David Redger's family originally came to Clark County in 1909, where they settled in Sitka. Redger**,** 63, graduated from high school in 1974. He currently lives on the family farm/ranch in Sitka. His immediate family came to Clark County in 1951 when his grandfather passed away. He is interviewed by his sister, Diana Redger.

David: He (grandfather) came from The Basin. Did you know he farmed out there?

Diana: Yes. He worked for the Smiths, according to Bessie. He bought the north place later and the Sundgrens (Great -grandparents) lived up where the Coverdale place was before they moved to Coldwater. So, was there any school on the property?

David: No, it was across the road.

Diana: Yeah. How close was the nearest school?

David: That I went to?

Diana: No, that was there. There was one in Sitka, right?

David: It would have been within a quarter.

Diana: What was your family's occupation? Were they rancher, farmer, cowhand?

David: I would say farmer.

Diana: How did your grandpa acquire his land?

David: He paid for it.

Diana: Yes. Describe the land that he had. Was pasture or was it farm land?

David: I think it was all farm ground or mostly farm ground. There was the southeast part of the two 80s, there would be an 80 over there, that was probably all grass. I think everything else was farm ground.

Diana: The pasture just east of the house that went under the bridge?

David: Yeah.

Diana: What about the pasture just south of the house that was over by the highway?

David: I would say that was farm ground.

Diana: And the stuff on the Sitka Corner?

David: Yeah.

Diana: So what type of land was it? Was it good grassland? Was it good farm ground? Was it sandy?

David: It wasn't sandy. I wouldn't call it good farm ground. Part of it was, you know, part of it was sub-irrigated, so part of it was decent.

Diana: Were there any rivers?

David: A couple of creeks. It's running water now.

Diana: The Day Creek?

David: No. The creek that runs through the house or under the bridge. No, that's not Day Creek.

Diana: What is it?

David: It's a Six Mile Something-or-Other. I don't know if it has a name.

Diana: What about up north? Is the dam full or is there still a dam?

David: There's three dams up there or four dams up there. But no. No water in any of them.

Diana: So what type of crops did they grow?

David: Mostly wheat. At one time back in the 40s, 50s, they raised corn, but then the drought hit.

Diana: Then what?

David: Well, they went to milo and then finally they just went straight to wheat because the milo couldn't survive in the summer here.

Diana: When did they plant alfalfa on that one field?

David: Sixty-eight or sixty-nine.

Diana: I bet it was earlier because the girls were still home and they were hauling hay and they left in '66 and '67.

David: When did Robert go to the Service?

Diana: In '66 or '67, he graduated from high school in '65.

David: I think they've put it in the year he graduated.

Diana: How many cuttings could they get off the alfalfa?

David: Normal year? Four. Sometimes if it was real wet, then they got five. Towards the end, when it was getting to when the drought was coming, you'd get three guaranteed.

Diana: How did they cut it?

David: They used a sickle mower to start with. Laid it on the ground and then raked it. And when we got the self-propelled swather was when we started swathing. How'd they bale it?

Diana: Was it a pull...

David: Well, it was a Ford that went behind the tractor, it had its own motor, because we didn't have a tractor that would pull a baler with a PTO that would pull a baler.

Diana: What did they use? A little Ford tractor?

David: Yeah.

Diana: So how did they gather the hay out of the field? The alfalfa?

David: By hand.

Diana: What did they use?

David: Four-wheel trailer.

Diana: How did they get that trailer? I think I remember him...

David: Well, he bought the dry gears, the pull gears, and then we put a bed on it.

Diana: Put a wooden bed on it. Yes. I could remember helping screw the nuts in to hold the bed down. So how many bales could you... These are small bales?

David: Small squares.

Diana: How many pounds?

David: Depending on who baled it. The alfalfa was weighing probably 65 to 85 pounds.

Diana: And how many could you get on a trailer?

David: That trailer, you could get 80.

Diana: And that was all stacked by hand, right? Walked beside and threw up by hand. OK, so when did you graduate to the self-propelled hauler?

David: My junior year, we hauled my freshman...

Diana: I thought you were in 8th grade, 7th grade.

David: No, we had a truck at that point.

Diana: When did you start your hay hauling crew?

David: Seventh grade! But we didn't get this...

Diana: 1969?

David: Probably. I had to hire a driver to drive at night because I wasn't old enough to drive. I wasn't 16. So, I bought that when I was 15.

Diana: So you would have been a freshman?

David: Probably.

Diana: And how big was your hay hauling crew?

David: That one took two to three people. The self-propelled took two to three people. When I worked for or with Randy Mings and at that point we had eleven kids working for us.

Diana: How many trailers were you doing?

David: We did three bobtail trucks, our DewEze wagon and then Alvie Mings made one, made a home-made....

Diana: DewEze?

David: Well, it wasn't a Dew-Eze, but it was a self-propelled. He took a truck, took the bed and cab off of it.

Diana: So. How did this work? The self-propelled?

David: Well!

Diana: But how was it different? You didn't have to handle the bales, right? Till they got up on the...

David: You didn't have to throw them up. It had a reversible hydraulic and you just drove along. It would turn them over so they were flat and bring them up the nose. It would bring them right to you. You just picked them up off the track and stacked them on a bed four to five high.

Diana: And then when you took them to the place where you were stacking them for the farmer, or whoever...

David: you just reversed the hydraulics and it took them back off.

Diana: So, when you were hauling hay, how much did you get per bale?

David: As a hand or as a...

Diana: Well, yeah, what did you have to pay your people?

David: Two to three cents bale.

Diana: What did the driver get?

David: Depended on how good-looking she was.

Diana: Was it always a girl?

David: No, no. We usually rotated it off. I had Cynthia Seabourn and Gwen Krier drive. They were the only two girls that I had driving, and both of them unloaded. So, they got a cent, a penny a bale.

Diana: How much did you charge altogether for bales?

