

Olis Lauppe currently lives in Meade County, but came to Clark County in the spring of 1963 to work on the Green Ranch.

*Olis:* The Green Ranch is up on the junction of 160 and 283. It is surrounded by the corner, mostly west, north, south and west. I think we went two or three miles south and two miles north. Then west, I don't know, a couple or three miles.

*Diana:* Who were the Greens? What were their names?

*Olis:* David Green and his three boys, four boys.

*Diana:* Do you know how many acres they had?

*Olis:* We would run around somewhere around 8,500 and 8,600 acres.

*Diana:* And did they just do cattle or did they also...

*Olis:* They took in cattle. They took cattle in for the summertime. We ran a lot of cattle for Warner, up at Cimarron. Willis was the foreman.

*Diana:* Jack Warner?

*Olis:* No, Lee Warner, like the insurance company.

*Diana:* Cimarron Insurance?

*Olis:* Yeah. Amongst other people.

*Diana:* Right. There were several people. So you were a cowhand?

*Olis:* I was just a cowboy and fence builder.

*Diana:* Did you have to supply your own horses?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. We did a lot of horse riding. That's about all I ever done.

*Diana:* Did they give you a place to live?

*Olis:* No, I lived at home in Meade County.

*Diana:* What all were the things they had you do?

*Olis:* Oh, mostly build fence and just check water; doctor screwworms or whatever.

*Diana:* When you say you built fence, did you build a fence that was steel posts or wooden posts...

*Olis:* It was all wood posts at that time, in fact 1963 was when they rebuilt 283 Highway. They hired me to begin with, to rebuild from the junction two miles north and a half a mile south of the junction on the west side of the road. We pulled all that fence up, two and a half miles of it. We moved the fence over to the full right-of-way. They built a new highway, an all new right-of-way.

*Diana:* Did you move the fence to the west?

*Olis:* Yes, moved it over there, how many feet, I don't know, 80 foot or better or 120 foot. And then we rebuilt it.

*Diana:* Five wire? Four wire?

*Olis:* Four wire. All hedge-posts, wood hedge-posts.

*Diana:* Where would they get the posts and wire from?

*Olis:* We pulled the old posts... on the Green Ranch, you pulled the old posts and set them over and used them again. We'd stretch them out and made them all work. If it was a rotten post, we threw it away. But we'd stretch them out a little bit and made it all work so they didn't have to buy any materials.

*Diana:* Did you have a fencepost digger?

*Olis:* A posthole digger? Oh yeah, we borrowed one from Charlie Green.

*Diana:* Was it hooked to a tractor?

*Olis:* A little Ford Tractor. We borrowed it from Charlie Green.

*Diana:* Did you have to dig any holes by hand?

*Olis:* No, we just had to clean them out, is all.

*Diana:* So how deep did you make the holes?

*Olis:* Oh, three foot anyway.

*Diana:* About how long did it take you to do that?

*Olis:* Oh, I don't know. At that time, you done it all by hand. Well, we went around the rest of the fence on the Green Ranch, it was actually Arnold Burns. We started there in January, February, and we finished up there around the 1st of April, and we started getting cattle in. Then I stayed and helped cowboy. Then I left in May of '63.

*Diana:* When you did cowboy stuff, was it because it was springtime?

*Olis:* We branded baby calves and worked calves, just regular spring branding. Then we rode pastures and checked water, just general ranch work.

*Diana:* Was it a cow/calf operation?

*Olis:* It was, except on that Burns property. That was all yearling cattle taken in. But Dave Greene, we worked for him and I actually worked for him, he was the boss on the whole deal and we branded calves for him that spring.

*Diana:* Did you use a chute?

*Olis:* No, we rastedled them by hand.

*Diana:* You roped?

*Olis:* No, we just penned them up in the corner and busted them down by hand. And that's the way we did it.

*Diana:* Yeah. So how did you heat the branding irons?

*Olis:* You know, I think we had a wood fire. We dug a pit in the ground where we could throw wood. I'm pretty sure that's how we heated them.

*Diana:* So about how many baby calves would you brand?

*Olis:* Oh, I don't know. We probably did a 130 or 140 head.

*Diana:* About how large was the crew?

*Olis:* There were just three of us. We worked all day!

*Diana:* A couple of days?

*Olis:* Probably, I would think so.

*Diana:* So, you rode pastures on a horse?

*Olis:* Oh yeah. We didn't ride in a pickup. You couldn't get across the canyon. We rode horseback. Hell, I rode horseback more than I rode in a pickup until about 1990.

*Diana:* Did you have more than one horse that you rode in a day?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. You had one you'd ride today and one tomorrow. You had to trade them off. If you rode hard all day, you would ride your horse down and you wouldn't have no horse.

*Diana:* Did you have a favorite type of horse that you rode?

*Diana:* Oh, no, all horses that I could ride, to me, was kind of a favorite.

*Diana:* Had you trained them yourself?

*Olis:* Yes. Most of them.

*Diana:* You raised them from colts?

*Olis:* Yes, I broke them myself.

*Diana:* So they were very familiar with you and you didn't have a lot of crow hopping when you went to work in the morning?

*Olis:* No, after you ride the hell out of them for a week; they quit that. They get different ideas.

*Diana:* OK, did you work for the Greens again or just that year?

*Olis:* Well, I did in '73 or '74. I checked some cattle for Greens. Dave hired me to look after some cattle for them, and I done it on horseback.

*Diana:* Is this green with an E on the end of it. Yeah. Then you mentioned Burns' pastures.

*Diana:* Was that the "Bern" or was it "Burn"? Like Stacy Burns.

*Olis:* No, it wasn't Stacy Burns. It was Arnold Burns.

*Diana:* So then, you came back and did some more work in that area, right?

