

*Diana:* May 8, 2020. Diana Redger interviews Frank Reed, 83, of Ashland, Kansas. Frank graduated high school in 1954.

*Diana:* Did you have any higher education after that?

*Frank:* Yes. I went to military schools to be an engineer in heavy equipment.

*Diana:* So what year did you go to the military?

*Frank:* Nineteen fifty-five.

*Diana:* And what branch of the military?

*Frank:* United States Air Force.

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

*Frank:* Six years.

*Diana:* Did you go to Korea?

*Frank:* No.

*Diana:* Were you stateside all the time?

*Frank:* No.

*Diana:* Where did you go?

*Frank:* I was stationed in Okinawa.

*Diana:* Japan, was it occupied at that time?

*Frank:* No, just Okinawa.

*Diana:* Did you do heavy equipment there?

*Frank:* Yes, I was the boss of it.

*Diana:* And what kind of heavy equipment are you talking?

*Frank:* We had earthmoving... We built an extension on the runway so the B 36's could come in from Guam and get on the fighter base.

*Diana:* So how long were you stationed there?

*Frank:* Almost two years.

*Diana:* And then when you left there, where did you go?

*Frank:* Shreveport, Louisiana at the Barksdale Airport Base.

*Diana:* And where were you when you retired out of the military?

*Frank:* Barksdale Airport Base.

*Diana:* And did you stay down there for a while or did you return to Kansas?

*Frank:* I took a 30-day vacation and came back and welded in the oilfield. I welded on the cofferdams on the Cimarron River Bridge.

*Diana:* South of town?

*Frank:* Yes, south of Sitka.

*Diana:* When they were starting to build that long bridge?

*Frank:* Both of them.

*Diana:* Was there another way across the river at that time?

*Frank:* They made a bypass on the west side.

*Diana:* When did your family come to Clark County? The Finleys, your mother's family? Well, first off, tell me your parents' names.

*Frank:* Parents' name was Finley.

*Diana:* Your mother, Mary, and who were her parents?

*Frank:* Those were her parents, and they homesteaded... No, they bought land in Sitka, three miles west of Sitka, but I'm not sure what year. My mother went to school... They farmed in Isabel, Kansas, and then they sold that land and bought land on the east side of Protection about a mile. That's where Mom went to the first and second grade. And then when they moved, they traded that land for the land at Sitka. And then she went to school there, they walked to school.

*Diana:* Did she have brothers and sisters that went to school with her?

*Frank:* She had two sisters and a brother.

*Diana:* What did her Dad do? Did he farm?

*Frank:* Her dad?

*Diana:* Yes.

*Frank:* He had the first tractor in Clark County.

*Diana:* What type of tractor was it?

*Frank:* A Fordson.

*Diana:* What's that? What did look like?

*Frank:* An old tractor!

*Diana:* Did it have did it have wheels or did it have tracks?

*Frank:* It had wheels.

*Diana:* Self-propelled tractor. So what type of crops did he grow?

*Frank:* He had wheat and feed because he still had his horses and everything. His main crop was wheat, his money crop, and the rest of it was to feed livestock.

*Diana:* What type of livestock did he have?

*Frank:* He had cattle and horses, work horses.

*Diana:* Were they a certain breed? Were they the big horses, Percherons or something?

*Frank:* I don't really know.

*Diana:* What was his name? First name.

*Frank:* His name? I don't know.

*Diana:* Just grandpa, huh? And your dad's name?

*Frank:* George

*Diana:* And when did his family come to Clark County?

*Frank:* They went when he was eight years old, in 1899. They had homesteaded at Luray, Kansas, and then they moved to... when they opened up the Strip on the Panhandle, they moved and homesteaded down there, the whole bunch of them, in Oklahoma, at Gate. They went to farm, but nothing would grow because it was all white ground. Turned out later on, there was a factory at Gate that manufactured face powder that put out a railroad carload every day, and that was the farm they was on. The reason it wasn't growing anything, was it was face powder! They traded their land there for land at Dobe Springs. Dobe Springs was an oasis of that whole area. They lived there and farmed and they made their living. They traded in Ashland and rode their horses and drove them and came to Ashland for trading. I think they had a grocery store at Dobe Springs, I'm not sure. But their main crop was broom corn, and they raised broom corn and then they opened up the Salt Flats at Freedom. And they

would load up. They'd take the wheels off the wagons and put them in the lake there a Dobe Springs, so they swelled up and they wouldn't come apart. Then they'd take the horses and go to Freedom and load with salt.

*Diana:* And where did they sell that to?

*Frank:* They brought it to Ashland to the Wallingford Elevator.

*Diana:* Did they bring their broom corn up here, too?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* Because there was a broom corn elevator here, right?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* Do you know what they sold it for?

*Frank:* No, I have no idea.

*Diana:* So how many years did they do that?

*Frank:* Well, in the meantime, they raised kids.

*Diana:* How many?