David: When we just had the trucks, we started at twelve cents. When we bought this, we went to fifteen. When we finished, however many years later, I quit hauling because I thought it got to where they couldn't afford it. And I was at 30 cents, but gas at that point was going through the roof. I mean, it was almost $2.

Diana: Were you a senior?

David: I was out of school. I had come back and I might have been married.

Diana: When you used that, could you make a pretty good income off of hauling hay?

David: My help, we was hauling 1,000 bales a day. My help was making 20 bucks a day. You couldn't do that in town. You know, most of the places that a high school kid could work was paying a $1.60 to $2.10 maybe for an eight-hour day so, you're looking at 16 bucks a day.

Diana: So how many farmers did you haul hay for? And did you have a regular route that you went?

David: I had a regular alfalfa crew. I followed my dad and I followed Alvie Mings.

Diana: What did your dad and Alvie do?

David: They were custom hayers. They swathed and then they baled it.

Diana: And then you came along and stacked it and picked up the bales. Did you have to stack in the barn sometimes?

David: Yes. It was always best to stack on the side of the field. If we had to, we charged anything over like three miles one way, if we had to haul it. We had to haul it more than three miles, we charged mileage. If it went into the barn, it was an automatic nickel. Because you handled the bale more.

Diana: Did you have to feed your crew?

David: Oh, yeah.

Diana: How'd you do that?

David: Out of my pocket.

Diana: Did you have help? Cooking meals for them?

David: If we were home.

Diana: But how often were you home?

David: Weekly, every other week. Maybe.

Diana: I just remember cooking lots of meals for the hay hauling crew.

David: Yeah, but we were only there when our hay was on the ground and 20 acres never took very long, you know, a day.

Diana: It was just that field east of the house?

David: Yeah.

Diana: When you stacked into a big stack, how many bales were usually in each stack.

David: Depended on the farmer.

Diana: What was average?

David: Thousand, fifteen hundred.

Diana: Did you ever drive the swather or the baler?

David: Yeah, when Daddy got sick, I ran both of them.

Diana: OK, so the swather. How is it different than, like a tractor?

David: It had joysticks.

Diana: And how did the joysticks work?

David: Like a dozer. You push it, the two sticks. The further forward you push them, the faster it would go. You pull them back to slow it down, to stop it, to back it up. The Case was a double-stick, just like a dozer. You could push this one forward. You could push your left hand forward and make the left wheels go forward. Pull your right hand back and make the right wheels back up.

Diana: So, you could turn it around.

David: Yeah. You didn't get it stuck like you did the...

Diana: How did you do the deck?

David: Foot pedals, up and down the foot pedal.

Diana: And the brake was a foot pedal?

David: Yeah. The brakes were on the... You didn't have brake-brakes, they were on the joysticks.

Diana: And was that the way it was on the New Holland?

David: Yeah, except the New Holland only had a single stick. If you were turning left, the left wheel would quit moving. So you could stick it quick.

Diana: So what about the baler? Did it have a...?

David: The baler was a regular, it was self-propelled. They had just moved a four-cylinder motor, give or take, onto the baler. You know, like a regular, little tractor.

Diana: It was pretty heavy, wasn't it?

David: Yeah.

Diana: What about the swather? How did Daddy move the swather?

David: He built a trailer to move the Case. You ran the drive wheels up on the trailer. Then you pinned the crazy wheel on the back so it didn't do stupid things behind you.

Diana: And then he could pull that behind his pickup and go wherever. But he had to road the baler, right?

David: Yeah, but the baler would run 40 mile an hour.

Diana: So how far did you to go to custom swath and bale for people?

David: I think he stayed pretty much in the county.

Diana: In the east part of the county, or all over?

David: I don't think he went to Minneola, but yeah, we were as far north as the Lexington Bucklin type community all the way down, some into Comanche County, mostly down across here and over to Acres.

Diana: In the south part of the county.

David: Yeah, because there's not much... You get north of town, there's just not a whole lot.

Diana: Do you remember what he charged for swathing and then for baling?

David: Baling, I think, was quarter a bale. Toward that, but I think that's what it was, 20 cents and then a quarter. Swathing was six, eight bucks an acre then.

Diana: It varied from what...

David: Yeah. What type of crop it was.

Diana: Did he do like wheat straw?

David: Yeah, he baled that. Wheat straw, feed, alfalfa, grass...

Diana: Did you ever have anybody work for him besides you? Did somebody else drive the baler?

David: I don't think somebody else drove the baler.

Diana: Did somebody else do the swather? Yeah, I don't think he'd let anybody else to the baling.

David: Yeah, I think either Mel or Vic Brown swathed for him some.

Diana: After the early 70s then, when he wasn't swathing or baling, did you stop the whole thing or how did you get out of haying?

David: **No,** After Daddy died, I took the swather and baler and went ahead and . . . cause I come back to the home place and was running them. The Hesston swather was probably seven, eight years old. It needed replaced. The baler needed replaced, too, but, you know, you could fix on it just a little

David: I went up to Bucklin, where we bought the Hesston at that time, to see what it would cost me to swap it out. Daddy gave six or seven thousand for that Hesston swather new. They were going to give me just about that, wore out, but they wanted $28,000 for a new one! There was no way. That's when we got out of it, because at that point, I couldn't charge these people that.

Diana: So how many swathers did Daddy have?

David: Just the two. I think he had it seven years.

Diana: Was the baler New Holland?

David: When Daddy bought the New Holland self-propelled baler, it was the first one in Southwest Kansas.

Diana: Where did you have to go to get it?

David: I don't know. They brought it out on a truck and the dealer from Bucklin came down and they brought a couple of mechanics or whatever. It was over on Jim Cox and they tried to slug it. They tried and they couldn't do it.

David: That was a single windrow of alfalfa and we had the old pull-type baler that they loaded on the truck. Then they took that self-propelled baler and tried it and couldn't get it to slug.