*Olis:* Well, I left there and went down there on the Profit ranch with Gaylord Allen, and I was there about two months. We did some fence work and did some work down on the corrals. We fixed a little feed pen down there and picked up some patch-up work. And we branded calves for everybody. We worked cattle everywhere.

*Diana:* Was Gaylord the foreman?

*Olis:* He was the owner. He leased the property from Profit.

*Diana:* And you did the pretty much the same things.

*Olis:* We did the same thing. There wasn't no tractor driving. We did it on horseback.

*Diana:* Did he raise any grain or feed to feed his cattle?

*Olis:* No.

*Diana:* Did Gaylord do cow/calf?

*Olis:* It was cow/calf.

*Diana:* Did he raise them from babies?

*Olis:* He had his own cow herd.

*Diana:* Did he ever go buy some at the sale?

*Olis:* Not that I ever knew of.

*Diana:* Did he sell his calf crop every year?

*Olis:* Yes. He kept back some heifers; he kept back replacements. But the rest of them, he'd usually sell them out to whoever would buy them. Jim Shaw, I think, bought a lot of them. We delivered a lot of calves to him.

*Diana:* To the feed yard?

*Olis:* He was just starting up the feedyard down there. We delivered a lot of calves down there.

*Diana:* Did he ever take any to the sale barn?

*Olis:* Not very many, cull cows and stuff like that, you know.

*Diana:* Would that be to the Ashland Sale?

*Olis:* Well, I think he maybe went to Winter Livestock with them.

*Diana:* In Dodge?

*Olis:* Yes. Most of them, he sold right there on the ranch. Buyers would come out to the ranch. They would agree on a price.

*Diana:* Back there in the 80s, 70s?

*Olis:* That would have been in the 60s.

*Diana:* So what was the price of cattle about that time?

*Olis:* Oh gosh, I don't know. If you got 45 cents for a yearling, a 700-pound yearling, you were doing well. You could start your own bank, you were doing good.

*Diana:* Were they able to keep all the cattle just on pasture or did they have to do some supplemental feeding?

*Olis:* The only supplemental feeding we did was in the wintertime. Cake and grass. If there came a storm, we fed hay. Otherwise, they had enough grass. If you stocked your pastures right, you could raise your own grass. That's the way it's supposed to be done.

*Diana:* Did they had a grass management policy?

*Olis:* Well, back then, it probably wasn't "grass management". It was just the way you did it. So many acres per cow/calf. That was probably 20 to 22 acres, minimum.

*Diana:* What was the water source?

*Olis:* Creek and windmill.

*Diana:* But there wouldn't have been any solar back then?

*Olis:* Oh no, no. It was all windmills and creek water.

*Diana:* Did you have to fix the windmills?

*Olis:* Yes. We fixed our own windmill.

*Diana:* It if you had a really broken windmill, who would you call?

*Olis:* We fixed it.

*Diana:* You mentioned there were canyons and stuff. Tell me a little bit about the pastures. Were they flat in parts? Rolling hills?

*Olis:* Creek bottoms, sandy hills, canyons, gullies, hills. There was buffalo grass, grama, big blue, little blue, Indian grass. But we have the same today.

*Diana:* There was a lot of good coverage of grass?

*Olis:* Oh yeah, except in a drouth. In a drouth, you overgraze. You can't help it.

*Diana:* In those kind of years, did he cut back on his cattle herd?

*Olis:* In drouth years.

*Diana:* So he'd mainly sell off the old cows?

*Olis:* Yeah, you cull the old cows out and then once in a while, they could lease a little pasture somewhere else, you know, and give you a little relief.

*Diana:* So he basically was leasing a ranch from somebody?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* Was it so much an acre for the pasture?

*Olis:* It was on a per-acre basis and I don't know...

*Diana:* Do you think that was contracted year to year or did he have a long lease?

*Olis:* You know, back then, I don't know if it was just word of mouth handshake. That's the way to do it really.

*Diana:* Right, so they just come to agreement on how much they were going to do?

*Olis:* Yes, they'd just sit out at the windmill and the corrals and argue it out and that's the way we're going to do it and shake hands on it. And it was valid.

*Diana:* And would it be OK? Each year they do that?

*Olis:* Well, no. If nobody complained, they just kept it like they did last year. And I still do that on some of mine today.

*Diana:* Yes. It's very common.

*Olis:* I have places I lease out, and I've got a contract for my own personal stuff, I have a contract but it's just like... It may be five years old, but it's still valid.

*Diana:* So in the contract, you set down how much per acre for so how many acres?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* Do you lease from different people?

*Olis:* I don't any more, but I did at one time. I had four or five landlords.

*Diana:* Would you lease wheat crop to have wheat pasture for them?

*Olis:* I have done that.

*Diana:* Was that common?

*Olis:* It was common back then, too.

*Diana:* When it came time... well, since he had cow/calves, did he move them from one pasture to another like from spring pasture to winter?

*Olis:* Well, at different places I worked at, yes, we did that. But out there on Profitt, we didn't. We'd move from here to the home ranch over to the pasture over here, but we didn't winter there. We'd work calves and move cows down there.

*Diana:* And you'd always move cows with on horseback?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* There wasn't too much of four wheelers?

*Olis:* They wasn't even heard of. If you had any kind of a buggy, it was a wheelbarrow. Yeah, we didn't use them either.

*Diana:* And probably the only tractor you had was a little Ford?

*Olis:* A little 8N Ford tractor.

*Diana:* Did it have a posthole digger on the back?

*Olis:* Yeah. It had a posthole digger on it.

*Diana:* And then a bucket on the front?

*Olis:* No, no. It just had a posthole digger on the back, that's all we had. You used it to dig a posthole, or you dug it by hand.

*Diana:* So the wire, since it was reused, you rolled it all up and then you had to stretch it back out?