*Frank:* They had 16 kids, most of them at Dobe Springs. They lost four of them as infants. Their daughters married and there's 12 or 13. And then they lost one daughter at Selman, Beruna. She died giving birth to a cousin of mine that just died last year.

*Diana:* So where was your dad in that list of kids? Was he one of the older ones or younger?

*Frank:* Yeah, he was probably the third or fourth one down the line.

*Diana:* Did he first come to Sitka? Your dad?

*Frank:* No. He was drafted in the army at Dobe Springs and got on the train at Ashland and went to Fort Riley.

*Diana:* What year was that?

*Frank:* The war ended in '18, so it was probably in '16.

*Diana:* 1916, so it was World War I. Was he in the whole time of the war?

*Frank:* He taught me and my brother how to shoot rifles when we was kids and all those of us here in Ashland at the time, they later moved to California during the Depression. And they would stand around and say, "Those kids shoot as good as their dad." I got dad to tell me this

story that when he was drafted he got on the train and went to Wichita. I mean, to Fort Riley. When they got off the train. They gave him a gun and taught him how to work on it.

Then they go to the firing range and they shot 300 yards, a football field, three times. And he hit it dead center every time. So that evening, they put him on the train again and sent him on to New York City and put him on a ship to Germany. He got boot camp and training on that ship. He didn't get army clothes until he got on the ship, and they sent his other clothes home. That's the way they did it in those days. So, he was a sniper, because of the marksmanship that began at home.

*Diana:* Did he tell you how long it took to get across the ocean on the ship?

*Frank:* Pretty close to a month, from the train in New York and then over to Germany.

*Diana:* Do you know what part of Germany he was in?

*Frank:* He was sent to France. In France, there were four battles in WWI, and he made three of them before he got shot and he went to a medical center in France. When he was able to get around, he worked as a medic on the others that got shot at. He was quite a story. And then at Sitka, WWII happened while I was a kid, and so the guys went to war and come back. We lost two or three of the Sitka boys in the war. So those guys like your dad, they'd sit around and have their refreshment, pop and candy bars, and Dad would take off from work and visit with them and they'd tell stories. And I learned these stories second-handed, and there's some great stories.

*Diana:* When did your dad open his welding shop?

*Frank:* He came back and bought a building. I forget what it was. It had been a hardware store or something, and he opened it into welding shop.

*Diana:* Was he a blacksmith first?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* But he also did welding.

*Frank:* He went to welding school through a kind of correspondence deal out of Chicago. He graduated out of that. He welded with acetylene and oxygen. There was no electricity in Sitka, so he put in a generator so he could do something. He ended up running lines all over Sitka and furnishing electricity with a generator when he ran it.

*Diana:* So how was this generator powered?

*Frank:* Gasoline.

*Diana:* When did he meet your mother?

*Frank:* I don't know, but they were married, around '20 somewhere in there. I don't have a

record for that. Anyway, I was raised in a lean-to house on the north side of that building, and that's where us kids were raised. There were five of us kids.

*Diana:* You have three sisters and a brother. Who's the oldest.

*Frank:* My older sister, Louise, and then George, and then me, the middle one, and then Helen, and then Sherry.

*Diana:* So, you all went to school at Sitka.

*Frank:* We all went to school in Sitka, until in my case, the sixth grade. We had a teacher I didn't get along with, and at the same time my dad had moved the building, which was the Wallingford Elevator office, where the VFW building now sits. They moved it down on Blackwood Street and Highland. And he fixed it all up for his parents to retire in. At that time, they lived out there where Alan Foster lives on 8th Street. That's where their house was. And my grandfather on my dad's side raised pigeons. And I've heard stories about the guys at work at the elevator, taking the sacks of feed out there and delivering them for his pigeons because he fixed them for eating. They called them squabs. He raised pigeons and dressed them out.

*Diana:* Did he sell them to restaurants or just to people?

*Frank:* I don't know. Guys like Skinny Wyatt told me the stories, because he delivered the feed for them from the elevator. And they made a little illegal booze and sold that too, I think.

Then us kids in Sitka, well, I and my little sister, come down with the scarlet fever. We had moved into the house that Dad had fixed up for his parents. In the meantime, they had moved to California with a whole bunch of the others in a Model T truck. There was an aunt named Letha that ran a barbershop in Ashland, and she was just younger than Dad, and they were the two that stayed here. There was another one named Walter, and during the Depression, he sent a telegram on the train to Mr. Spotts, who was the depot agent, I understand, to the president, saying we were starving to death in Ashland. We needed help.

He got a telegram back the next day, Mr. Spotts came with that. They ran two railroad cars of flour into Ashland and they put Uncle Walter in charge.

Well, when my aunt had passed away and she had the motel and rental houses all over town and the standard barbershop. Well, she left it all to my mother. My mother didn't know what to do with it, so they put it up for sale. So, we went to the motel and took everything out of it and got ready for the auction. And the uncle from Missouri, he came back home, him and his wife. And they helped us get the auction ready. And my mother didn't trust anybody, even us kids, so we set all the beds and everything out in the drive-in area and parking area in front of the motel and we were going to sleep out there and camp out. Mom said we had to stay right there in bed. It was a nice night.

