

Ranching Gilbert Krier

Diana: Tell me your name.

Gilbert: Gilbert Krier.

Diana: Where do you live?

Gilbert: I live on the Glenn Ranch, which is west of Ashland.

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

Gilbert: In 1944.

Diana: Why did they come?

Gilbert: Why did they come here? Well, Dad met this guy on the train going to Kansas City with some cattle. He told Dad he had a ranch out here in Clark County and that if he wanted to, he could lease it.

Diana: Had your dad worked cattle before?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Were you in the Marines then?

Gilbert: I was in the Merchant Marine. The reason I was in the Merchant Marine, when we went to Kansas City to enlist, I was too young to get into the Marine Corps, so the Merchant Marine had an opening. So, I went to the Merchant Marine for eight months until I was old enough to get in the Marine Corps.

Diana: Where did you grow up?

Gilbert: Olpe.

Diana: And when you went into the Marines, where were you stationed?

Gilbert: Parris Island in South Carolina.

Diana: And then did you go overseas?

Gilbert: Yes.

Diana: Were you in the Pacific or the Eastern?

Gilbert: Eastern.

Diana: Where did you serve?

Gilbert: Well, to back the story up, when I was in the Merchant Marines, we took the B-29 bombers and their motors and took them to Hawaii. And then we come back to the States and I called another

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Merchant Marine ship and that was in 1944 and we were there earlier, at a little island they called _____ And I remember going swimming on Christmas day when we waited there for an escort to go to Tai Pan. We all loaded there and headed back to the States. Then I quit the Merchant Marine and went into the Marine Corps.

Diana: So how long were you in the Marine Corps?

Gilbert: Two years.

Diana: And when you got out of service, did you move to Ashland then?

Gilbert: No, I live in Emporia, and I worked for the Santa Fe Railroad for three years, and then I married my wife. We got married and I was still working for the railroad and Dad and Walt lived over there at the Berends Ranch over there by Englewood.

Diana: Was that Stacy Berends?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: It was a different...

Gilbert: Yeah, he was from _____ and anyway, he got Dad... I think Paul got bucked off and Dad went to get his horse and his horse stepped in a prairie dog hole or something and broke Dad's ankle. So Dad called me up and wanted to know if I wanted to come out here and help. We moved out here in '52.

Diana: So where did your parents live? Did they live on Berends' property?

Gilbert: Yes, over there by Englewood.

Diana: Were they given housing, did they have a house?

Gilbert: Yeah, and I think about 1949, Dad leased the Gabbert Ranch.

Diana: And so how big was that ranch? How many acres was the Gabbert Ranch?

Gilbert: Oh, 6,000.

Diana: So what was the going rate? How much did they have to pay for the lease?

Gilbert: I don't know.

Diana: You don't know how much it was per acre?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: How many head of cattle did they run?

Gilbert: Well, on the Gabbert Ranch, we ran around 400 cows.

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Diana: Did you run cow/calf pairs? Did he breed heifers?

Gilbert: No, he ran a cow/calf deal.

Diana: Right. So what type of cows, were they Herefords?

Gilbert: All Herefords.

Diana: And did they ever go to Angus or did they always run Herford?

Gilbert: Dad always had Hereford cows and bulls, but when we moved up there on the Glenn Ranch, Mr. Glenn had Hereford cattle and Dad bought him out. A couple of years later, we went to Angus.

Diana: So when you and Mary moved out here in 1952, where did you live?

Gilbert: We lived... In the meantime, Charlie was in Korea, and he got wounded over there. He come to the states and spent some time in a hospital in Texas and then moved to Topeka.

Diana: So how many brothers do you have?

Gilbert: Six.

Diana: Did they all come to Clark County?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: Who did?

Gilbert: Charlie and Earl finally came to Ashland. Walter and Earl was... Earl lived in Wichita and Walt lived Texas, he went to school down there.

Diana: Did Jerry come here? Did Jerry settle here?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: So you were going to tell me where you lived when you first came out here. Where did you and Mary live?

Gilbert: Oh, do you remember that house out on the corner south of the old church?

Diana: Yes.

Gilbert: That's where we lived, then Charlie got well enough to come home and help, so Don Hoffman, I went to work for them a couple of years. Then Dad leased the Comstock, which was where.... Well, I can't think of it. Do you know where the Comstock is?

Diana: Yes, pretty much. So, you lived up there?