*Olis:* On electric fence.

*Diana:* When you built that fence on the highway?

*Olis:* Oh yeah. We had to roll all that up by hand and then move it over 120 yards or whatever the difference was, and unroll it by hand and carry all the posts over there and dig a hole, set it in, and put the wire back up.

*Diana:* Did you have the big things of wire or did you put them on little spool?

*Olis:* No, we rolled them by hand in a four- or five-foot roll. We tried to get a quarter mile thrown together or wherever we'd come to a good splice to cut in two and tie it all back together.

*Diana:* So how did you stretch the wire?

*Olis:* With a pair of wire stretchers. At that time, I think we had the old rope stretchers. We might have had cable stretchers, but I don't think so. We might have had power-pull.

*Diana:* So when you say "rope stretcher", how does that work?

*Olis:* Well, it is like a block and tackle, or a little smaller, and you chain it to a post and get back there and pull on the rope.

*Diana:* And then now when you use the wire stretchers, and it has kind of a crank?

*Olis:* Yeah, yeah, yeah. I don't remember what we used for wire stretchers on that fence. You had that Goldenrod. We didn't use them much because they're too small, you can only stretch them out so far and then you had to start over. Those rope stretchers would stretch six feet. They'd stretch way out.

*Diana:* Did you ever have the problem of the wire popping back?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. If you break it.

*Diana:* Or if it had a weak spot?

*Olis:* Yeah.

*Diana:* So then what did you do? Did you just splice it?

*Olis:* Yeah, and start over. There might have been some bad language used, but then that goes with cowboys.

*Diana:* Yes, that's true. So you spoke about electric fence. Did you use that to corner off a part of the pasture that you want to graze?

*Olis:* No, we didn't use it in the pastures. In later years, we used electric fences to corner off wheat pasture or something, but not very much of it in a pasture.

*Diana:* If they caked back then, they didn't have cakkers...

*Olis:* So most it was 100 pound gunnysacks. At that time, we'd get it in a 100-pound bag, semi loads.

*Diana:* Was there a certain formula mixture that they used?

*Olis:* Old timers, if it wasn't cotton-seed, it wasn't cake. And then as time went on, oh, I suppose in the 70s, late 60s, early 70s, you could get it in a 50-pound paper sack. But when I started out over here, it was all 100-pound sacks.

*Diana:* If they got a semi load, would it be that much?

*Olis:* Yes, 22 tons.

*Diana:* Where did they store it?

*Olis:* In a shed.

*Diana:* Most of them had a shed on the property?

*Olis:* We had an old wooden granary out there on Proffitt's.

*Diana:* Then you had to put it in the granary?

*Olis:* Yes, you had to cart it off and then stack it in the grain bin.

*Diana:* Did you ever stack hay there, too, so that you'd have that?



*Olis:* We didn't put up hay. I did in later years, but when I worked out there for Profitt, we didn't put up hay.

*Diana:* If they fed, did they feed hay bales? The little ones?

*Olis:* Yes, little square bales, 14 x 16.

*Diana:* What would they mostly be? Would they be just be hay, or would they be alfalfa?

*Olis:* No, 90 percent of it would be prairie hay. They'd feed it to horses too.

*Diana:* So you just used one kind of hay?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* You said you worked for somebody else?

*Diana:* I left Gaylord's in June, I think, of '63, and went to work for G.W. Gifford. I stayed there four years.

*Diana:* Where was his place?

*Olis:* Southeast of Profitt's.

*Diana:* And Profitt's was west of the highway?

*Olis:* Yes. Gifford's was about a mile south of 160 and about two miles west.

*Diana:* How big was his place?

*Olis:* He had about 6,000 acres. He has some over in Meade County.

*Diana:* So about how many cattle did he run?

*Olis:* Around 250 head. Cow/calf.

*Diana:* Did he ever do feeders? Any stockers?

*Olis:* Just what he raised, if he didn't sell them that fall, he'd carry them over on wheat pasture and then he had his own little feed set up. He'd feed them out, he'd sell the steer crop and then he'd feed the heifers on graze and self-feeders out there. Then we'd run some on wheat in the wintertime, if we had the wheat pasture. Then we'd have to build more electric fence for that.

*Diana:* Did he have his own wheat pasture?

*Olis:* Yeah. He didn't have all that much. He might have 100 acres over here, and about 200 acres over in Meade County.

*Diana:* So that it was all pretty much in the same area, so it wasn't hard to move cattle?

*Olis:* Well, no. The Meade County was about eight miles west, two mile north. And what he ran over there, if he had wheat pasture, he'd run cows on it. He'd let the cows have it, and then over here in Clark County, where he'd run a bunch of calves on wheat. We had pasture over

there and it was right close by. And they could come in to the water, they could come up to the house to water.

*Diana:* And if he sold those, did he sell them in Dodge?

*Olis:* No, he fed them out there went to the packer with them.

*Diana:* And where would the Packer be?

*Olis:* Dodge.

*Diana:* Just in Dodge?

*Olis:* Yeah, at that time, it was High Plains.

*Diana:* They've been there a while. Then he would negotiate his own contract with the packer?

*Olis:* Well, yeah, yeah. They'd argue with him on it. When I first went over there, Winter Livestock had a fat sale, and we load up a truckload and go to Dodge and he and the buyers up there, they would argue the shrink and this and that and then he'd sell them. That's the way it went.

*Diana:* So you always took them to Dodge? The packer didn't come out and pick them up?

*Olis:* No, we had to haul them up there. We'd take them up. And then what didn't fit to feed, while he'd bring them down to Ashland, to the sale company, till it went out of business and then he went to Winter Livestock.

*Diana:* So they ran a cow/calf operation, did he have his own bulls?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah, well, he bought them.