My sister had a recorder and she recorded it, we asked Uncle Walter about his history. He's got a beautiful history and it's all recorded.

*Diana:* So, Aunt Letha, where was her shop, her barber shop?

*Frank:* It was where the south building of the grocery store is, on Main Street, and when I was a seventh grader or so, when we moved back, when we moved over here, I worked for her. I flipped the picture show out too, for Art Ganson. And then I worked in the barbershop and the barbershop was half barbershop and half beauty shop. And she was the first lady barber in the state of Kansas.

*Diana:* The motel they owned was a trailer court, right?

*Frank:* No.

*Diana:* Didn't they own the trailer court that was behind where the VFW is?

*Frank:* No, that was a motel, and then the south building was plumbing shop. My uncle was a plumber. And it was all built out of army surplus after the war. The barracks from the Liberal airport, after the war.

Anyway, my uncle was in charge of getting rid of all this flour, and they had to get the railroad cars emptied in four days, the president told him that in a communication. So, he rounded up everybody that needed jobs and they had trailers and horses and they delivered them out, and they sold all the sacks for a dollar a sack. And then after he got all the money in, and he's living pretty high, the depot agent come to him and said they'd got another telegram and they had two federal agents coming out to see if he'd got his job done. And that's when him and his wife, which was a Concannon out of Lexington, they loaded up their car and went to Missouri, back in the sticks. The two federal guys couldn't find him.

That's the story. Anyway, it's interesting. So, I had quite a life in Ashland and Sitka

*Diana:* When you went to Sitka, there were two schools, right, there was first and second grade was in one building, and then third through eighth was in another building?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* Do you remember your first and second grade teacher?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* What's what was her name?

*Frank:* It was Dorothy Davis Amos Baker, and her husband had come to Sitka while I was in the first grade, and he was going to Europe. He was a paratrooper and he was a handsome young man. And we all got out behind the school and he popped his parachute out of his backpack and let the wind catch him and drag him across the back of the schoolyard. And then he went to Europe and was killed over there. I didn't meet her (again) until about four years ago at the All School Reunion. She married a man in Amarillo, and that's where she got the name Baker. Anyway, us kids all called her Dorothy Davis Amos Baker, because she had all those names.

She informed me when she was in her 70s or so, not to call her that, just to call her by her

first name and her last name. It was one of the greatest things that came out of the school reunion.

*Diana:* So how many kids were in your class when you were in first grade?

*Frank:* Well, we was in one class, kind of, first and second grade, I think it was pretty close to 20 then.

*Diana:* And then when you went up to the other school, do you remember the teachers?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* Was it the same one all the way through your third through fifth grade?

*Frank:* We had new teachers every year. And one of them was Mrs. Matt Wilson. I've talked with her through the years; she was a beautiful lady, and she was a kid. You know, we're third graders, and she's our teacher and she's not much older than we are. She went to school, I think, in Hays. One semester in college made you a teacher in the elementary system.

*Diana:* Got a certificate to teach, right?

*Frank:* Yeah, to get your certificate to teach. She was a... Well, I've talked her through the years since and said, "You were just a beautiful young teenager."

*Frank:* She said, "Well, it was because I was only 17."

*Diana:* Well, so did she quit teaching when she got married?

*Frank:* She was already married to Matt Wilson. So, then we had other teachers, one of them was from Minneola. Her name, through the years, they was a pretty active family in Minneola. And then we had... the school system was run by a lady named Fox. She was the superintendent of all the schools in Clark County. She rotated around, drove around and checked all the schools. And so, we had teachers from Ashland and teachers from Sitka.

*Diana:* Do you remember the principal?

*Frank:* Mr. Palmer. He ended up running the Gambles store here in Ashland. Him and his wife both were teachers. They lived in that little white house that later turned into, when the school moved and everything, it turned into Quinton Wright's home there in Sitka. He was a school principal, because the superintendent was Mrs. Fox.

*Diana:* Was he the principal the whole time you were at school at Sitka?

*Frank:* No, he came to Ashland and opened a business, and I'm not sure who was the principal after. Engler, Mr. and Mrs. Engler was their name, I think.

*Diana:* When you were in grade school in Sitka, was there a school bus?

*Frank:* Yes. Sitka always had school buses in the time I went there. And my dad ran a Model



T school bus. When he opened his shop in Sitka, he ran a school bus. We had two schools besides the two you're talking about. There was one over at the Catholic Church, right across the fence from your grandparents.

The history of Clark County would be great if you could get Dave Bouziden to tell you, because he bought the Harper Ranch. And he just told me one day, "Frank, I got a nice ranch. But the paperwork, the deeds and everything, is worth more than the ranch."