Diana: What about the hay loader? Did you have to road it home? Where did you go to get it?

David: I drove it from Harper, from DewEze. It was made in Harper, Kansas. We went over there and got it and drove it home. It would run 60 to 65 mph.

Diana: And when you went to different farmers, you roaded it, right? And what you had a pickup or two pickups that you took for your crew?

David: I had a pickup. I had that old '67 Chevy.

Diana: And then the rest of the kids showed up.

David: We hauled all our crew with us.

Diana: What were the ages of the kids that worked for you? You had to have somebody that was old enough to drive.

David: Yeah, I had to hire drivers. They had to be at least 16 to drive in the dark.

Diana: But this had lights on it, right?

David: It didn't have to be it didn't have to for that, because it didn't have a tag on it.

Diana: But you had to have a pickup driver.

David: Yeah. And we hauled all over Kansas and Oklahoma, in the panhandle.

Diana: Especially when you went down Englewood and worked for Alvie.

David: Yeah, but Doc Hudson in Buffalo. We used to have to fill his barn with prairie hay and alfalfa.

Diana: When did you start working in the summer? Did you start working in May and go till...

David: We would start in the end of April when they'd start laying down wheat hay and go through... Usually we went plumb into November, clear into basketball season.

Diana: How'd you do that? On weekends?

David: **No,** when we got done, we had people that didn't play ball. So when school got out, they would go out and load the trucks; so we could load four bob-tales and the two hay wagons. Yeah, our hay wagon Alvie's didn't run enough. I mean, if it had problems keeping running in the dark.

Diana: So how many hay bales could you put on the on the self-loader.

David: You could put as many you wanted. You could put up to 300. But, normally, we put 220 to 250. Tried to do 200.

Diana: So you're stacking four high? Or three high?

David: Four high was to 200. You'd go three high at three-bale across. And then the fourth one would be a tie row, would be one in the middle. And then two on the sides to make five to tie it together so it wouldn't fall off.

Diana: Did you ever lose a load?

David: Not off of that.

Diana: Off a truck?

David: **Oh** Yeah.

Diana: You blow a lot of tires?

David: No, I don't remember ever blowing out a tire.

Diana: You run out of gas.

David: Yeah.

Diana: On the hay haulers or on the trucks or both?

David: Both, but usually on the trucks. This thing had like a thirty-seven gallon tank and we never worked it hard enough to run it out of gas if you filled it every morning. Gas was like twelve cents. You know, you could buy farm gas at that point. Regular gas was like .27 or some such, but that wasn't very high at that time.

Diana: Okay, so besides doing hay, you also raised cattle. What type of cattle did we have?

David: We started out with a registered Hereford herd, or a semi-registered herd.

Diana: Was it from Grandpa?

David: I don't know that.

Diana: Think Grandma and Daddy were in business together.

David: They were. Grandma had either 5 or 10 head of cows. But with the 800 acres we had, talking to Robert, we probably had...

Diana: We had how many acres?

David: 800.

Diana: Yeah, between north place and the homeplace, so.

David: We probably never had more than 60 head of cows.

Diana: Was it all a cow calf operation?

David: It was to start with. Back in the 50s and early 60s, all the neighbors around us had a half section or a section of ground. Everybody had a small cow herd. So we all neighbored together. Sometime in the early 60s, we bought a calf cradle. So they would load it up and take it around each person's house. You know, Daddy would saddle the horses. We didn't have trailer at the time, so he'd saddle horses, throw me up on horse and I would ride to whatever neighbor we were working for.

Diana: So like, McMinimy's, Wilson's?

David: Yeah, Dome's, Randall's, Charlie (Randall) Skinny Wyatt

Diana: Did he have cattle or did he just do sheep?

David: He had a couple of cows. They might have been milk cows.

Diana: And Ritters did sheep, right? They didn't do a whole lot.

David: Well, they had some cows, but mostly they were sheep.

Diana: This calf chute ended up at our house a lot, right?

David: We might have been the last place to do.

Diana: And we had a way that they could load cattle out, right? Into the trailers?

David: But most everybody did.

Diana: So when did we get the horse trailer? Was it a conglomerate thing?

David: No, Daddy went into partnership with Dan Daily in the late 60s, and that's when we got out of the cow business. Out of the cow/calf business and we started doing breeding heifers. They would breed them, and if the market wasn't right, they'd calve them out. If the cow/calf market wasn't right, they'd keep them and sell the calves off of them. But they were always buying heifers every year to replace, and they got into the Ponderosa. I don't know what year that was.

Diana: I think 1969. I don't know why I think that, because the Cimarron Grazing Association and Kenny Dome was back from the service, so he was part of it, too. I think.

David: Dad was. Daddy and Dan got in as a partner (Shared).

Diana: And there was that (Vernon) Webb and Jim Bisel.

David: There were 12 of them.

Diana: And Bill Anderson was in it. Several people at the time, and they could run however many cattle or whatever their partnership... What each person was allotted to run over there?

David: Yeah, that the government set how many you could run.

Diana: Because it was all grassland, right, that they purchased. They bought the land from Theis?

David: No, the government took it as a… I don't know, a tax-something maybe. But they split it amongst twelve small farmers and there were certain criteria. They couldn't have a hired man, they couldn't do this....

Diana: So they each had to work over there. They couldn't have somebody else do it for them.

David: They had to farm it, no, not farm it. They had to fence it. The first year or two, we run 600 head of steers on the north pasture. Everybody together.

Diana: How many pastures?

David: Well, at that time there was only two. There was a headquarters down at the bottom that had a trap that was probably half a section maybe.

Diana: So how many acres did they get altogether?

David: A lot, because they're everybody got a section or a section and a half, so...

Diana: It was in the thousands.

David: Yeah.

Diana: So how many pastures did they make it out into? So each one had their own pasture

David: They split it 12 ways. I think Jim Bisel ended up with all of it there.