*Diana:* So did he have a certain breed? Were all of those out there that you worked for, were they mostly Herefords?

*Olis:* Hereford cattle.

*Diana:* Hereford bulls?

*Olis:* Yeah, he bought the bulls from a bull producer. And then somebody come up with the idea that Angus would have a smaller calf, so they bred heifers to Angus bulls. Well, when you do that, you wind up with a black baldie and if you keep it, you end up with a black calf. And it kind of evolved down.

*Diana:* So instead of having Herefords anymore, they had...

*Olis:* Angus and black baldie or whatever. But he still had polled Herefords. He had really good polled Herefords.

*Diana:* Yeah. So the size of the cattle that he had then, when he wanted to have a cow to have a calf, how big did he want the calf to be?

*Olis:* So I don't know about size. It was always by age. Most of them would calve as a two-year-old.

*Diana:* So did you have to go help calve?

*Olis:* Yeah, we did. We kept them up close to the house so we could see them twice a day and sometimes we'd have to have the vet come out. Not very often. So after you've done that long enough, you kind of know on your own how to do it.

*Diana:* Or if you going to have to have help.

*Olis:* Yeah. And you would know. You would know pretty quick if the cow had to have help.

*Diana:* The type of structure of the cattle back then, how has it changed today from what it was then?

*Olis:* Well, not a whole lot. We've got a better confirmation that we had back then. Bull producers have done a remarkable job on improvement. If you're running a cow/calf commercial, you can select your bulls to get what you desire and then a good bull producer will recommend, if he knows what your program is, he can recommend a bloodline that will help you out and get what you want.

*Diana:* So is there a certain size of calf that you want now? Do you want it not to be over a certain weight at birth?

*Olis:* I want it under a certain weight.

*Diana:* So like about how much? Do you want 60 pounds?

*Olis:* Oh, no. I like to have a lot of 70, 75-pound birth weight. After I got to run my own business, I've had cows that would have an enormous calf, over 100 pounds. And I've had a lot of them that were clumsy, that it took them a week or 10 days to get on their feet. I had one, for instance, a real gentle old cow, and I'd always give her a sack of cake to eat while I was messing with her calf. And I had to hold that calf up for about five days. I'd pick it up in the pasture to get it up to mom and I'd hold it and prop it's legs up so it could stand. In about five days, when I got over there and he was up a second when I got there, so I just drove off.

*Diana:* So he finally figured it out and got strong enough to stand?

*Olis:* I've had more than one great-big birthweight. If you get them down to about 80 pounds, 85. An old cow can have a 100-pound calf, but I don't like for them to have to.

*Diana:* About how many years will you get a calf out of a cow?

*Olis:* Well, you should get one until your cow is 10 or 12 years old. If she's not a good producer, I'll sell her. I've had a lot of cows 14 years old, still raising babies. They have the best calves from 8 to 10 years old.

*Diana:* Do you ever have twins?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah.

*Diana:* Is it common? Rare?

*Olis:* Oh, I don't know how common it is because a lot of times, out on the range, an old cow will have two calves and pick one and leave the other. You won't know it. But I've had them, like this last year, a first-calf heifer had a set of twins. One of them was born dead and one of

them she raised. About two weeks later, I had another heifer, I've still got her and I've still got both calves. She had twin heifers. I kept her around home because I wanted to make sure she didn't leave one. But she knew she had two and they were on her mind. And I've had cows do that, and I've had old range cows that I'm sure they had twins. One time, we were branding calves and we gathered these cows up and two calves followed one old cow in. This actually happened. I asked him, "How did you rate a set of twins?" He said, "I don't have a set of twins. That one calf right there belongs on that cow and I don't know who that other one is." I said, "It belongs on that cow too." And he said, "No, it don't."

We got through branding and the calves were out with the cow. We sorted off some stuff and turned the rest of the cows out. We had a calf left over in the corral. I said, "It belongs on that cow, like I told you." He said, "No it doesn't." We went down another half-mile down the creek to bring this old cow back up. She was sucked out on one side and the other side was still full!

She came in the corral and that little calf looked up and went, "Baaaw!" She mooed and he went over and got on his side and milked her out and the old man stood there and said, "Well, I'll be damned." He said, "I saw that calf born." You don't try to fool a cow.

*Diana:* No, you don't. So how old are they when you wean them?

*Olis:* Usually, six months or so.

*Diana:* Then you do all the branding and put in your tags and stuff. How does that differ from what you used to do?

*Olis:* We brand the same brand, other than we have electric branding irons today. I still drag calves to the branding fire and use a branding iron. I ear tag them, and it's not the mother's number, it's the pasture number. When I wean, I don't know what calf went on what mama, but I know what pasture it came out of. So if I have a different number in one pasture, I can go back and know what pasture that was.

*Diana:* So when you brand, do you dehorn them?

*Olis:* I'm polled. I quit dehorning. I think that is about as hard on them as you can be, so I buy those polled bulls. If I keep a heifer that's got horns and she get snotty with me, I can dehorn her. I can get rid of that dirty habit.

*Diana:* Do your horses get pretty friendly with the cattle?

*Olis:* Oh, yes. You get a good cowhorse and he knows what you're doing before you do.

*Diana:* And he knows how to cut the one you want out of there?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah.

*Diana:* So when you move cattle in or you work cattle, about how many people do you usually have to help?

*Olis:* Oh, I usually have around 13. We're run a round-up crew and a branding crew. They come out. A lot of them just come up here to be to be a cowboy for a day.

*Diana:* When you get there, how long does it take you to gather?

*Olis:* That just depends on the pasture.

*Diana:* And how many cattle in that pasture?

*Olis:* Oh, the most I've got in one place is usually around 60, you know, from there to 40 or 50 to 70 or 80.

