lot of alfalfa hay during the 80s and the late 70s and 80s, and 90s.

*Diana:* Did you bail your own?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah, and we've done a lot of night work, baling hay.

*Diana:* Small?

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*Olis:* Back then, most were smalls, but we had a big baler too. We done a lot of small bales.

*Diana:* Did you stack them yourself or did you hire people to help?

*Olis:* No, we bought a bale wagon. The grandkids did it, and Greg.

*Diana:* Did you stack in barns or did you just stack in the open?

*Olis:* Mostly out in the open. We put some in the shed, but mostly out in the open.

*Diana:* For winter, how much would you need to bail at the summertime to be have enough feed to run your cattle through the winter?

*Olis:* Oh, we had enough. Back in them years when we was getting rain, I sold a lot of hay.

*Diana:* So how many cuttings could you get off the field of alfalfa?

*Olis:* Well, you could get four, if you were lucky. It's got to now where you hardly get any. But there were a few years where you could get four pretty good cuttings.

*Diana:* Did you bale hay too, or like wheat straw?

*Olis:* Oh, not much. We baled some feed.

*Diana:* So how did the machinery you use change from the time that you started until now?

*Olis:* I got more land and did more farming and I bought more equipment, balers, tractors... It just takes quite a bit of stuff to keep it going.

*Diana:* Did you buy a combine?

*Olis:* Yeah, yeah. We've got two combines now.

*Diana:* And the trucks to haul it yourself, grain trucks, or grain haulers, instead of trucks. So, to harvest wheat in the summertime, how many people does it take or how many can you get together to help?

*Olis:* Now it's getting harder to get help. We run two combines.

*Diana:* Do your grandsons come back and help?

*Olis:* Well, we still have Austin. He is great help. Maybe I'll get some great-grandkids.

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*Diana:* Well, they got to grow up a little bit, don't they? You said your dad or your grandpa and dad farmed during the 30s. What types of things do they have? Do you have any family stories that you've heard about what happened during those times?

*Olis:* Well, when the 30s started, it just got dry and nobody could raise anything. And it was just really hard times. Nobody could make any money.

*Diana:* What did he have to do with his cattle? Could he sell them?

*Olis:* He couldn't get nothing for them. The government even had a program where they come out and pay you for them and kill them. I can remember that going on. They would shoot them and bury them.

*Olis:* You couldn't even use the meat. They would pay you something for them, dig a ditch and shoot them and bury them.

*Diana:* Was it just cattle, or did they also do pigs and sheep...

*Olis:* I don't know. I know they did cows.

*Diana:* Did your grandpa and your dad or you grow other things like chickens or did you have pigs on your farm?

*Olis:* Everybody had chickens and hogs.

*Diana:* Kind of self-sufficient. When you were growing up, was there always a grocery store in Englewood?

*Olis:* Yes. There was.

*Diana:* Did you come to Ashland very often?

*Olis:* Not very often.

*Diana:* Englewood was a big town back then.

*Olis:* Yeah, we had a big swimming pool. We had the best auditorium in the country when I was growing up.

*Diana:* What did Main Street look like?

*Olis:* Well, it was busy and had stores on both sides. Saturday afternoon, when I was a kid, if you parked a car on the street, you had to get down there early, before people.

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*Diana:* Was there a movie theater?

*Olis:* They put one in, when I was probably about 10 or 11 years old. They had a theater for quite a few years.

*Diana:* Were there lots of kids in school over there?

*Olis:* Well, there was for Englewood. When I graduated, there was only 12 in my class, but when we were in grade school, there was probably 20 in the class.

*Diana:* Well, there were dairies around there, weren't there?

*Olis:* No, not really. Out there on the Theis Ranch, back in them days, they had a dairy. Mostly, it supplied milk and cream for their help.

*Diana:* Did they have a bunkhouse where they kept people on their ranch?

*Olis:* Not at the time that I know of. They did, before that they did, but by the time I was acquainted with it, they had a house out there that one guy lived in, and his family. But everybody else lived in Englewood, or some of the farmers worked there part-time, too.

*Diana:* So Charlie Theis actually lived on the ranch then?

*Olis:* Well, he lived in Englewood.

