

## **Work 4.m4a**

**Interviewer** OK. If I ask again how ranching has changed in the last hundred years, do you still work cattle the way your grandpa did?

**Charlie** No. They didn't work their calves on the cows, it was just... You know, they just manually threw them down and did what they had to do to them. I presume, no bigger operations than they had, if they had to do something to a bigger animal, they would put it on a rope and tie it to a post and go from there.

**Interviewer** Do you have working pens now?

**Charlie** Oh yes.

**Interviewer** When were they were built?

**Charlie** Oh, what I've got now was built in the last two years! The rest of them burned to the ground.

**Interviewer** Are your current pens metal or wood?

**Charlie** Oh yes, mostly metal.

**Interviewer** That's a big change sir. Is there anything else that you can think of that you know has changed in the last hundred years in the way that you handle your livestock?

**Charlie** Well, a hundred years ago most animals that were put on feed for slaughter were three year olds before they were put on feed. That was... You didn't know that, did you?

**Interviewer** I didn't.

**Charlie** Yeah and even... When I was a little kid, a lot of the steers were two year olds when they went on feed. You know, they'd be weighing 10 or 11 hundred pounds then. And the cattle have got... Over the last hundred years cattle have went from big to little to big again.

**Interviewer** I seem to remember in the early 70s they wanted short-legged marshmallows. I remember that.

**Charlie** Well, that was nothing like what they had in the 50's. They were really short then.

**Interviewer** Do you run a specific breed now?

**Charlie** No.

**Interviewer** Do you breed your own cattle. Do you run cows.

**Charlie** Yeah.

**Interviewer** You do run cow/calf and you don't try to go for any specific breed.

**Charlie** No.

**Interviewer** Do you have any family stories of disasters not the fire?

**Charlie** Well, I told you about my grandpa driving the cattle to Ashland and it rained before they got home. There were several hailstorms where it wiped out a wheat crop after it had headed it out. One of my mother's uncles, in the thirties, he had considerable funds in the Sitka Bank and they caused him to go bankrupt and lose his farm.

**Interviewer** I didn't know that bank failed.

**Charlie** Yes. He thought he had \$50,000 in the bank and he woke up one morning and he didn't have nothing. It broke the man's spirit. He was never able to do much again.

**Interviewer** OK, you have one brother, Sam. Do you farm with Sam or are you completely separate?

**Charlie** No, we're together and separate too. Most of it's together.

**Interviewer** When you are thinking about the next generation, how are you trying to prepare your sons to keep farming. Are either of them interested? I mean your son and Sam's. Are they interested in continuing farming/ranching. Your son has a good job. So is he interested in coming back to farming?

**Charlie** No, he's really not interested. He's not interested. No, he wants to... They want to retain ownership of the property. I'm not sure what they... I guess when I'm dead and gone, it's up to them what they do.

**Interviewer** Have you tried to teach them what it will take to keep the ground?

**Charlie** Yeah, they're capable of doing that.

**Interviewer** Okay. Going back. When you think about taking care of your cattle, what changes have you made in how you feed them and how you doctor them from the time your grandpa was doing it.

**Charlie** Well, where the feedyard is, I use a tractor to feed with, I don't manually... One of the big things that's changed is the eradication of screw worms.

**Interviewer** I've only ever seen one screw worm cow in my life. What did it do to cattle when that was a problem?

**Charlie** During fly time, the screw worms... any place the skin was... it didn't have to be broken, just chapped and the screw worm flies, the flies could lay eggs on that spot and therefore create a maggot that would eat live flesh. They could eat plumb through a cow. Not the first generation of screw worms, but they would hatch and lay eggs and make a fly to lay eggs and they would just keep it infested.

**Interviewer** And even if it didn't kill her, she didn't gain any weight.

**Charlie** Yeah.

**Interviewer** And she'd have trouble keeping a calf.

**Charlie** Yeah. If you had calves born in fly weather, you had to treat the navels.

**Interviewer** What did you treat them with?

**Charlie** I think they called it "Smear 62" or something like that that Franklin Laboratories sold.

**Interviewer** Was it blue?

**Charlie** No, it wasn't blue it was just kind of a clear gel, as I recall.

**Interviewer** How did you deal with the screw worms, if you had a cow that had them?

**Charlie** You had to put that Smear 62 on it.

**Interviewer** And it would kill the screw worm in the flesh.

**Charlie** It would kill the screw worm and you'd keep it applying it and it would keep the flies away to where they wouldn't lay eggs in it and infest it.

**Interviewer** So you would be constantly having to catch this cow and throwing her or putting her in the chute to doctor her?