*Diana:* How big is one pasture?

*Olis:* Oh, you can go all the way to 2,000 acres down to 40, whatever you like.

*Diana:* So do you just use horses or do you call them with your caker?

*Olis:* I just use horses. When you're gathering cattle, if you'll get out of the pickup, you'll get along a whole lot better. And we don't use four-wheelers. I've got one, but I don't want to hurt cattle with it. Well, I have, but...

*Diana:* Do you go check cattle with it sometimes.

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. I check cattle with it at the time. I've got a Ranger and you can haul 300 to 400 pounds of salt in the back of it. You got salt and mineral and all that.

*Diana:* And you can go out and see if all the cattle are in the same place.

*Olis:* The Ranger don't bother them.

*Diana:* Do you have a good neighbors that keep fences up and the cattle stay where they're supposed to be? Or are we moving cattle back in sometimes?

*Olis:* Well, yeah, most of my neighbors are pretty good. You can drive through, ride through to your own. It's still like it should be. Mine is. If you've got cattle you've got to cross on me, cross and go on. Shut the gate when you're through. That's what gates are made for.

*Diana:* The important part is shutting the gate.

*Olis:* That's right. Shut the gate and go on. I've got neighbor that took all the gates out, now. There's no gate there and it's 30 miles around. That's stupid. But they're not cattlemen.

*Diana:* Do you use a caker?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. I do now.

*Diana:* Do you cake every day?

*Olis:* Every day in the wintertime.

*Diana:* Do you feed hay?

*Olis:* Yes.

*Diana:* Is it just prairie still? Any alfalfa?

*Olis:* Yeah, we bale up a lot of grass. We've got about 300 or 400 acres of hay ground.

*Diana:* You have hay ground specifically to be baled?

*Olis:* To be baled.

*Diana:* And how many cuttings can you get off of a hay field?

*Olis:* Grass? One.

*Diana:* And at the end of the summer?

*Olis:* We start cutting, usually by the 10th of July. Sometimes, we'll finish up around the 10th of September.

*Diana:* And how many acres do you bale?

*Olis:* Oh, heavens. You just bale until you're done. I suppose 300 acres, I don't know.

*Diana:* Do you do large round bales? 300 acres.

*Olis:* Big, round bales.

*Diana:* Did you used to do little, square bales?

*Olis:* Yeah, before round bales got popular.

*Diana:* About how long they've been popular?

*Olis:* Oh, quite a while. I remember when I got my first round baler. I bought a square bale wagon, when I was square baling. But I don't remember when I bought the first round baler. I've had three or four of them since then.

*Diana:* Is size is the biggest difference between the little square bales and round bales?

*Olis:* Yeah, there's quite a bit of difference in size.

*Diana:* So how many square bales would equal a round bale that you would have to feed?

*Olis:* I'm making from around 22 to 23 bales, squares, 24 maybe. I haven't checked it for a long time, but I used to make 20 squares equal one round.

*Diana:* When you feed a hay bale, do you string it out or do you put it in a holder?

*Olis:* I unroll round bales, I don't use a holder.

*Diana:* How far will it go?

*Olis:* Oh I don't know. It depends on the density of the bale. If it's baled kind of dry, it will unwrap a lot faster than if it's got more moisture in it. I like to bale from around 15 to 18 percent moisture.

*Diana:* Do they combust as easily as alfalfa or some other things?

*Olis:* Well, they like alfalfa, but you get a good quality prairie hay and they get along.

*Diana:* Is your prairie hay of different varieties?

*Olis:* Yes, you have different varieties of grasses?

*Diana:* Kind of like what you were saying was in the pasture?

*Olis:* It's pretty much what grows in the pasture.

*Diana:* Then how big does it get before you start bailing?

*Olis:* Oh, it'll get up about two foot tall.

*Diana:* Then how do you cut it? Do you use a swather?

*Olis:* I have a windrower, it is a Discbine. It is a rotary cutter.

*Olis:* It's got 15 little turtle shells, discs, with a plate on each end. They turn about 3,000 RPM. And you get so many coming one way and so many going the other way, they put the hay together, then push it out the conditioner.

*Diana:* So you have a windrow.

*Olis:* It does it all at one time.

*Diana:* So then your hay bale...

*Olis:* I rake two rows together, I pulled two rows to the middle.

*Diana:* Do you have a rake that you rake it together with?

*Olis:* Yes, it's a V rake.

*Diana:* So you have enough that it...

*Olis:* Yeah, it makes bigger windrow? These bigger balers, they're kind of hogs. They can eat a lot of hay.

*Diana:* Does it takes a lot to fill it?

*Olis:* Yeah, you need a pretty good windrow to get a better bale of hay out of them.

*Diana:* Your hay baler, is it self-propelled or is a pull-type?

*Olis:* It's pulled by a tractor.

*Diana:* Has the size of your tractor changed through the years? Has the type of tractor that you use changed?

*Olis:* Oh yeah, in comparison to what I started out on.

*Diana:* What did you start out on?

*Olis:* An M Farmall.

*Diana:* Did it have a cab?

*Olis:* No, I had a lot of winter clothes.

*Diana:* Yeah, I would think so. Now, what do you use?

*Olis:* Well, I bale hay with a 6070 Ford New Holland and a Vermeer baler. It's the best outfit I've ever had. I farm with an 8670 Ford. I have a Cat Challenger, but I don't know what number it is. It's got air-conditioning, cab air-conditioning there. If the air-conditioning blows out, you're broke down

*Diana:* Do you have a GPS?

*Olis:* We've got one, yeah. We use it for planting.

*Diana:* So you can tell how many acres you planted?

*Olis:* Well yeah. Mainly so you know where you're driving. Otherwise, when you do a little row tilling, you can't hardly see the furrow over here a ways. So, you know, you may be six inches from the row, or you may be 10 inches. You may be on top of what you just planted. With the GPS, you go right straight down the field.