*Diana:* In Englewood. You said that was originally part of the Perry (Ranch). Where was the Claremont?

*Olis:* The Claremont is the Theis Ranch. Perry, come out here from Illinois and bought that land off the government and started that ranch. Then he sold it to another outfit, and then that's the period of time my grandpa had it leased. And then Theis bought it. And then Perry named it the Claremont Ranch. He's the one who started the town or Englewood.

*Diana:* Tell me some about disasters, do you remember any snowstorms when you were growing up?

*Olis:* Well, we had quite a lot of snow, it snowed quite a bit. I know get there on the creek and slide down the creek on our sleds. Everybody just made their own sleds. They didn't have boughten sleds.

*Diana:* Did you live in town?

*Olis:* Yeah, I lived in town. I grew up right there in Englewood.

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*Diana:* So, you're talking about the creek that's on the north side there?

*Olis:* Yeah, up there by the school house.

*Diana:* What do you use as a sled?

*Olis:* Oh, we'd just make them. You take some 1 x 6's and make your runners and put some boards on top of it and just build you a sled.

*Diana:* Did you have a lot of blizzards where you had to dig out?

*Olis:* No, they did, but I wasn't... The worst one that I know was in '71, when we had about three foot of snow all over the whole country.

*Diana:* Right. Did you have trouble finding your cattle?

*Olis:* I did then. Yeah.

*Diana:* Did they have water or was that a problem?

*Olis:* Mine did. When that hit, it just snowed and snowed and blowed. I had cattle scattered out for 12 miles in different fields and pastures, so it was a little hard getting to them. Finally, the county got the roads opened, which helped a lot, but we done it all with tractors.

*Diana:* There really wasn't an easy way to get around.

*Olis:* The air force was flying around dropping out bales to cattle, stranded cattle.

*Diana:* Did you have them do that?

*Olis:* I didn't help, but they did drop some hay for some of my cattle.

*Diana:* Did it take a long time to get over that snowstorm?

*Olis:* Well, it didn't, not that long, because of what happened after that snow. It stayed warm and the wind didn't blow. If it had turned off cold and the wind blowing, we would have probably lost a lot of cattle. But it didn't. It stayed warm.

*Diana:* Did it provide a lot of moisture for the wheat that year? Was it a good crop?

*Olis:* Yeah

*Diana:* What about tornadoes?



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*Olis:* Well, we had a tornado one time, went right west of our house one afternoon. Went two and a half or nearly three miles north and hit Woodruff's house up there and tore it up. That's the only one I've actually seen. We watched it go, Gayle took a picture of it.

*Diana:* It was so none of this "going to the basement", or was it far enough away that you could just watch?

*Olis:* No, we didn't. We had been working cattle that day, and Gordon Harrington was helping us. We had just got through and it started raining. We went in the house and Gordon looked out the window and said, "Well, look at them trees." And they were just kind of sucked up, you know. And then about that time, the phone rang and it was Harry Walker. He said, "We're looking at a tornado. It looks like it's over at your place."

Well, it went by our place to the west of us and was going north. We looked out the door, and run out in the yard and looked at it and watched it go up the road.

*Diana:* Was it moving very fast? Was it very big?

*Olis:* Yeah, it was. It was probably 200 yards wide, but halfway up into the sky. It was a big funnel cloud.

*Diana:* So Woodruff's house was the only damage it did or did it do some other?

*Olis:* The Woodruffs, they were in the house and it just completely wrecked the house, blew the barn away and blew the garage away. The house stayed intact, but it just destroyed it. They tore it down right after that.

*Diana:* Did it move it off the foundation or that type of stuff?

*Olis:* It just twisted around.

*Diana:* It does that kind of stuff. What about floods?

*Olis:* No, we've had some rains that got the creek up, but maybe you couldn't cross the creek for a while, but we've never had...

*Diana:* ...nothing that did a lot of damage or anything. OK, then there's fires. We had that big one a couple of years ago.

*Olis:* It will be four years in March.

*Diana:* Did you have a lot of damage from that fire?

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*Olis:* Oh, yeah, it just burned all our land up, burned it plumb up, burned all the fences up.