**Charlie** Yea, and you know, a wire cut or getting a horn knocked loose, was a opening for those screw worms.

**Interviewer** Do you remember about what time, what year, they started being able to doctor screw worms.

**Charlie** I don't know when that was, it was before my time, they had a treatment for them and it would have been in the early middle 50's when they started releasing sterile male screw worm flies on the Mexican border. And they still continue that program today. They moved that line south somewhere; I think it's Panama now where they release those sterile male flies. That creates a barrier that keeps flies from coming north of that line and multiplying. You get on down into South America and Africa and there are still screw worms.

**Interviewer** OK.

**Charlie** You didn't know that?

**Interviewer** No. It's not something I've had to deal with.

**Charlie** Occasionally there'll be a tourist from this country that goes to Africa or South America and they'll have an open wound somewhere and they'll get screw worms and they won't realize what they got when they get home and the doctors don't know what they got until they get to digging around and they find this maggot in there eating on them.

**Interviewer** You'd think that would be horrifically painful.

**Charlie** It would be.

**Interviewer** Okay. Are there any other changes that have happened that you know of? Your grandpa had to rope her or tie her to a post. And now, what do you do?

**Charlie** Well, most people have a chute of some kind. Or you can catch one and immobilize it and do whatever procedure you need to do.

**Interviewer** If you now have metal working pens, do you have the curved alley. Did you do that?

**Charlie** I don't have a one at this time; I may someday.

**Interviewer** Why would you think that was a positive thing to have.

**Charlie** It depends on how it is set up. Some set ups aren't positive.

**Interviewer** Why?

**Charlie** Part of it is because of bad design and part of it is the people who are trying to use them. Even though they call a cow dumb animal, which they are. There are some people ain't any smarter than a cow.

**Interviewer** I'm assuming the whole point of this is to keep the cow as calm as possible when you're having to interact with her and she doesn't like it anyway.

**Charlie** Yeah.

**Interviewer** When you look back at your farming/ranching operation, what is the smartest thing you ever did.? I know. How do you choose just one? But what was something you did that worked?

**Charlie** Oh boy. I can't come up with any one thing that's any more intelligent than what other people do.

**Interviewer** How did you come up with intelligent things to do? Were you watching what other people were doing and trying it?

**Charlie** Sometimes you would watch what other people would do. Sometimes you figure out what works for you. Sometimes it depends on how much blood, sweat and tears you want to invest!

**Interviewer** Is there something in your operation that if you could go back and change it, you would.

**Charlie** Yeah, I would have started running sheep a lot sooner and had a lot more of them.

**Interviewer** Why?

**Charlie** There's more money in the sheep. There's more work, but there's more money.

**Interviewer** How did you get started with sheep?

**Charlie** By accident, my brother had some and he thought I ought to have them and I bought them.

**Interviewer** Were you raising them for wool or meat?

**Charlie** Both.

**Interviewer** I thought the meat sheep didn't produce the good wool.

**Charlie** They don't. But the sheep that have good wool don't produce a good carcass.

**Interviewer** Are you still able to sell? Because I thought Dodge shut down their sheep auction.

**Charlie** They don't have a sheep auction anymore at Dodge City. I think Hutchinson is the closest auction.

**Interviewer** So you aren't running sheep anymore.

**Charlie** No.

**Interviewer** But they actually made money. When did you quit running sheep?

**Charlie** The Starbuck Fire scorched everything. The facilities, the sheep, everything was gone. I was seventy years old, and I'm not gonna start over.

**Interviewer** Were you hauling them to Hutch at that time then?

**Charlie** No, the auction was still in Dodge City, and I was in Dodge at the sheep auction when the Starbuck Fire came along, and those were the highest priced lambs I ever sold in my life.

**Interviewer** I'm glad you went out with a bang! Is there anything that you would like to tell other people about ranching south of Dodge City that you wish people understood or knew.

**Charlie** Most people that are still there have a pretty good handle on what they're doing. It's changed quite a bit in the last 30 years.

**Interviewer** In what way?

**Charlie** Thirty years ago, probably less than a third of the grass was cow/calf operations. It was stocker feeders. In the last 30 years, that's changed. It's probably 75 or 80 percent cow/calf..

**Interviewer** Why?

**Charlie** The stocker deal, the calves get... The weaning weights are bigger and you don't have the opportunity there to put enough weight on them before they go to the feedyard. That's a lot of it.

**Interviewer** So farming practices really don't have much to do with that. It's more the difference in the type of cattle you're raising.

**Charlie** That has a lot to do with it.

**Interviewer** How much longer do you hope to keep farming?

**Charlie** I suppose as long as I'm physically able and probably two years after that.

**Interviewer** Is there anything else you would like to have on this tape?

**Charlie** Not really. You know most most of my family that's been involved in farming, ranching and livestock. Most of them was involved up to within a couple months of their death. They quit because they couldn't get around to see it no more.

**Interviewer** Do you enjoy it?

**Charlie** I must.

**Interviewer** Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us.

**Charlie** Did I answer all your questions?

**Interviewer** Yes sir.