Mr. Campbell built that ranch. I don't know where he came from, Mrs. Harper's dad. They had no knowledge of what being a rancher was. But he studied and made it work. And they were from back east, I think, back in Pennsylvania or somewhere? Well, they found out, if you fill that big ranch, fifteen thousand acres or something, with cattle, they have to eat. And then when winter comes and comes snow and they got to eat, right. So, they had to feed them. That was a new deal for the Campbells. They found out that there was a big center in Hays and Victoria and up in there, where the Germans came out at the end of the war and settled in America as immigrants, the Germans and the Russians and Czechoslovakians, I think. He put ads in newspapers all up there. At that time, his ranch almost went to Sitka, so he gave them farmland if they would come and settle in the Sitka area, and so all the people that I knew in life as a teenager, were these people: the Domes, the Pfeiffers, the Browns... Just people that you know of, Ben Dome and his grandparents, they come down there and uncles and aunts. George Dome lived down there, right south of where Bev York lives now.

They ended up with the land for farming it and raising feed for the cattle on the Harper Ranch. So, all the paperwork in transferring the land to the landowners, they had to work or they would lose it, it was really interesting to Dave Bouziden.

*Diana:* And so most of those people were of the Catholic faith, so they built the church and the schools for their kids?

*Frank:* That's where the school buses come in, you were talking about. See, my dad, after the war was over, and I remember the story there because it's a good story. He and another man was on top of a high hill overlooking a little town of Luxembourg. They put them out there about four o'clock in the morning with machine guns. And they did go right down Main Street, with machine guns, and to get anything that moved was their orders. Anything that moved, dogs, cats, chickens, kids, anything, kill them.

And they lied. This runner came to them. He got up on the back of them and patted Dad on the back, and he said, "There's an armistice they're gonna sign at eleven o'clock. The war will be over, they are surrendering. Don't shoot after 11:00." And Dad told this other guy that was feeding bullets to him, "We're not shooting anything. Let them live." And so that's when the war was over for him.

And then he stayed there in Luxembourg, I don't know how long, until they could clean up and kind of rejuvenate the country they'd blown all up, and get on the way to come back to America, kind of like this virus thing we have here and now we've got to rebuild. That's what they was doing. He lived with a couple that had a daughter about his age in a two-room house and him and the daughter's in this one house. And he told your dad and all of his buddies these stories over there. Well, he had to go feed the horses all the time and make sure they

was ready to go. And so, he'd go by this chow supply and bring back a couple gallon cans of pork and beans to this family he stayed with.

And the cooking facilities in the center of all of this two-room house was a fireplace and a big oven built into it. He brought this girl two gallons of pork and beans, and so she put them in the oven to cook them up, not knowing that they had to be opened. And when he got off work and come back, it had blown the whole side out of the house. The beans had exploded and blew up the house. And he told that story. Well, when I come back from Okinawa, Dad asked me what I'd done with all the money. And I said, "I didn't buy any beans."

The guy sitting around who heard this story, they laughed about it and went on with their day's work. It's kind of interesting. But as far as, well, what she's trying to put together is something to do with Clark County and the ranching business. And so, when I was as a little kid, I got to meet Mr. Campbell and the family. My dad would go down there and work, and the cowboys would all be working cattle. Dad would go down there and weld up stuff for them and make sure the branding irons was all working and everything.

*Diana:* Did he weld branding irons? Did he make those for people?

*Frank:* He made them. Between him and me, I would say that almost 50 percent of them in the drug store were made by us.

*Diana:* Did your brother George weld too?

*Frank:* We both learned as kids. Dad's welding, we had no electricity, so we didn't have electric welders. And I can remember that in Sitka, we had a unique thing that nobody knows about nowadays. We had a loading dock for seven oil tankers. They'd come in on the train and put seven there and they'd pump oil from the Morrison Field up in Lexington down to Sitka. These tanks had a walkway that went from end to end on the west side of town. And one time, the train jumped the track down there somewhere, and to get the train back on track, they had Dad come down and cut the rails out from under it, and they got it jacked up and they could put new rails under it. He cut the rails out with a heating torch because there wasn't a cutting torch in those days.

*Diana:* Hadn't been invented yet.

*Frank:* He got it red hot by turning on the oxygen valve and that oxygen would cut metal. I've heard him tell the story, I wasn't there, but I've heard him tell the story how he cut the rails out from under the train so they could get the new rails in there.

*Diana:* So, he had a blacksmith shop in the back part of the building, and then in the front, you had hardware? Were you the only hardware store in Sitka?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* And like, what type of stuff? Bolts...

*Frank:* Oh, bolts and gloves and... About everything you could need to fix your equipment and keep going. We had gas station in front of that.

*Diana:* So how many pumps were there?

*Frank:* There were three pumps when I was a little kid.

*Diana:* And what type of... what were in the pumps?

*Diana:* Well, you could see, because it was in glass bubble. The orange ones were the regular. The red one would be your Ethyl and then a green one for the farm tractors.