Diana: I think so too.

David: Kenny Dome had a bunch until he swapped with somebody.

Diana: For something closer, because that's clear over west of Englewood, right? Is it in Meade County?

David: Part of it.

Diana: So we started out doing registered Herefords. When did we go to registered Angus.

David: We actually never did. The children, Robert Louise and Carol, their 4-H projects were breeding heifers and they got those from Bares,(Bob & JoAnn) I think. To get the registered deal. So we ended up with, I think, eight or nine registered black cows.

Diana: I can remember black baldies.

David: Well, the black baldies were when Dan and Daddy were doing the heifers. We put the Hereford heifers with the black bulls to give us the black baldies.

Diana: So who owned the bulls?

David: I have no idea. I don't have any idea.

Diana: OK, so we had a pasture that's four miles north of Sitka.

David: Well, it was three miles from the house, but it's two miles north of Sitka.

Diana: But we moved cattle up there every spring?

David: Yeah,

Diana: So how did you move them?

David: You opened the gates and drove them horseback, since we had no trailers.

Diana: How many horses?

David: Well, you could do it with two.

Diana: And a pickup.

David: You put a pickup out there to block the highway.

Diana: Did you put a pickup in front of it too?

David: Only if we had the personnel. You know, I always thought I was doing something when I was a little kid helping Daddy do that, until one year I went to school and coming home and the horse that I was riding had my saddle on it and the reins tied to the saddle horn. She was doing everything I was doing on her back, all by herself.

Diana: Which horse were you on?

David: Starlight

Diana: I can remember stopping traffic on the west because people coming over the Sitka hill couldn't see what we're doing. But usually the cows or whatever...

David: Well, we had to throw dirt across the highway because if they had just sealed it

where it was hot, they wouldn't go across. They wouldn't cross it because it looked like shimmering water and they would they wouldn't cross that hole.

Diana: So it was just a straight shot into the pasture, right, when you got up there? But when you brought them home, you had to turn them to go into the corrals that were up at the house. Do you remember when they built the corrals? Put up the wood corrals instead of the barbed wire?

David: They were there before I was.

Diana: No, they weren't. I remember them.

David: I don't.

Diana: I don't remember when they built them, but I remember the barbed wire fence. Because I know you and Roger used to walk the tops of them. (Wood corrals) But what were you? 10? I can remember us building those corrals, because I remember the Ford tractor sitting out there with the post hole digger on it, but they were big ties, too.

Diana: So besides cattle, you've mentioned horses. How many horses did we usually have?

David: We usually had six. Starlight and Goldie.

Diana: Buck, Molly, Socks...

David: We had a Nugget and a Rex. Rex was a Shetland. That's seven. Then Starlite had four palomino colts. Well, we had Sandy. Sandy was the horse that broke her leg. She came from Bares, I think.

Diana: Molly came from Bares. Sandy was one of Goldie's colts. Yeah, she ran into something or twisted her leg. Didn't know what they did. She limped then if she got tired, when somebody was riding her.

David: She'd fall down.

Diana: And Rex. Where did we get Rex?

David: We bought him from a traveling horse seller. (Rex was a Shetland pony)

Diana: And if he didn't want you on his back he'd sidestep and you'd be in the dirt. Did we ever have milk cow that you remember?

David: Yes. Yeah, that's what happened to Daddy's... The reason we don't have a milk cow. Buck was Starlight's colt, and he was probably a month old and Daddy was caking over there, just past the silo, right there in the grass trap. He walked out across there with a bucket and was throwing cake out across the ground. Buck was bouncing and doing his thing over there, went running by over there and the old milk cow had the Jersey horns. Well, they weren't big. They just kind of tipped around it. And she stuck a horn through his chest and it come out the other side. And we didn't have a cow.

Diana: I was thinking she got blood poisoning, but she may gotten lead poisoning.

David: No, she actually went to town because she was a good milk cow.

Diana: So what other livestock?

David: We had a couple of goats once.

Diana: Why didn't we keep them very long?

David: They got on Mother's brand-new car.

Diana: So what about poultry?

David: We had chickens, geese, ducks. Guineas. We never had a peacock.

Diana: How come we had guineas?

David: Because they were very good at eating the stickers.

Diana: And they're good watchdogs.

David: Yeah, they tell everybody that something's going on here.

Diana: So we raised chickens, our mother raised a lot of chickens. How did she raise a lot of chickens?

David: In the broiler house. So Daddy built the crates. (He built the boiler house too)

Diana: He called them batteries. So explain that.

David: The chicken batteries, and I believe there was 10 of them, ten or twelve of them out there. Each one had four levels.

Diana: How big were they?

David: I think they were probably 5 or 6 foot... (3x6ft)
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Diana: Because they had two of those deals on the sides for the feeder troughs. Yeah, and the water troughs for the ones on the ends, and there were four.

David: They'd hold 100 head of chickens. They come in and you'd put them on the third shelf. under the warmer... Well, that's where the heat racks were. That's where they hung the heat racks. But that was high enough that a Mother could walk in and it was eye level. So she picked the deads out and whatever happened as it went along. But when they feathered. They were split 24 to a rack, and once a week we'd have to go out and clean the...

Diana: Under-deals where the manure came. They were like a panel.

David: And put fresh newspaper down so it would come off.

Diana: And sometimes it didn't.

David: Yeah, and you had to scrape it.

Diana: Daddy built these? How? Did he use a welder?

David: Yeah, that was his job. When he first came over to this country, we didn't have cattle at that point, whatever Grandma had, and he needed a way to make a living because he hadn't started farming yet. I mean, he had to wait for a crop. He went to work for George (Reed) Junior, probably, in the oilfield. I'd call it a roust-a-bout outfit

Diana: He worked with Kenny Miller**,** Wasn't it Kenny Miller? Guy that had a shop down there by like where Mishlers. And they went and did oil wells.