*Diana:* Did you put the fences back in the same spot or did you do some different, did you go with five wire?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* And did you go with wood or steel or what?

*Olis:* We put in wood and steel.

*Diana:* Did you build them yourself or did you hire it done?

*Olis:* We hired it done. We couldn't have ever got it done, but we did have a lot of help. You know, a lot of volunteer help, especially tearing our fences out. And that really helped a lot. People come from all over, everywhere.

*Diana:* So about how many days of people coming in helping did you have? Do you have any idea?

*Olis:* No, there one time it was for probably nearly a month or longer, maybe two months, people coming in different bunches and they'd come and help you. We done a lot of it ourselves too, but it was sure nice to get that extra help. We hired the people to put it back.

*Diana:* So about how many miles of fence did you lose?

*Olis:* Oh, probably a hundred miles.

*Diana:* Did you lose any cattle?

*Olis:* No, our cattle, what cattle we had, was a bunch of steers on wheat, this happened in March, and so they survived. We didn't lose any cattle.

*Diana:* You weren't here when the fire happened, right?

*Olis:* I was in Wichita just that morning, and had a knee replacement, so we didn't know for a day or two whether we still had a house or not.

*Diana:* Somebody had to go over there and see and tell you if you did.

*Olis:* Well, they finally got to where they could, you know, and we did have.

*Diana:* Yeah. Was that kind of nerve wracking not being here?

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*Olis:* It wasn't that long until we knew the house was all right. The fire went around it and on both sides.

*Diana:* Get pretty close?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah.

*Diana:* Did you lose machinery?

*Olis:* No.

*Diana:* That's lucky because some people did. What about other fires?

*Olis:* Oh, there's been lots of little fire around, like lightning and stuff, but nothing like that. Nothing like that. Nothing to even compare with that.

*Diana:* A typical fire, if you had a grass fire that was started by lightning, about how many acres would that burn?

*Olis:* Oh, it probably wouldn't burn over two or three hundred acres. You get it put out. This was different.

*Diana:* Yeah, completely different, wasn't it?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* Let's talk about your family, because they've been involved in your operation the whole time, right? I mean, when your kids got old enough to help and all that. How's your current operation changed? You said you no longer do cattle. Have you completely turned it over to your son?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. Greg runs it all. I don't have any cattle anymore.

*Diana:* Do you do any farming?

*Olis:* I help some.

*Diana:* So basically, Greg's in charge and he decides what all is going to happen now?

*Olis:* Oh yeah. He runs the ranch. I just help out now and then.

*Diana:* Did you have a succession plan? I mean, Greg's taking over. Does he have any children that are planning on coming back or do you have any grandsons, or other children.

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*Olis:* Well, they all grew up working on a ranch. Farming and working and baling hay and night. They done it all. But his kids are doing other things, Waco is going to be a doctor and Wes and Aaron are both engineers and Austin's still in high school, but Austin's such a darned good hand, he can run everything on the ranch. He's run a combine since he was 11 or 12 years old.

*Diana:* Yeah. Any chance he'll come back and run the farm?

*Olis:* I doubt it.

*Diana:* He's pretty musically inclined, isn't he?

*Olis:* Well, he's very talented. I think he'll probably be an engineer. I think that's what he's got in mind.

*Diana:* What about your other grandkids. Any of them interested in farming?

*Olis:* Well, they're not. They're all doing other things. But most of them worked for me from the time they was in high school till they went through college. We had a trailer house out there on the place, they'd stay in it and Shirley'd cook for them and do their laundry.

*Diana:* So every one of them come through? I know Matt and Mark came up, right?

*Olis:* Mark here for several years. Seth worked for us some, and Clark some. Then all of Greg's boys. We had a bunch of grandkids working in the field.

*Diana:* That worked well. So, when you were working for Theis, you did a lot of looking after the cattle from horseback I would think, or rounding them up now. Now, when Greg gathers cattle, does he still do it on horseback or does he use four-wheelers?

*Olis:* Now he used a cake wagon and four wheelers. We've about quit horses.

*Diana:* Horses mainly for pleasure?

*Olis:* We don't have a horse on a ranch.

*Diana:* Not anymore.

*Olis:* I've got some, but the ranch don't.