*Diana:* What was the type of baler you have? A Vermeer?

*Olis:* Vermeer.

*Diana:* Who's that made by? The company?

*Olis:* I think it's made in Italy.

*Diana:* Is it big? Huge?

*Olis:* Oh, it's not that big. It makes five by six-foot bale. It's big, but it's a good baler.

*Diana:* Is there some kind of twine that all together?

*Olis:* It's a net baler.

*Diana:* And then when you put it out for the cattle, you have to cut that net?

*Olis:* I cut the net off. You have all the tools of the trade. Yes, you can take that old round bale with that net, and if you don't cut it, the bale can roll down the hill

*Diana:* What about the prairie hay that you're baling. Do you have to replant that often?

*Olis:* No, just leave it alone and it will come back when it rains. Today, I fertilize it. I put nitrogen on it in May. It increases the yield and also increases the TDN on it and they love it.

*Diana:* When you roll out a bale and they eat it, there's not a whole lot of leftover.

*Olis:* There's very little left over if you don't overfeed them. You have to know, well, a cow eats so many pounds. A bale weighs so many pounds. If you have an 1,100-pound bale you have to know how many head to feed for.

*Diana:* So how often do you have to put a bale out?



*Olis:* I put one out every day. It depends on how many cattle you got, but I feed them hay every day. If they don't clean it all up, I make an adjustment on it.

*Diana:* So like this cold weather, we just had?

*Olis:* I had to put out a lot of hay.

*Diana:* Do you calve in the fall?

*Olis:* I calved in the spring this year, I had one calf born before the full eight below zero, and I had several of them born when it was eight below zero and I saved every one of them. Their moms got them up and all cleaned up and fed and I don't think I even got an ear frozen on them.

*Diana:* So you didn't have to bring in any to the house?

*Olis:* I brought one in and warmed him up and hauled him all the way back to his mother and she took him and hid him. Three days later she come in all milked out. Two more days later, he come in with her. Good old mamma.

*Diana:* Let's talk about some of the disasters that have been around the county. Snowstorms, do you remember snowstorms that you've worked in?

*Olis:* Yeah, when I moved over there where I'm at, I think it was in '70 or '71.

*Diana:* There was a big one in February of 1971. That's the one that closed the...

*Olis:* That would be the one, 1971. I was snowed in here for three weeks. There was about 300 to 400 head of cattle from Fowler drifted into my country and I left home one morning before daylight at four below zero, on a horse. We rode all day and gathered cattle and I just started pushing cattle north from my house. Then we rode with the rest of the cowboys. There was other crews coming in from east and west. We gathered them up and we got them about six miles north of my house and we turned them in on of the neighbors for the night, it was dark.

The next day we got them and the cowboys took them on back up to wheat pasture south of Fowler. Oh, it was cold.

*Diana:* Did they have access to water?

*Olis:* They did after we got them up that night and penned for the night. We turned them in a neighbor's pasture and let them stay all night.

*Diana:* Were you running cattle for yourself then, or were you working for somebody else?

*Olis:* I was working for myself at the time

*Diana:* So you did lose any cattle during that?

*Olis:* No. I might have lost some baby calves.

*Diana:* Do you remember any other snowstorms?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. I don't know what year that was either. I think it came in March, the 17th of

March? The day before it was a hot, sunny day about 70 degrees and I was clear up five miles west of home building fence. It was the latter part of March. The next morning, snow was blowing. Snow flew all day and about half the night. I was snowed in again. It was pretty cold that night, too.

*Diana:* So what about floods?

*Olis:* Well, the big flood was 1951 and I was in Ohio. The folks and I had gone to Ohio. So I missed that. But everyone talked about it and I saw the devastation when I got home, but I wasn't very old in 1951. I could have been 10 years old.

*Diana:* You saw the devastation Did it wipe out fences?

*Olis:* It took the fences out, might have been for a quarter mile.

*Diana:* What about tornadoes? Have you seen any of those?

*Olis:* In 1973, in September, a tornado tore up my neighbor's. That's the first one I ever saw.

*Diana:* Did you actually see it?

*Olis:* I had seen funnel clouds, but this sucker was kind of in your hip pocket. We were close enough to it, it went about a half mile east of me and it was quiet as a mouse, there wasn't a breath of air. You could see that old funnel going and the debris. It demolished my neighbor's house, outbuildings, barn. It just tore it up.

*Diana:* So even though they say this area has a lot of tornadoes, we really don't see a whole lot a lot of times. What about fires?

*Olis:* Oh, fires. The worst one was Starbuck Fire. I don't ever want to see another one.

*Diana:* You lease land in Clark County, right?

*Olis:* I own land now, in Clark County.

*Diana:* So you were north of where the fire was?

*Olis:* I was just a little tad north, it missed me on one corner, by about a quarter mile. I knew it was coming and grabbed a tractor and disk and went down to fight a fire guard. And then the neighbors came in with a tractor and we got it put out. It lacked about a quarter mile of getting to me.

*Diana:* So you roaded your tractor down there. But how far would that be?

*Olis:* About three miles down to through the pasture. Two miles, three miles, probably three miles.

*Diana:* How close to the 12-mile corner did it come?

*Olis:* Oh, three, four miles. If it were just south of Donley McCarty's house and it angled southwest. What is that, three miles down? Four miles down?

*Diana:* Something like that.

*Olis:* I got down there and saw the fire crew. I took a tractor and disk and saw the fire going

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just south of Donley's house, over on the neighbor's. Then I just followed the fire line, clear on southwest down to Sand Creek. That's where we corralled it down there. Then about midnight that night, I went back over and plowed another fireguard out here around, north of Donley's on some CRP. It broke out and come the other way. Then we got it put out.