David: Well they do anything but that, that's what they... Well, I don't think it was pipeline. I think it was drilling rigs. That type stuff.

Diana: So we had all these chickens, did we just raise them for us.

David: We had a contract with the…I don't know if it was a contract. Weekly, we would take 100 or more. We'd go through three sets of chickens a year, we'd get chickens in three times a year, so we'd start in April? We got chickens 100 at a time

Diana: No, the first ones came in May. Memorial Week because Landon Haydock was the postmaster and he would call and tell us the chickens were there and we'd have to go in because they were closed.

David: So every 30 days: May, June, July, August, September. We got out of there before it got cold. Cold-cold, because we had heaters in there, but they were mainly to keep the little chicks. the broiler heaters kept the chicks warm, but there was two propane heater deals in the wall. The pipes are still there. And there was water in there.

Diana: Who did she sell them to?

David: There was a place in Dodge.

Diana: I think she sold them to a restaurant.

David: Well, no. There was there was a Butcher place in Dodge that we would take them to. Live chickens.

Diana: Because they put one those batteries in the back of a pickup. Yeah, I remember that. It was kind of like when you put the sides on to haul cattle in the back of the pickup, but it was to put one of those batteries in there and load it full of chickens and take them up there. It was off 14th and it was right there beside the bridge.

Diana: Where the racetrack is.

Diana: Yeah. You go back in there.

David: It flooded, whatever year the flood came through there. 1965. That's when we quit the chickens.

Diana: And I remember Mrs. (Velma) Williams came out and showed mother how to how to cut them restaurant-style. Yeah. With the quarters and stuff. So in the summertime when we weren't selling them, when we were keeping them for us to eat. How big did they have to be and how did we figure out they were that big? Do you remember how we weighed them?

David: We had a scale that hung up there.

Diana: It was a cone. So how big did they have to be? Three pounds, three to five. So when we stayed home in the summer, and the older girls were still there, they had to kill so many chickens a day. A day? I thought we did it on Saturday. No, they did it every day, Mom went to work.

David: Well, I know we ate chicken every day.

Diana: When did the turkeys show up?

David: Carol had a 4-H project, but I don't know what year it was. Everything's Carol!

Diana: We had a whole bunch of turkeys, there was quite a flock.

David: Ten maybe?

Diana: There were more than that because they'd go down to the port of entry. There were probably 20 of them. Yeah, because Mr. O'Bleness would call and say the turkeys were down there and we had to go down and herd the turkeys back.

David: Yeah. I don't remember that.

Diana: So any other animals? Dogs.

David: Well, the dogs always came through there. You know, people would dump dogs at Sitka. They'd come up.

Diana: Then they'd go back down to the elevator and get in the rat poisoning.

David: Well, some of them.

Diana: Okay, they had that chute so they could brand and do all that. Did they ever do any of the actual roping and branding them out on the ground back then?

David: Not for our family, no.

Diana: You did that later for people. Did your kids get pretty good at helping? What did they do?

David: Kayla cut, Trish and J.D. pretty much flanked.

Diana: When you worked for other people, how many cattle were you doing? Were they mostly baby calves that you were branding?

David: Yeah. Anything that you roped and drug was usually babies.

Diana: So about how many head?

David: Buster's deal was usually 200 to 300 head. You could do that in a couple hours with a good crew.

Diana: How many people were usually there?

Diana: Well, when I first started doing stupid things. Everything was done horseback. You'd go out and usually when you gathered, you'd have to have a crew of 12 to 18 riders to cover the ground. Most of the stuff that I worked for is big pastures, sections or better.

David: Anymore, it's not so much. Anymore, there's not as many people that have stock any more, and finding people that want to give up their time and still ride. To do what we used to do, you needed horses that were being used daily. Well, at least weekly. You know, they had to be legged up to where they could go do this.

Diana: So, who did you work for? I mean, who did you go around up cattle and brand and that stuff for? Or did you have several people?

David: I did. I was day working when I came back, you know, so we'd go down to the Tuttle Ranch. We did Denton's, Krier's, Barby's. Barby's is a week. You'd start here and end up in Gate at the end. At that time, we had five or six pastures in Meade County that we went over to. Krier's was three different ranches that were strung out all over the county. Stephen's Ranch (Jack Stephens), Jess Waits was up there at that time.

Diana: So besides like day work, did you also work in feed yards?

David: Yeah, I spent, what, four years horseback. You know, in feedlots.

Diana: Did you do medicine?

David: The first feedlot I went to, we did everything. It was A.I.D. Feeders in Kinsley. Yeah. You had to do everything, I mean, you processed, you doctored, you rode pens, you put pill bags up and did whatever. I left there and went to Canadian Feeders in Canadian, Texas. Started out riding pens and ended up on the doctor crew. We didn't have to process down there, but we had to doctor.

Diana: Was this in the 70s?

David: Yeah. And I quit that, come home, and got married.

Diana: Then what did you do?

David: Nothing for 30 days. I finally got a job at the feedyard out at Garden City, Master Feeders, and found a job that was exactly what I wanted. You saddled a horse at 5:30 in the morning and you unsaddled a third horse, long about dark in the evening and you spent all day horseback.

Diana: Did they provide the horses? Or did you have to have your own horse?

David: They provided three head and let you bring two in. We were so shorthanded through most of the time I was out there, I had seven company horses in my string. I took two of my own out there for a while. They didn't have enough horseflesh, I had to use mine because I ran out of horseflesh.

We went through the scabies scare out there, and had to dip a 57,000 head yard in three days and then turn around and do it again.

Diana: So how did you find out they had scabies?

David: Oh, you can tell.

Diana: So what did you dip them in?

David: They had an old-time drive-them-off-in-a-pit bath. It was like going off in a deep end of a swimming pool and letting them swim to the other side and come up. But it was only three feet wide. It was narrow enough that they couldn't turn around, but wide enough that you could run a fat through and not have a, you know, not stick him... But we got the original... you know, and while you're doing this, you got to do your regular work too. So, they had to hire a crew to come in and dip.