*Diana:* And how did you get the gas up into the bubble?

*Frank:* We pumped it by hand. We had tanks underground, and the trucks came and filled the tanks up, and then my dad, when they put in the gas station down at Haydock's, we were so envious because they put in electric pumps. And all they had to do was turn them on and pump the gas, like they do nowadays.

*Diana:* Do you remember when electricity came to Sitka?

*Frank:* Nineteen forty-seven. And then Ed Hoffman and two or three others went to school and learned to wire houses and stuff And REA put the poles up and everything. And then Ed wired the shop and our house. At the same time, there was a grocery store across this street and a block south, right there on the e corner between the hotel an... My grandfather Finley had built this to make extra money farming. Jake Urban and their family run the grocery store. And he moved it to Ashland and opened up a grocery store.

*Diana:* You know, when?

*Frank:* We had this little lean-to house and five kids and it was kind of crowded, right there on the side. When that store come up empty after Urbans moved to Ashland and opened the store here. The Pfeiffer family took over the store and they run it and farmed too, south of Sitka. Then they moved back to Hays when the girls got to college age and stuff like that. Well, we ended up with the store building. It was empty, so we moved in it and we had the biggest building in town for a living area! Sitka was always so unique to us kids, because we could cover the whole town.

*Diana:* Yes. There was a ballfield that lots of people played ball on. Where was it at?

*Frank:* Right west of your house.

*Diana:* On that corner?

*Frank:* On the corner. The ball field, in the history I've studied on it and stuff, was one of the top recreations in the whole area and it covered many towns. Selman, Oklahoma, came and played us. Beruna played us, Buffalo played us, and Englewood. And they played vicious basketball!

*Diana:* What about football?

*Frank:* Football? The only football we played was from second grade to eighth graders, at Sitka School. The only competition we had was the parochial school, which they closed down in Sitka and they built a new one in Ashland. They had a little nun who was quite active and taught football. I can remember playing against the Priesner boys that were eighth graders when I was a second grader. Yeah, it was vicious football we played out there on the lot! It wasn't like this for baseball. Baseball was probably one of the top sports in the United States. And we had... they traveled! They'd take school buses and haul a team to Protection and Coldwater and places like Wilmore. They'd go on the train and they go back there. That train is so interesting because it went to Ashland, and then it went to another couple towns. And us kids didn't ever get to go on it. Now, I went on the train to Protection, because my grandmother, when she left the farm, she lived in Protection. I had my tonsils removed.

*Diana:* Do you remember the doctor's name that was in Protection?

*Frank:* No. Dr. Glenn hadn't come yet. He came in after WWII, and I cannot remember the doctor. But I do remember we had no electricity at Sitka; we had no refrigeration. After I had the tonsils removed, I rode the train to Protection, too, and Grandma picked me up. And then I stayed over there and recuperated from this for about two weeks. And then Mom, come over on the train and picked me up and come back to Sitka. But anyway, they fed me ice cream because they had it in Protection. So, it wasn't a bad deal, I got fixed up and I got ice cream, too!

*Diana:* It was a good thing!

*Frank:* And so, when Cara at the library asked me to talk on this thing, I didn't know how to tell her that I didn't know there was a Clark County.

*Diana:* Or any other part of it besides Ashland?

*Frank:* I knew the train went to Ashland after it unloaded everything, and course we got first chance on the train at Sitka, us kids did. Anyway, they went to a town called Acres and then they went to Englewood and then he turned that thing around and come back somehow. On that area over there is a big circle and I didn't know it at the time.

But one year, we had a blizzard in. It was a bad blizzard and Dad hadn't got his acetylene ready for weather. It was inside the shop, so we took off that morning. School was shut down and everything, and him and I went to take care of that generator. We used to take it up to your dad's and drain it. We'd drain it, and the farmers would all come in with their buckets and catch all the stuff out it, the white lime deal. And then they'd put it in their chicken houses. It would make everything snow white and kill mites and all the stuff that chickens have. And then we'd pull it, we had it on wheels, we'd pull it up to your place and park it by the tank and fill it up with water.

Then later on, we could use a hose because your dad put in a pump. But anyway, I found that Acre's was a pretty good size city. And it had two or three elevators and a school and all kinds of stuff, you know? And then Englewood was a big city that the train went to. Dad ran out of blacksmith coal one time, and we took the car and went to Englewood, to the

blacksmith over there. He had a couple extra sacks until we could get the train to bring some in. It was a special coal we used to make blacksmithing, and he had some.

That was the first time I ever went to Englewood, was when we made a special trip to pick up blacksmith coal.

*Diana:* Did your dad shoe horses?

*Frank:* No. He had no use for horses. He had everything he needed to run a horse shoe business, so Duke Crane's father, Raymond, lived down on the west end of Sitka. And he was a farrier. When a horse needed shod, they'd bring it behind the shop and tied up back there and he come up and use our dad's equipment and do that horse shoeing.