*Diana:* It kind of went all over the place.

*Olis:* Yeah, it went everywhere.

*Diana:* Blew around different ways. Did you come back the next day and help some more?

*Olis:* Yeah. Oh, yeah.

*Diana:* Do you remember how about how much damage you saw? It looked a lot different in the daylight.

*Olis:* It was just devastating. You know, I grew up in that country. I just took off on 283 highway, drove off out in the pasture and sandhills and it was just like, "Where am I?" It was gone. It was gone.

*Diana:* It was just flat sand. Had it started blowing then?

*Olis:* Oh, yeah. It blew as soon as the fire got out of it. Yeah. It was sand ridges three foot deep.

*Diana:* And the trees...

*Olis:* It just took all the timber out. There's still remnants, always will be.

*Diana:* Well, they want to knock those down.

*Olis:* Oh, some of them dozed them down, but there's a lot of them still there, the old skeletons still standing.

*Olis:* Yes. Those who were there, know.

*Diana:* So that fire has been four years ago, this year. So how has the land recovered?

*Olis:* Good. Pretty good. It is amazing.

*Diana:* So the rain came at just the right time.

*Olis:* It all came just about right.

*Diana:* Is it the kind of grass that grows in that area or...?

*Olis:* Well, yeah. I think that's a lot of it. Way back in '61 or '62, fire went through east of us down over there, and you can still see that five years later, five, six years later. You can see where the fire went through, and that's all buffalo grass. They just got it put out, just like Starbucks. It probably burned 1,000 acres. And, you know, five years later, you could still see where it was at. Yeah, that's what fire will do if conditions are right. But on Starbucks, we had nice rains afterward, and that saved it.

*Diana:* And now you can't tell at all, except for the trees.

*Olis:* You can't hardly tell where the fire went. You could if you went out and studied it.

*Diana:* Tell me how cattle ranching has changed from the 1960s when you first came to Clark County to today?

*Olis:* Oh, man. Change have been tremendous.

*Diana:* Like what type of things?

*Olis:* Mainly the way you handle them, or what you handle them with. There's very few cowboys.

*Diana:* That actually know how to ride a horse and rope and go out and know how do it?

*Olis:* They go out on a four-wheeler and whatever, but when I started out, we rode horses. If I was going five miles out to help a neighbor, I saddled up in the dark.

*Diana:* Did you trailer your horse?

*Olis:* We rode. We had horse trailers and we used them.

*Diana:* But when you went and helped somebody work cattle for a day or two days, did they feed you dinner? Did they take you out or did they take you to their house? What was most common?

*Olis:* A lot of times, we went to town for lunch.

*Diana:* Where would town be?

*Olis:* Minneola, Fowler, Ashland, or Englewood. You know, depending on what area you were working in.

*Diana:* What was closest.

*Olis:* Where there was a restaurant. Now there ain't no restaurants. But, yeah, we done a lot of work for Jarboes. Young Cooper, we worked there. Jarboes always had a cook. They always had somebody to cook for them.

*Diana:* They'd come out to where you were?

*Olis:* No, we went down to the cookhouse. We'd shut down for dinner and go down to the cookhouse. And yeah, we trailered to the headquarters, then we'd ride or trailer to the back side of the pasture and then ride back up.

*Diana:* When you're working for somebody, and it would take a couple of days. Do they pay you by the day or do they pay you by...?

*Olis:* A lot of it, you just did it.

*Diana:* Some of it, you didn't get paid for?

*Olis:* A lot of them paid by the day; most of them paid by the day. I went over and I helped on the Adams Ranch several times. I'd get up at three o'clock at home, trailer over there. I'd try to get over there in time and they'd always tell me to go in so-and-so gate, and go north until you

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find a set of corrals. Then I'd unload and head south to the river. It might be five miles to the river, but you had to be down there by daylight. So you rode all this way in the dark. A lot of times I'd leave the corrals at whatever time it was in the morning and I could hear somebody just over there, but I didn't know who it was until daylight came. We didn't ride together, I rode over here and he rode over there. There'd be five or six cowboys down on the river. We were trying to gather cattle and head back north. You'd ride all day.

*Diana:* Were you heading for certain pens?

*Olis:* Yeah, we'd go to a certain set of pens. And then you could go gather another pasture the next day and come back to that same set of pens.

*Diana:* You said you worked for Young and Cooper, who was the in charge of that place at that time? Jim Arnold worked there for a while.

*Olis:* Yeah, Jim Arnold helped. I didn't do a whole lot of work for Young and Cooper. Most of it was Jarboes-- Nux Jones? I think that was his name. That's been a long time ago. Jimmy Arnold was Young and Cooper's man. Red Simmons was there when I was there. I worked along with Red. Good man.

*Diana:* So when they called you to work, or did they call you? Was it word of mouth? I would speak to whoever called me. Gaylord usually called me. Bob Lynn worked over there at that time. He'd call and we'd go. Yes, I left home a lot of times. I'd come over and then we'd go on up. We'd load up and go on to headquarters.

*Diana:* Today, when you move cattle, you're pretty much calling people?

*Olis:* I call whoever can help. We've got certain people who can help. I just call them, when we've got to move cattle. I've drove a lot of cattle from Meade to Clark County.

*Diana:* Do you usually call the same people every time?

*Olis:* Oh, usually. If they're available. Sometimes you use different ones. A lot of them have died. A

*Diana:* Or got to old to set a horse.

*Olis:* Einsel Brothers, I helped Einsel brothers a lot, to move and brand calves. We gathered up there one time and about three or four of those old hands, they ran and got on a horse, and Ralph Einsel was sitting there looking all around. Pretty soon he said, "You know what I think? I think it's time we look for some new help."