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Gilbert: Yeah, we lived up there about five years and then Dad leased the Philip Glenn Ranch and we moved out there.

Diana: So did you do cattle all this time, when you worked for different people?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: So when you moved out that way, had there been a school on the Glenn Ranch? Was there one down on the Gabbert?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: OK, so what type of land did he lease? Was it all pasture land or was there farm ground?

Gilbert: Most of it was pasture land, but some of it was farm ground?

Diana: Was it sandy?

Gilbert: Over there around Englewood, it was really sandy.

Diana: Was it good farmland?

Gilbert: Oh, kind of medium.

Diana: So what kind of crops did they grow?

Gilbert: Well, mostly winter feed, cane and stuff like that.

Diana: Did they grow wheat?

Gilbert: Maybe a little bit.

Diana: Did they have other animals besides cattle? Did they have hogs or chickens or horses?

Gilbert: We had horses, and I think Mom had some chickens over there at Englewood. Then when they moved over to the Gabbert, she had chickens. No hogs.

Diana: Did she have a big garden?

Gilbert: Pretty big.

Diana: So George was telling me about a house that they were to move into, that they had to clean the dirt out of.

Gilbert: That was over there at Englewood on the Berends Ranch.

Diana: It hadn't been lived in?

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Gilbert: No, I don't know. Charlie and my dad came out here and kind of cleaned it up, so Mom wouldn't have to wade into the dirt. .

Diana: So when he leased the Glenn Place and you had the Gabbert, how many total acres did you lease?

Gilbert: Around 18,000.

Diana: So do you still lease land?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: How many acres do you have now?

Gilbert: Eight thousand.

Diana: Do you mainly just run cow/calf still?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Do you do any steers. Nope? How have the ways that you work cattle changed?

Gilbert: Well, when I was working for W.W., down at Don Howell's place, sometimes we would throw them up in the corner and rope and drag them. But now I think everybody's got calf cradles.

Diana: So how has medicine changed how you doctor cattle?

Gilbert: I can remember when the only thing that we vaccinated for when I come out here was blackleg. And now you give them three or four shots. I don't really remember what the medicine was.

Diana: So when you go feed your cattle, do you feed every day.

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: What do you feed them?

Gilbert: The cows down there that we feed still, during the storm, we fed some round bales and cane hay.

Diana: So do you mostly check your cattle in the pickup or do you use a horse or do you use three wheeler or four-wheeler?

Gilbert: Mostly in the pickup.

Diana: Do they come really good to you?

Gilbert: Oh, yeah.

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Diana: So when you have to gather the cattle to go to market, do you use horses then, or do you ever use four-wheelers?

Gilbert: Yeah, yeah.

Diana: So when you have to gather the cattle, do you hire people to come help?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: How many do you usually need to have help?

Gilbert: Oh, six or seven.

Diana: And so are you in a partnership with your children?

Gilbert: Yes, with George, just George.

Diana: So how were you able to get started purchasing cattle? Did your dad help?

Gilbert: Yeah, in fact. He gave each one of the kids 50 cows.

Diana: Did you get a bull?

Gilbert: No, I don't think so.

Diana: Did you use his bulls or did you have to buy your own bull?

Gilbert: You bought your own.

Diana: So where did you go to buy cattle? Did they have the sale here when you were first starting?

Gilbert: They had a salebarn here at Ashland. We didn't buy anything here at Ashland, usually, Dad would go to... Do you remember Jim Wagnon?

Diana: Kind of.

Gilbert: Him and Jim were pretty good friends and they would go into New Mexico. Raymond Broadie was kind of a cattle buyer and he would tell Dad where he could find cows and stuff like that.

Diana: So how do you buy cattle now? Where do you have to go to buy cattle?

Gilbert: Well, we got this guy over there east of Winfield and we've bought several years a truck-load of cows.

Diana: So how has the price of cattle changed since you started?

Gilbert: I remember when Dad leased the Gabbert Ranch, you could buy all the cows you wanted for \$200. Now, now they're about \$1,700 to \$1,800.

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Diana: So is it a good time to sell cattle? Instead of purchasing, is it a good time to sell?

Gilbert: Well, we sell most of our calves on TV, and we deliver them in October and then we cull the cows and preg check them. Then we've got to go to auction with the culls and then before the first year, we've got to those guys east of Winfield and buy some cows.

Diana: So do you calve out cows?

Gilbert: Not the two-year-olds. I'm too old for that.