Diana: So then, you were still having to do the regular day to day work.

David: Riding pens, yeah, you had to do your regular day's work anyway. My section of that feed yard was five thousand that I rode every day by myself. Most of the sections... I had the south section, which was the smallest, I guess, the least amount of pens and the same amount of cows.

Most of the pens in a feed yard are anything from a truck load, 50 head, up to a couple hundred. My south side, I had four pens that were normal-sized pens-- 100 head pens. And then my next three alleys, the smallest pen was two hundred and seventy, and then it went up to one that was about the size of a football field. And I think there were 300 to 400 head in there!

Diana: So it was mostly steers?

David: It was steers and heifers.

Diana: So did you carry medicine with you?

David: No.

Diana: Did somebody else do that part?

David: Yeah. You just went in and rode your pens, pulled your sicks out, put them in an alley and delivered them to a hospital.

Diana: And then the hospital took care of them?

David: Then doctors took care of it. Yeah.

Diana: So did you work in any other feed yards? Were they basically pretty much the same from one to the other, just the size?

David: Yeah, but the bigger they are, the less you have to do, you know, I mean, once you get over 50,000 head, they hire you to ride pens. They hire you to set a horseback. You know, you sort cattle, you take them back, you pick them up.

Diana: And somebody else does the other stuff. So when did you work in a grain elevator?

David: I think I started there. Well, I started in high school, worked for Wallingford for three or four years. It was my fallback to job; any time I quit something else, I came back to that. But in '82 or the fall of '81, right after the blizzard hit, I had a kid, I had a guy that was running the Bunge (elevator) corporation. And he was calling me pretty regular to go look at a job. And finally, one Friday evening, I come walking into the house and I was froze. I had ice... I couldn't get my leggings off because the zippers were froze to my legs. It was probably 7:30, 8:00 in the evening when I finally got home. I lived on the yard at the time, which is why I was still there.

Diana: Is that when you were at Sublette?

David: I was back out at Master's again. I'd took off and drove semi for a couple years, or a year and a half anyway, I'd come home and run the farm, then went back out there.

Diana: Steve Brown, who was the general manager or whatever or whatever of the deal up there, was telling me, and kept offering me better incentives to go look at this job. That was in Cunningham. And he finally put a price to it, and what he was offering for a 40-hour week in a climate-controlled office was more than I was making busting my butt out there many hours a day.

Diana: Did you have two kids then?

David: Yeah, I left my wife out there at Sublette driving a grain truck with two children.

Diana: Was J.D. already born? So that's got to be '80.

David: Yeah, it was '81, '82, because we always went back to the feedlot for childbirth, because Master's health insurance policy figured that a pregnancy was an illness and they covered it within 30 days. I mean, if you were on the job 30 days and had the child after that, they paid for it!

Diana: So how long did you do elevators then? Were you in Cunningham? Were you in Turon?

David: I lived in Turon and worked out at Cunningham. Then I think I was down there two years and then it was two years in Rozel. And then I went to Macksville for at least two harvests.

Diana: You were in Macksville when Kayla was born, that was '83,

David: Yeah, I didn't leave there until '85. I think I bought a truck in '86.

Diana: Eighty five's when you came down here.

David: Then I bought the truck in '87.

Diana: What kind of truck did you get?

David: Yellow International, an asphalt truck, a dump truck.

Diana: And where did you get work?

David: All over the state of Kansas.

Diana: For highways and stuff.

David: Yeah, we were laying asphalt and then when that quit, we were in Salina and we hauled dirt out of the mall parking lot and fill sand back into the parking lot so they could build it. I got to drive my truck down the main hallway in the mall and spread sand!

Diana: At the new mall.

David: Well, it's 30 years old now!

Diana: So when you came back to Clark County, where did you go to work?

David: Road and Bridge for the County.

Diana: And what do you do there?

David: Whatever was needed. I was truck boss for a while. I was a heavy equipment operator.

Diana: So then you went back to working with cattle?

David: I did that because while I was working for the county because the county was just a 40-hour job. And we started hanging around with the cowboys again and going out for nothing. Then I went to work for Jim Harper. Podzemny was working for Harper. I went there; I went to Buster Carter's.

Diana: That's when you started dayworking.

David: Yeah, and got a bronc I started paying for. That's when I broke the leg. I was working for Marvin Lipsett at that point.

Diana: That kind of stopped you for a little bit.

David: They took the horse away from me.

Diana: So you mentioned the blizzard. Do you remember any other disasters or any other storms, tornadoes, or floods that affected Clark County when you were living here? Do you remember the blizzard of '71 when you were in high school?

David: Yeah. And the one in '92.

Diana: Start with the one in '71. Did you go help dig out pigs at Duvall's?

David: No.

Diana: What did you do?

David: Not a whole lot of anything. I mean, we fed our own cattle. We had to go find them. When it finally cleared up, we couldn't find them.

Diana: Were they close to the house?

David: Yeah. They were in the two 80s there at the house.

Diana: They went under the bridge, were they clear on the other side of the bridge?

David: They were under the bridge. The snow had caked over the top of them. It's a railroad bridge, but it's down there in a draw, you know, a creek bed. The snow had actually blew in over the top of them and basically trapped them in the deal. But the body heat kept the ties thawed out. The hole through the deal. The heat was... That's how we found them, the steam rising through the bridge.

Diana: They had air?

David: Yeah, they had air.

Diana: How long were they there?

David: I think the storm blew for a couple of days, didn't it? It was Sunday or Monday before we got out?

Diana: Well, it was... We didn't go back to school to like Thursday or Friday.

David: No, we were out two weeks. I walked to town. Yeah, I walked in and stopped at the elevator and picked up a gunnysack and went to the grocery store. I ordered whatever we

needed and then I went to the school. I went up to the high school to see what hell was going on.