*Diana:* How have things changed? Do you doctor as much now as you used to? Or is it different?

*Olis:* Well, certain years, you do.

*Diana:* What kind of things are you doctoring for?

*Olis:* Black leg. They call it malignant edema, of disease, you vaccinate for about anything, whatever, black leg, pink eye. That's what I use. I use all that stuff. I give the calves a booster in the fall.

*Diana:* You have most of your own cow/calf. You're not buying anything in?

*Olis:* I haven't bought cattle for a long time.

*Diana:* You don't have to really take care of anything that's coming in?

*Olis:* No. And when you wean calves in the fall, you always have some sick from pneumonia or something. Draxxin is good. You know, I've got a dart gun. I have a feed truck, and I can doctor that one over there. I lost my cowboy ability when I started up the feed truck.

*Diana:* It's easier to stay in the feed truck.

*Olis:* I got arthritis and can't rope no more.

*Diana:* It makes a difference, doesn't it.

*Olis:* It's been a good deal for me. And yeah, ranching has changed.

*Diana:* And it has a lot in the last hundred years, right?

*Olis:* The last 10 years, is when it all changed the most.

*Diana:* Has it become more modernized, more automated?

*Olis:* Yeah, it is. We've got away from 100-pound sacks and have a cake bin, a bulk bin.

*Diana:* The feed store just brings it out?

*Olis:* You auger the feed right out on the ground. You don't even have to leave the cab to deal with wild cows. That old cow, when you took off a 100-pound sack of cake, she knew you. You were her buddy. I used to have an old cow who always came out like this. And I got to messing with her, and I got her to where I could lock my knees between her horns and as long as I would stand there and scratch her, she'd never move a muscle. When I would move my knees to where she could get back out, she'd take off, and go stand over there, you know. But yeah. All I had to do was go up there and catch her by the horns and wrap her around my legs, and she would just stand there just real nice. Us guys are not too smart, anyway.

*Diana:* Well, they become pets.

*Olis:* I'll bet there's probably not two ranchers in the whole world that don't have a cow that'll eat out of their hand.

*Olis:* Looking back, what's the smartest thing you've ever done?

*Olis:* Went to work for myself.

*Diana:* If you could change anything, what would you change if you could?

*Olis:* I don't really know.

*Diana:* Are you planning on your operation going to the next generation?

*Olis:* I've already got it set up.

*Diana:* You have a succession plan drawn up and it's all ready to go?

*Olis:* All ready to go, it's all done by a trip to the trust. Everybody doesn't need to know this.

*Diana:* Most people do have something well-established already.

*Olis:* You know, I started out on my own, and it was awful hard to lease land. It was awful hard to get anywhere. And I had family that had land and they wouldn't let me have it. A lot of them told me later, "We don't know why you guys didn't have this, we don't know."

*Diana:* Through the years you've gone from leasing land to having actually acquired some land on your own. You've gone from leasing to owning.

*Olis:* Yeah, I own almost everything I operate, anymore. I've got just a little bit of land leased over in Meade County. The rest of it, I operate it all. I mean, I own it. Some, I'm still paying for it, but I still own it. I'll be 400 years old before I get it paid off.

*Diana:* We're in a partnership here. Tell me some of the ways your family has been involved in the communities that you've lived in.

*Olis:* Oh, we've always been involved in some kind of community organization around. We used to be, years ago, when we had a lot of neighbors, we'd have a community supper once a month and meet in the old school house. That fell apart and then neighbors died and their places were taken over by absentee owners and conglomerates got a part. I've been a member of the Meade County Historical Society for ever. I've served on the board many years, over there. I've lived in Clark County and I've lived there, because I'm pretty well taxed out.

*Olis:* Then I've been a member of the church family from way back years ago when I attended church regularly. I

*Olis:* Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

*Olis:* Oh, I don't know, I started out on my own 1967. I batched for five years over there, seven years, or five years. I just gradually added to it, here and there and yonder. The best thing I ever done was every time I've had an opportunity and could handle it, I bought a piece of real estate.

*Diana:* When you bought real estate, was it from an auction or sale or was it a private treaty?

*Olis:* It was generally private treaty. The place I live on, the ranch I live on, I leased it for five years. And then my landlord died and I had to either buy it or move. I stuck my neck out and bought it. And then I rented a half-section that had a little grass on it and some farm ground. I didn't farm it, but I had the grass leased. They still wanted to sell it, so they sold it to me. I bought it. My dad had some and I bought it. Then this came up for sale and I bought it and that came up for sale and I bought it. I have bought land at public auction. I bought the Clark County property at public auction.

*Diana:* When you do it with private treaty, do you sometimes get a better deal than you do at public auction?

*Olis:* I don't think so. You just don't have to worry about your neighbor bidding against you. I never have really got a better deal. It was more what you wanted and what I wanted, and if you were happy then so was I. It's a good way to buy land. You don't have to pay an auctioneer and you don't pay a real estate agent.

*Olis:* You might not get what you get at auction, but how much you pay an auctioneer and

how much you're going to pay... I know how much you pay an auctioneer, cause I done it. And you don't have a real estate and they get quite a chunk of it.

*Diana:* So it's just an even better deal.

*Olis:* Most of the real estate I've bought has been offered to me. The people who owned it, offered it to me. And, you know, if they thought that much of me, I tried to buy it. If I was able, I bought it. There was some I couldn't buy. But that's the way life is.

*Diana:* They thought that you were a good steward of the land.

*Olis:* They liked what I'm doing. No, I look back and all I've done is got old.

*Diana:* Happens to all of us, doesn't it?

*Olis:* Sooner or later. We do it one day at a time. Don't get in a hurry.

*Diana:* Don't want to.

*Olis:* Oh, I don't know what else it would be. I'm happy with what I've got.