Then they talk about the cattle business. Well, the Snake Creek Ranch was a huge ranch, too. The people, when I grew up in high school, that run that was named Alexanders. The Harper Ranch was huge, too. And we didn't get into too much west of Ashland on cattle business and the Sitka area, but the train loaded cattle to haul them to the market.

*Diana:* Do you remember them shipping cattle to haul them out of Sitka? Did they drive them up there or did they use trailers?

*Frank:* They drove them, and then they would make arrangements with Dad for four to five days in advance, because Dad used the trip hammer when we worked on the plowshares and stuff like that for the farmers in the blacksmith's shop. Well, it makes a lot of noise and you're right there when the cattle would come by, so they'd come by and tell Dad their schedule. They'd schedule this stuff and we knew the schedule anyway because, like, your dad drove... all the other guys and farmers in the country drove cattle up there. They'd bring them out of down on the state line and bring them up in a group and try to get them across the river.

*Diana:* Where were the cattle pens in Sitka?

*Frank:* Right across from the depot on the west side of town.

*Diana:* So which side of the elevators were they on? I mean, were they on the north side, where the elevators are now?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* They were on the north side of the track. Was the depot on that side, too?

*Frank:* No, it was on the other side.

*Diana:* It was on the south side, but it was further west. Right?

*Frank:* No. The stockyards was west of the depot, there's the street that went north. At one time we lived out there. There's a rental house where we lived in and it comes out right on the end of Bill Fox's farm on the south road to Ashland. Consequently, I've told stories before, but there's no place in the world that was better to raise kids. We had two lumberyards. One had closed up and was out of business, down there on Main Street, on the east side by the

bank. There was a barbershop in the front of it and the other one was right across the street from our shop. It was a Home Lumber. It closed up after I come along. I was probably six, seven or eight years old about the time they closed the Home Lumber.

But if it rained or snowed or anything, us Sitka kids had a place to play. And we played cowboys and Indians all day long in them lumber yards and OSHA would have a heart attack if they seen us kids climbing the ladders to get up into where they stored the lumber to get up into the top. There was like a little room up there, you know, near the side of a camper or something.

*Diana:* Who were the kids you played with?

*Frank:* Well, the Hoffman girls. There was four or five of them. They had no boys. They was all our age, some older and some younger. The Dome kids. There was a lot of Dome's. The Wrights, Quinten Wright and his kids.

*Diana:* And the Cranes, were they still there?

*Frank:* The Cranes, the Haydocks, and there was the people that worked on the farms and ranches that had houses rented there in Sitka, they had kids. But between the lumberyards, the stockyards was kind of new to us. And they had 2x12's on top of the fences, you know, so we could get up and run around like ants on there

Then, I've never have figured out how they done it, but there's quite a few people in Sitka that worked on the railroad. And so, they took care of things and rode the train. The section crew from Coldwater went from Coldwater east or something to Belvedere. And then our crew from Sitka went clear to Coldwater and Protection. And they come to Ashland, because I remember one time the neighbor there... He was real sick and he got a heat stroke down there on the bridge east of Ashland, is what my mom said. I was just a kid.

Anyway, we could play in the stockyards; we could play in the elevator (if they didn't catch us). And then, this deal where they loaded the oil out, it was the only sidewalk in town. It was up in the air, 20 feet high. They could go up and down the sidewalk and we could take our tricycles up there and ride the sidewalk for shoving the cars on.

*Frank:* And then the other thing that made it easy for kids is that Sitka is in a hole. People don't know that, from Sitka Hill and looking south. It's in a hole. So if you were down in Raymond Crane's house, Mrs. Crane's, and if you wanted to talk to Opal Haydock, by the grade school, you'd just talk. You don't need telephone, you'd just talk back and forth. Everybody in town knew what everybody else was doing because they could hear every word, they'd just broadcast it automatically.

*Frank:* Your grandmother was a heck of a baker. She made pies and stuff. She had a shelf on the south side of the window in her kitchen. She'd set her pies and cookies out there, and so your grandpa built a stile, a stairway, in front of the church there, south of the house, so us kids wouldn't have to crawl through the fence and tear our clothes up or mess up his fence. So your Grandmother Agnes would just open the window and yell out, "Hey kids, the cookies are ready!" And we'd just migrate clear across the railroad track. I can remember her calling us over. We had easy service to snacks.



*Frank:* We'd go around, and when they ran the elevator, the elevator man, Mr. Floyd, he caught me and a couple other boys standing in the wheat after they dumped it. The elevator wasn't moving (that's what kills people. They get in the wheat and they go down.) He caught us in there, and then after that, he would reach in his pocket and take out nickels. We'd got electricity at about that time and we'd go down to a grocery store and get popsicles and fudge bars. They cost a nickel. So, we could get refreshments, and all we had to do was watch real close and get over there in that elevator when we weren't supposed to be there and we get a nickel!

*Diana:* Were the elevators wooden then?

*Frank:* They were wood.

*Diana:* When did they build the cement elevator?