Diana: Do you grow like feed and alfalfa to feed your cattle?

Gilbert: No, we plant cane for winter feed.

Diana: So do you plant wheat? When you have a wheat crop, do you use that for wheat pasture for your cattle?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: You just do for grain?

Gilbert: We just plant it and cut it.

Diana: Have you always planted wheat since when you first started leasing land out here?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: What kind of machinery did you use back when you started?

Gilbert: Oh, we had a one-way, in fact, two of them. We pulled two one-ways.

Diana: Did you have a tractor?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Did you ever use horses?

Gilbert: No, not work horses.

Diana: What do you remember, what brand of tractors?

Gilbert: Oh, we had a Minneapolis Moline and we got rid of that and then we had, more or less, John Deere.

Diana: So do you cut your own wheat or do you have it custom harvested?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: Then you cut it yourself?

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Gilbert: No. Jeff's got two combines and he usually comes over and does that.

Diana: So is it profitable to raise wheat?

Gilbert: Not for me, it's not, but if I had something to put on there in the fall, like calves or something like that, I think it would pay for it.

Diana: Do you have to do more now to plant a crop? Do you have to top dress and do that, or do you use no-till? What type of practices do you use?

Gilbert: Well, we plant out wheat, and then in the spring, we spray and use fertilizer.

Diana: So do you remember any disasters, like do you remember any blizzards since you moved to Clark County?

Gilbert: Oh, yeah. In '72?

Diana: In '71. Were you snowed in that year?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Did you have a hard time getting water to your cattle?

Gilbert: No, it wasn't the water. We didn't get out among them for three or four days.

Diana: Did you lose any?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Were the drifts just too high.

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Do you have canyons on your property?

Gilbert: Oh yeah.

Diana: Did they get down in there?

Gilbert: Yeah. There were a couple cows down in the canyon. They had baby calves.

Diana: When you calve out, do you do it in the spring or in the fall.

Gilbert: Spring.

Diana: Do you remember the big flood of 1957? That rain that came from the north.

Gilbert: No.

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Diana: Do you remember any tornadoes?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: Were there any grass fires, besides the big one, that were on the grass that you had?

Gilbert: Yeah, when we first moved out there, I think there were several years when somebody threw a match out or a cigarette, and then we had some lightening fires and stuff like that.

Diana: Equipment fires, like balers, things like that, nothing like that?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: A lot of your land is pastureland, right?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: How do you manage it. Do you rotate pastures or limit how many cows you have in each field?

Gilbert: Oh, yeah.

Diana: What are you mainly do?

Gilbert: Well, we try to give a cow year-round pasture, about 28 acres.

Diana: Yes. So when it's gotten really dry around here, have you had to cut back how many cows you purchase? Did that last for a while?

Gilbert: Yeah. I forget what year it was, we got some older cows down to Bristol, Oklahoma, and then we brought the calves home and sold the cows.

Diana: So have you ever completely sold off all of your cattle, or you've always had a starter herd?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: How have the fences changed? Do you have five wire fences or four wire fences, or do you use a lot of electric fence to keep your cows in?

Gilbert: Most of it is four-wire. Of course, when a fire comes through, they had a crew come out there and they put up five-wire. But most of it is four-wire.

Diana: Did they use steel posts and alternate with creosote posts?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: So how did the fire of 2017 affect your operation? Did you lose cattle?

Gilbert: No.

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Diana: Did you lose a lot of pasture?

Gilbert: Well. We probably lost maybe 3,000 acres.

Diana: Did you get lots of rain, though, afterwards?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: What's the smartest thing you ever did?

Gilbert: I suppose when I got married.

Diana: That's a common answer. So when you were working as a ranch hand for somebody else, what were the type of jobs that you did?

Gilbert: Well, when I worked for Don Hoffman, I would help build fence. Then in the wintertime, I would haul aluminum in there. He had a team of horse and a wagon, and I would go along with him to feed cows. Of course, I had a horse back with me in case there was trouble.

Diana: Did you own your own horses or did you ride the person you worked for's horses?

Gilbert: Overall, I think I owned a few horses, and then I would ride the ranch horses.

Diana: So how did they pay you? Did they pay you just in money or did you have a house or get beef?

Gilbert: Well, the house that Bessie Seacat lives in now, was out there in the country and we lived in that. They furnished our beef and \$125 a month.