Diana: Were the helicopters there at the school?

David: No, but the hay was, and there was probably a... They bombed me when I was walking to school, walking to town, when they were trying to feed...

Diana: Would it have beenYork's?

David: No, it was probably Skinny Wyatt's or Breit's. They missed. We had to go over and throw it over the fence.

Diana: Were they small bales?

David: Yes, they were squares.

Diana: They were throwing them out the side of the helicopter?

David: Out the back of a plane.

Diana: So you mentioned there were other snowstorms.

David: The one in '92, that's the one that started Tuesday before Thanksgiving and we fought snow... There was probably still snow in May.

Diana: A lot of snow that year?

David: Was it ever. Yeah. We tore up every piece of equipment the county owned.

Diana: So you were working for the county. Did you have any cattle?

David: Not at that point. I lived in the VAM house at that point.

Diana: In town. So it was just trying to open up all the roads around the county?

David: I spent from the day before Thanksgiving... no, probably Thanksgiving Day, we got out of town because we started on that Tuesday. I got to go rescue the state workers that had slid off the road out of the county line to the east. Phil Reed and I took up his 140 blade (it was only one with a snowplow on it) and a one-ton winch truck and we went out there and could not pull the blade out of the deal, so they had a blade out there and they had a truck out there and both of them were stuck. So we ended up loading those people into my pickup.

Diana: How many were there?

David: Two, one in each. We loaded them into the pickup. Got turned around and ended up having to put the cable from the blade and tied it onto the front of the pickup. That's the only way I got back to town... It was that it was snowing that bad.

Diana: So another time?

David: Ninety-eight, and it was a spring storm. It wasn't near as long, but it...

Diana: What were you doing then? County?

David: Yeah. I quit the county in '01 and started day working.

Diana: Do you remember any tornadoes?

David: The Greensburg (2007). We went to Greensburg after that.

Diana: Do you remember any in Clark County?

David: Yeah. Being fire chief for as long as I was, or being on the department. We were storm spotting for 30 years. There's been all kinds of tornadoes in this county. Most of them didn't do much damage, but the one that took out the Greensburg started at Pike's over there (Kirb's) yeah in that area. It tore up that tree row right there. Went across the highway south of Eldora's (McMinimy) or between York's and Eldora's and Dome's, up through there. It slid around and we followed it through this side of Steve and Kelly Hazen's. It jumped over the Stephens Ranch and did a little damage to some trees and whatnot up there, but it never touched a house in our county. It set down in Comanche County and rolled a bunch of tank batteries and whatnot. And then it kind of went straight up 183, the highway. It went across where the Mennonite deal is there and tore up a bunch of stuff there. And then it went into Greensburg.

Diana: Was there another tornado that was over by Protection that was hitting tank batteries and it started coming back toward towards you and you couldn't get away because there were all these storm spotters?

David: Oh, no, that was a little twister.

Diana: Was it about in the same time?

David: Yeah, it was all within a year or so. Yeah, we made the National Weather Storm Spotters' class video.

Diana: That they do every year?

David: Yeah.

Diana: So what about floods?

David: We've worked a couple of those. Bluff Creek has flooded twice that I know of.

Diana: Did it take out any houses or anything?

David: We had to evacuate some houses.

Diana: At the same time that Kellenberger's...

David: Yeah, that's what I'm thinking of, and there was a couple before that that flooded the park. There was one before that where the shelter is now, they had just put them concrete circle picnic tables in there. This one came through and took those concrete picnic tables and it put one of them in a tree. Oh, 15 or 20 feet up in the air.

Diana: So how have things changed since you were a small boy growing up in Sitka to now? There's not as many people, right? What about how has CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) affected the county? The grass?

David: CRP came to this country in the late 70s, early 80s.

Diana: I think that was the late 60s, early 70s.

David: That was the Soil Bank in the 50s and 60s. It didn't start until I was gone anyway. The first year that they put CRP in Clark County, they took 46,000 acres of farm ground out. The farmers that were in their 60s and early 70s at that point thought this was the greatest thing that was gonna happen because it was actually going to give them a retirement, right? If it would have been 10 years, it would have been fine. But at the end of 10 years, they re-did it again. In its second 10 years, it broke every small-town Main Street.

Diana: Yeah, we lost a lot of gas stations.

David: Yeah, but we lost two elevators, maybe three. Englewood Co-op went away, Bunge went way. The Co-op went away, Wallingford, Walcott and Lincoln, whatever, went away. It took out Waits Homogenized Gas or whatever, it took out a propane business.

Diana: It's still here, though.

David: Yeah, whatever. It's not what it was because there's no homes in the country.

Diana: That are propane, they're mostly electric.

David: There's no homes in the country. Yeah, that's the deal. There's no homes in the country.

Diana: Especially since the fire.

David: The fire took care of all of the homes that didn't have anybody in them anyway. From the time I graduated high school till before the fire, I could probably pick 40 homesteads that are not there now, within a two and a half, three-mile circle. That's all families that are... Well, they were all older people and their kids didn't come back. Well, what was there to come back for? They put it to grass.

Diana: So besides CRP, how is grass managed around here?

David: It's basically just grazed. And the government will let them do the CRP, they won't let them graze it.

Diana: What were their options?

David: Graze it, burn it, hay it. You can hay a third a year.

Diana: Right. So how about fencing, has it changed since you were younger?

David: Yeah, but not a whole lot. You know, everybody after the fire, they went to pipe corners, a lot of pipe corners, some went to steel posts. You know, when I was little, high school, everything was wood. Cedar, Creosote.

Diana: How many strands?

David: If you do an outside fence, it's five. The State of Kansas says you have to do four. That was a 60s law. That may have changed, but everybody, all the old timers, said you always do one more than is required. So outside fences were all five wire fences. Interior fences were usually the four. A lot of the big ranches that I've worked for, their interior fences were three. They were drift fences, just to keep the cows from going from this area to that area.