*Frank:* They started that my junior year of high school.

*Diana:* Was it built by local labor?

*Frank:* They were out of Preston, Kansas, on the other side of Pratt. They hired a lot of local people, because it takes a lot of people. Your dad was a young man at the time and he had a Ford tractor with a scoop on the front. They hauled him the sand then he filled the cement mixers with the supplies, the sacks of cement and got it all mixed up and then they sent it up to the elevator winch system and dumped it up there for filling the elevator.

I know what I done on it, because we worked 24 hours a day on the elevator and packed it up to the top. It requires a lot of steel, so I worked all the extra time I could get because we were making all the rebar and stuff and bent hooks on them where they went around corners and stuff, filling them with cement. We built all the ladders and stuff like that. And so, I had control over everything while they were building all that stuff.

In the meantime, they was bringing these cattle up there. Somehow, they put loads of sand between the stockyards and the railroad track, big piles of it. And when they brought it out and dumped it, we never did get to see him do it. Because you never messed around the train when they was working.

But us kids, when we'd get down there, we always had sent fresh sand to play in. And then somehow, when they got ready to ship out the cattle, they'd put it inside the boxcars they'd left on the siding and it must have been the local guys like... August Breit was one of them. Four or five guys that lived right there at Sitka, got shovels and put it in the cars. They'd shift cars up and down to where they didn't have to carry it anywhere, they'd throw it in and get in there and spread it out. It took the cattle to Kansas City.

*Diana:* So how often did they ship to the ship in the fall or the spring or...

*Frank:* It was nice weather. I remember your dad leading the cattle when they'd come out of McMinimy's area into Sitka. Well, they'd take two or three cowboys to kind of lead the

critters and then the others would go on the side of them so they wouldn't run up and down the side streets and into the buildings and stuff like that, to keep them on the highway.

And your dad had a palomino horse and something was wrong with its knees. They were like this, and when he was coming down the highway, the old timers would be there drinking the pop and watching the cattle go by. And they say, "Look at Albert's horse, it's kind of crippled." And one of them would say "Well, he thinks that's the greatest horse in the world and he's happy with it." "Well, I wouldn't ride that thing across the street. He walks funny." I remember that, just like it was right now. But he was a pretty horse. He looked like a Roy Rogers horse in the movies.

We had a lot of people come from up in the Lexington area to help with the cattle drives. And they would bring their stuff to Dad's shop and leave it to get it worked on while they went down there get their horse. They had those trailers they hauled in the back of pickup. That horse would jump up... One thing about your dad's horse, he'd jump up in the back of the pickup. You didn't have to have a box for it or nothing, he'd just haul him around and he'd go.

And people don't realize they done things that way. No big deal. I do remember Howard never had a horse, your neighbor to the east.

*Diana:* Ridder?

Yeah, and Howard was a successful farmer, and he made his whole life living out of watching your dad and Matt Wilson and people like that that were ranchers, farmers together, because we always had a little herd of cattle. But he never ploughed the ground up to plant wheat until the neighbors did. When they went to work, it was time for him to go to work. He was quite a character and was a good friend of mine.

*Diana:* Did they mostly raise sheep? Him and Mary, did they raise sheep?

*Frank:* She had all kinds of critters out there, about everything you could put on a farm, kind of like we have in Ashland now down on the east side of town. We had some guineas all over Sitka, whatever they do, making noise. Chickens everywhere. Everybody had chickens and they always had hogs. Everybody had two or three hogs. We had a couple or three. And we butchered them as a family get-together. This was after we lived in the store building, there was a basement under it. The whole community got together and we butchered the pigs in the backyard when it was Buddy's Café, the Breit place. That was a big deal. I mean, we didn't realize it, we was just kids, but they'd kill all these pigs and they shaved them and everything else and cut them open and got the meat. Then they put the meat in the basement at our house, at the grocery store. With their names on it and everything. The women all were gathered there at their tables and they salted that meat with the red salt that came from the Carey Company. I never did know what it done, but it preserved it all winter long. They put them on the tables and cut up hams and stuff out there with the salt on. Then when they needed something to eat, they'd just come to the house and Mom would give them the key to the back door and they'd go down in the basement and get their food.

*Diana:* They just kept it in there because the basement was cool?

*Frank:* Yeah, it was kind of like a refrigerator. It was kind of a funny deal, how they done it.



They had their fruit, too. We had an apricot tree and an apple tree. Everybody had a peach tree down the street. Everybody had fruit. And you'd put it up and onions and stuff like that. You learned to preserve it for the whole winter. We always had vegetables.

*Diana:* When your dad was in the shop, did everybody bring stuff to shop or did he have to go around to their farms?

*Frank:* Well, big stuff, we went out to the farms. We had this welding equipment on a trailer. We'd hook it on the back to the car and go out when they had an emergency. When they're drilling wheat or something, there's a lot of little pieces on a running drill and they all get screwed up. He'd have to go out and do that.