*Diana:* Are they working horses or are they racing horses?

*Olis:* Well, I think they're for business, but Shirley says it's my hobby.

## **Ranching Olis Goodnight**

*Diana:* Where do they race?

*Olis:* Oklahoma City. Oklahoma, different places in Oklahoma.

*Diana:* And they do quite well?

*Olis:* Well, fairly well.

*Diana:* Keeping you entertained with your hobby then?

*Olis:* Yeah, that's good.

*Diana:* What about your tractors now? Have they changed in size from the time that your kids were helping?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah.

*Diana:* Do they have four-wheel drive tractors, big implements? Do you use GPS on the tractors?

*Olis:* All the time.

*Diana:* And you have combines now, do you use the precision where they use the Internet to like, tell how many acres you've been over?

*Olis:* No, with ours we don't do that.

*Diana:* Yeah, but they are capable of doing that kind of stuff now.

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* Let's talk about your award. You were installed into the Dodge City Cowboy Hall of Fame.

*Olis:* Yeah, I was.

*Diana:* And what category? Was it working cowboy?

*Olis:* No, it was 2015 Rancher/Cattleman.

*Diana:* So how did you get involved in that?

*Olis:* I don't know.

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*Diana:* Did somebody nominate you?

*Olis:* My daughter, Sherre Harrington did.

*Diana:* So how were you honored?

*Olis:* Well, they had a deal in Dodge City and gave me an award and had a banquet. They invited the whole family there were quite a few people there. I think five people were nominated, so all their family and friends were there.

*Diana:* So what kind of things did they talk about, about you?

*Olis:* Well, just kind of our operation.

*Diana:* Like how many cattle you ran and like how many acres you had and that type of stuff?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* So, a pretty nice night?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* Cool. Tell me how your family's been involved in the community, which I guess here it's more of a big community like Englewood and Ashland and Meade.

*Olis:* Well, you know, we've always been involved with whatever is going on. My mother taught school there at Englewood a few years.

*Diana:* What was her name?

*Olis:* Iona.

*Diana:* Did you serve on the school board?

*Olis:* I did, in Ashland when it was first put together.

*Diana:* Like when they first consolidated?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* So how many years did you serve?

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*Olis:* Ten years.

*Diana:* So was that kind of a difficult time because...

*Olis:* No, not really.

*Diana:* Were people kind of used to the idea that they were going to have to consolidate or was that a hard thing?

*Olis:* Oh, we knew it was coming on, because at the time there was only four grades being taught in Englewood. The high school had already come over. So it wasn't that hard.

*Diana:* During the time that you were on the school board, what type of changes happened, what type of things were happening in school?

*Olis:* Well, at the time Ashland's high school building was a pretty new building. So, things were just normal.

*Diana:* So how many people were on the school board with you?

*Olis:* Jab Herrington and I was on the board. There was probably six of us, I think, probably altogether.

*Diana:* Were there any major changes or difficulties during that time?

*Olis:* No, everything was going pretty smooth.

*Diana:* Because that would have been like the 60s.

*Olis:* Yeah, pretty much.

*Diana:* Were your kids involved in 4-H?

*Olis:* Not really.

*Diana:* Scouts or anything like that?

*Olis:* No. Mostly what we did were school activities.

*Diana:* Yes. Did they ride the school bus?

*Olis:* I didn't. The country kids rode the school bus.

## Ranching Olis Goodnight

*Diana:* When your kids were in school, did they ride school bus?

*Olis:* Yeah, my kids did, because we lived in the country. They had a lot of miles on a school bus.

*Diana:* So transportation was a big thing back when you were on the school board, wasn't it?

*Olis:* Yes, it was.

*Diana:* I know they had to have buses that came to Englewood and then the bus came over here. So how many buses did you have? Do you remember in Englewood, that brought kids into town?

*Olis:* There at one time, some of the little buses would run into Englewood and then a big bus would pick them up. Kirby Burns, one time when our kids go to school, most times Kirby Burns would run the school bus. He lived just down the road from us, so he would pick them up in the morning and deliver them at night.

*Diana:* When did they drive themselves to school or did they ever?

*Olis:* Well, not much. Greg probably did more than anybody. By the time he... He was the last one. When he was going to school, he did drive some.