Diana: What about electrical fences?

David: Most people no**,** most grass ranches won't use an electric fence except on a wheat field. They're too hard to maintain out across the sagebrush and tumbleweeds and whatever.

Diana: How do you charge them?

David: Either with a 110 plugin at the house or solar panels, or you change out a car battery every other day or every couple days.

Diana: What about water? Windmills. What's more prevalent now? Solar panels or wind.

David: That is the owner's choice. I have both in most of my pastures, because in August, when the wind doesn't blow, usually the sun is shining. In the fall, in the winter, when the skies are cloudy, the wind's usually blowing!

Diana: So do you often have windmills fail or you have to haul water?

David: Yeah, that's usually an annual occurrence; somewhere somebody's going to have to haul water.

Diana: What about the next generation? Do you have any of your children that are interested in being involved in farming or ranching?

David: They are interested in it, but there is no way they can afford it.

Diana: So are any of your kids involved in agriculture right now? What's your daughter do?

David: She's a meat inspector for the State of Kansas.

Diana: So where does that take her?

David: All over western Kansas, to the small packers.

Diana: Well, those are the only ones that the state does, right?

David: Yeah.

Diana: When we had a farm, did we have any hired hands? I can remember Warren Randall.

David: Was that when Daddy was in the hospital?

Diana: No. Warren would've graduated in 1959 from high school. I think it was when he was doing the haying, because that dog Jiggs got its leg cut off when they were out swathing off the hay. And I think Warren was working then. But you don't remember anybody else except the guys that used to swath for you?

David: No, we always had kids. Carol ran the swather and the rake and the sickle too.

Diana: And they hauled the hay when Robert was in Vietnam. What was your favorite job?

David: Pen riding. I really like pen riding.

Diana: How has your part in the community changed? Have you had a role in the community?

David: Such as? I was a 4-H leader for 10 years, I was on the fair board for ten, maybe twelve. I was Boy Scout Leader, Assistant Boy Scout Leader to get off the fair board for 10 years. I've been a volunteer firefighter for 30-plus years. As a firefighter, I was a first responder EMT. I taught CPR. I taught first responder (classes) or assisted with it.

Diana: Were you an officer for the golf club?

David: I don't know if I was an officer.

Diana: But I think you were because you had to do that tournament where you had to do the food. Isn't that the vice president or something? So what kind of things did you do as a fire chief? Were you on any boards?

David: The state executive board, a Southwest Homeland Security Board.

Diana: Were you able to bring anything into Clark County that we wouldn't have had if you hadn't been on this boards?

David: Oh, yeah. All of the emergency management grants that started coming was because I was on a committee that the people on it were talking about, "Have you got this filled out?" You know, and they weren't talking to me, that was just in a hospitality room...

Diana: As general thing.

David: Yeah, and I didn't know anything about it. We asked questions and I think we got.

ten or fifteen thousand dollars that first go, because we were at a meeting that cost us $20 bucks to go to.

Diana: Is that how you found out about the FEMA grants? And what has that helped bring to the community?

David: A bunch! As in two fire trucks, the breathing air, all of the bunker gear. Two sets of bunker gear.

Diana: The washer, the fill station. So then, I wanted to go back and ask a question when you were hauling hay, how did you protect your clothes? Didn't you wear chaps?

David: Yes, hay chaps.

Diana: How are they different from cattle chaps or cowboy chaps?

David: Mine work! But at one point I bought hay chaps for my help. They are the same thing that a horse shoer uses.

Diana: Knee-length.

David: Yeah. Just a little longer than the knee and they're held on with a belt around your waist and then a couple of straps that hold them to your leg.

Diana: So how has ranching changed since you started? Do you use four wheelers?

David: We do now.

Diana: How often? Do you use horses as much as you use your four-wheeler? No How do you use your four-wheeler?

David: I use a four-wheeler for what I used to use a horse for, checking cows, riding pastures.

Diana: How many cows do you check now?

David: 430 plus the calves, right at the moment. Now tomorrow that's going to change.

Diana: You're going to get more?

David: I'll get probably 700 pair, or end up with 700 pair. And I don't know if I'll get my third ranch's this spring or not, I haven't heard anything from them.

Diana: So you don't raise cattle yourself, right?

David: No.

Diana: Do you have horses still?

David: Still have horses. I have goats.

Diana: Cattle, I mean, for 4-H?

David: We have a 4-H animal.

Diana: Do you have any farming as part of your operation?

David: I just put everything I own back to grass.

Diana: So you'll have something to feed your horses?

David: Mainly so I don't have to farm.

Diana: So what's the smartest thing you ever did?

David: Put that back to grass.

Diana: Overall.

David: Married my wife.

Diana: And what would you change if you could?

David: I don't know if I would.

Diana: Besides riding pens, what other jobs did you like?

David: Those that hurt me.

Diana: Such as...

David: Oh, the heavy equipment. I liked driving truck for a while, and then I got so sick of it that I don't care if I ever smell diesel smoke again! I've done pretty much what I wanted to do.

David: You know, it if a job got to where the politics was too much or the B.S. got to the point that I didn't enjoy going to work, I switched jobs.

Diana: So what advice would you give to someone new coming to Clark County? What are the benefits or what keeps you here?

David: I'm too old to go anyplace else. I like the country. You can step out and see into tomorrow. You can see the weather that's coming from a distance. I don't like being in crowded areas. I don't like towns. You can't see up and down the block. You know, I went to a lot of conferences, conventions and what have you, all over the country. Three nights is a good convention and then it's time to go home.

Diana: Anything else?

David: Volunteer, any community you go to, get involved. When I was in Rozel, I was in

the Lions Club, playing donkey basketball, we did that down here too. When I was at Macksville, I was the vice-president of the chamber of commerce. Get involved in the community.

Diana: Anything else? Thank you very much.