Diana: So did you get any time off? You get weekends off or Sunday or anything?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: Every day. What was your favorite job as a hired hand?

Gilbert: Oh, riding pastures was mostly what I liked to do.

Diana: You have a lot of pastures now. How do you provide water for your cattle? Do you have solar windmills or do you use old-fashioned windmills?

Gilbert: We've got windmills and one solar pump.

Diana: Do you often have to haul water to the solar? Does it keep up?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Did you work for your dad or did were you like a partner with your dad?

Gilbert: Kind of a partner.

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Diana: Have you ever partnered with your brothers or anybody else?

Gilbert: No.

Diana: Did your wife help you on the ranch or did she have another job?

Gilbert: Well, when the kids were growing up, she took care of the house and the kids. And then when the kids got out of high school, I think she went to work down at the hospital.

Diana: She was an EMT, too, wasn't she?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: In your current operation, how has it changed from when you first started? Is it simpler? Do you have more equipment or there are better ways of doing things? What's the best changes?

Gilbert: In the wintertime, we used to haul from Co-op, and we'd bring out cane shocks and put them in the barn, whereas now we've got them bulk tanks and it's pretty simple.

Diana: So how much can you put in your tank? How much will it hold? A half ton or a ton?

Gilbert: Twenty-five ton.

Diana: And how long can you feed off that?

Gilbert: I would say a month.

Diana: Do you have a gauge or something that tells you it's getting low?

Gilbert: No

Diana: You've just got to climb up there and look?

Gilbert: Or beat on the side.

Diana: To see how it sounds. So do you feed in the morning or the evening?

Gilbert: Morning.

Diana: Do two of you feed?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: How long does it take you to feed your cattle? Are you done by noon?

Gilbert: I'm done by noon, unless something goes wrong.

Diana: Do you have to doctor a lot of cattle?

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Gilbert: No.

Diana: Do you ever have cattle wander off? I mean, do you have to go find them in somebody else's pasture?

Gilbert: We're short some cows right now, but I don't know whether I miscounted or whether they've wandered off or somebody drove them off.

Diana: So when you first moved out there to the Glenn Ranch, did you have lots of neighbors?

Gilbert: Yeah, we had the Hulstines, and Jim Miles, and Joe Gentry.

Diana: So do you have more neighbors now than you did then? Or do you have fewer and they're further away?

Gilbert: No, there's a boy lives out there where Jim Miles used to live, but Hulstines...

Diana: Yeah, they're gone. Can you think of anything else, have anything else you'd like to say, anything you wrote down, you have anything you wrote down that we didn't cover?

Gilbert: What did the Depression do to your operation?

Diana: Yes.

Gilbert: Dad owned some land there, he lost that.

Diana: Was he always a cattleman or was he mainly a farmer?

Gilbert: Well, he always had cows and he farmed.

Diana: So this offer from the guy that told him there was land to lease out here, did that come at a good time?

Gilbert: Yeah, in 1935, I remember, he was good friends with Carl Warner, Warner Feedlot, and he had some land out there by Kalvesta. That was a major departure, and I remember I went to school up there north of Kalvesta, probably in the third grade. It was so dry that a fellow east of us had a bunch of sheep. He would come across the country with several hundred sheep and he had a dead one about every 50 feet. They just didn't have nothing to eat.

Diana: Yeah, so do you remember any of the dust storms?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Tell me a story.

Gilbert: Well, when we left school, sometimes you'd get lost. We had about a mile to walk to school.

Diana: You remember any snowstorms, when you were little or rainstorms? But it was just dry all the time, right? What do you do for food? Did you shop in Kalvesta?

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Gilbert: Well, I don't think Kalvesta had a grocery store at that time. You'd either go to Garden City or Dodge.

Diana: If you could change things, what would you change?

Gilbert: I don't think... I don't have an answer.

Diana: If you change something, it would make everything different, wouldn't it? Ah, do you have like a secession set up so that there will be another generation running the operation?

Gilbert: Well, it depends on the Glenn family and whether George will be able to stay here. The way they've got that set up is, Cessna and Scott have got to die, then their kids will decide.

Diana: It's in a trust right? The land's in a trust. So, it's basically up to what the family wants to do if they're going to keep it and lease it, or if they'll sell it.

Diana: You have any other things to tell me? We covered pretty much all your operation?

Gilbert: Yeah.

Diana: Well, thank you for taking the time to do this. We appreciate it.