*Diana:* Wasn't there an activity bus?

*Olis:* We had an activity bus when we consolidated. We got an activity bus to drop them off.

*Diana:* So that the kids over there could participate.

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* Has your role in the community changed through the years? Your role, what you guys do in the community? Has it changed?

*Olis:* Well, it just deteriorated. There isn't much going on.

*Diana:* Englewood still has a lot of social activities, doesn't it? Sometimes?

*Olis:* Hardly any anymore.

*Diana:* So, the fire department's not having a lot of dinners or anything like that.

*Olis:* Oh, not a lot. Maybe once a year or two.



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*Diana:* So the pandemic has really shut down the type of things you've done.

*Olis:* They do have some of the ladies at Englewood that have a coffee at the school building in the morning. We go in there once in a while to find out what's going on.

*Diana:* What would you say is the smartest thing you ever did?

*Olis:* Her!

*Diana:* That's the one answer I get the most.

*Shirley:* I appreciate that.

*Diana:* You know, she probably kept you on the straight and narrow all these years. Tell me, what would you change if you could?

*Olis:* Oh, I'm pretty well satisfied the way it was.

*Diana:* So how many years have you been married? Oh, you're getting close to sixty...

*Olis:* Yeah. Sixty-seven years. Oh, I don't know. How many years have we been married? Sixty-seven?

*Shirley:* Sixty-eight. We got married in '52.

*Diana:* So now tell me about Mount Shirley.

*Olis:* Well, there's a little hill south of our house, that's the Claremont Ranch, we got, that Theis owned. It's got a hill on it they call Mount Helen, and its name is Mount Helen, it's on the map. And Shirley always said it was going to be Mount Shirley. So, you know, the family kind of carried that on. Then on her 80th birthday, the kids got together and bought her a plaque and I built a little brick monument up there for the plaque on it. It was her birthday and says, "Mount Shirley" on it. So, we had a little celebration on her birthday and took some people out there. We took everybody up on Mount Shirley for a little dedication. Now it's Mount Shirley.

*Diana:* That sounds like a fun day.

*Olis:* It was a fun day.

*Shirley:* Sherry went to the powers that be to see if it could put it on the map as Mount Shirley, and they said, not till I had been dead for ten years.

## **Ranching Olis Goodnight**

*Diana:* Oh, well, we don't want to do that yet!

*Shirley:* They're not in any hurry.

*Olis:* But Austin told her he'd take care of it.

*Diana:* Oh, well, good. That's good. So, there was the irrigation ditch. Does that run through any of the land that you own?

*Olis:* Well, yeah, it does. It goes through part of that Theis Ranch. Water runs through it. It come off the Cimarron River, the ditch at about seven miles long and it comes north and east through the Cimarron River and runs down through the ranch and there's still quite a bit of that old ditch that's still visible.

*Diana:* Does it hold water?

*Olis:* Well, no, not anymore. It's just the ditch through the pasture. You can't see where it was through the fields, but you can see it through the pasture.

*Diana:* When was that built? Back in the 1890s?

*Olis:* Yeah, probably early 90s when they started building it.

*Olis:* Yeah, it's cool. I don't have any more questions. But do you have any other things you'd like to mention?

*Olis:* Over the years, we have purchased most of the land that we rented.

*Diana:* OK, I appreciate you coming in and doing the interview, so thank you.

*Olis:* All right.

## **Mount Shirley**

On the Theis Ranch that we leased, there is a hill that is called Mount Helen. It is even on maps in the area. One day at dinner, the family was all talking about how Mount Helen got its name. I told them that it was named after Colonel Perry's daughter. Colonel Perry originally owned that land. Anyway, we all thought that was impressive, and we got to thinking that the big hill south of our house should have a name. Shirley then said it should be named after her and we all agreed. So, from then on, we always called that hill "Mount Shirley". Then on Shirley's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, February 29, 2012, we invited the community, family and friends and we had a celebration on top of Mount Shirley. The kids had a plaque

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made, and I built a brick monument to put the plaque on. The plaque says, "Mount Shirley, established 2/29/2012 in honor of Shirley Goodnight's 80 Birthday."