*Frank:* The wheat combines, I went with him all the time because Mom run a gas station up there. So I got to go out and watch him run the threshing machine and stuff like that before they got combines. Then when the combines come, well, they would road them or pull them with a tractor or something. Dad made a deal where he could take a tractor's back wheels off and they'd put a gearbox on there. They'd jack the tractor up and they'd run 40 mile an hour down the road pulling the combine. Then back about the time I was a freshman in school, they come out with a combine that was self-propelled. At one time, there was a factory in Ashland, at the White building that Coverdale had? It was a factory. He manufactured self-propelled combines. And I remember Bob Seecat was in the shop one day and I was welding, and he said, "If you'd had the teacher I had, you could weld, better." He was quite a character, Bob was. He had a whistle that he blowed every time that scared everybody to death, by the kids specially.

*Diana:* Was is this old Bob Seecat?

*Frank:* Old Bob Seecat, the father of George and John. He worked in the factory making them combines, and they had no welding rods. They used No. 9 wire with the electric welders there. There's no coating on them, you just had to get with it. You could weld probably two or three inches and then you'd have to get another piece of wire.

He told me, "You get so you can run a good weld with No. 9 wire and then you'll be as good as I was." He was quite a character. I'd wait until he left, and then I go get me some No. 9 wire like they put on corner posts. Everybody had some of that, and I'd use it. Dad said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Bob Seecat said I could weld if I could do this."

He was character and a half. He run a truck hauling cattle and hogs for people later on. He was ambitious guy, I think.

*Diana:* When did you come back and take over the shop?

*Frank:* After I got out of the air force in 1960.

*Diana:* Was your dad still alive?

*Frank:* He died the year before.

*Diana:* Was your brother George here?

*Frank:* Well, George came back from the navy and he tried running the shop with Dad and it didn't work. He worked for K\_\_\_\_\_ Welding, right here in town, which had 15 or 20 welders, and worked in the oil field during the boom.

*Diana:* What did they weld in the oil field. Did they make derricks or...?

*Frank:* No, the derricks were a thing of the past by then. I welded about 25 years in that oilfield, too. When they set the thing in the ground and drilled the hole, then they put a piece of pipe in down to where it was hard rocks and stuff, and they used the conductor for the drilling part.

And so that's all got to be rigged up by setting men in the hole. A lot of people don't know that, but they have all the crews for a full day move that rig in there, the night before, most generally. Then they're out there at 7:00 in the morning, putting it together to get ready to drill. If they can get the bit stuck in the ground by 12:00 noon, it makes their day. All the other crews go home and get to bed and come back during a regular shift. They drill the first 1,000 feet in the ground. Well, consequently, if they go in and put the casing and stuff in the bare hole, if everything goes right, they're ready to go at about 10:00. They call the welder, that's me, to come out there and weld all the connections on it that they use for getting water in and out and drilling a hole. Consequently, there's times they run into underground structures and stuff and rock and so on, and they don't get the pipe in the hole and they have to take it back out and drill some more. It might be daylight before they get done. I had the shop at Sitka for a while, and I'd be late for work for my customers here in town because I've been out all night on the rig. Anyway, it's interesting, how they do things.

*Diana:* So back when George was welding around here. Were there a lot of oil wells or gas wells that they were welding on? Was a big crew? How many people went together out to weld? Would more than one person go to a site?

*Frank:* Well, when they go to drill, to set it up. There're four crews. And each crew is four men and a pusher. Five men. And so, once they get it all set up and drilling, they can all go home except for the one crew. And then they rotate around.

*Diana:* But they only have one welder per crew.

*Frank:* They don't need most generally but just one welder. But he has a particular job to do, unless they break down, and they have to repair things and they don't never tell you they're broke down until you get there.

*Diana:* When did you open your shop in Ashland?

*Frank:* In '64.

*Diana:* And how long did your mom keep the shop in in Sitka going?

*Frank:* She run it for two or three years, I think, because we lost the post office at the same time. I opened the shop at Sitka, and she was running her gas station. They asked her to be postmaster; she was postmaster for a year and a half or two, I think. Or more, because

Shermans were the post people before. And then they moved to Protection. So, yeah, we went to the welding shop to get our mail.

*Diana:* When you moved over here, what type of things did you first weld for customers. What type of things did they bring in? Were you still getting plows?

*Frank:* When I first came over here, it was right at harvest. And I found out that I didn't know much about how harvest works. But they all go south to begin in Texas, to Wichita Falls and places like that and come back. They have no welders that work on combines and stuff like that all the way down there. So, they found that I would and they'd come two weeks early and park around my shop. I got pictures to this day, where you cannot see my shop from the bridge because combines is all sitting around it and trucks. They'd bailing-wired things together to make it to here and then have me weld everything up. And then they would take off and go to Wichita Falls. Then when they came back, they were all broke down again.

So, I done pretty darned good. And the other thing is, and a lot of people don't know it, but they didn't have to pay income tax. And the farmers didn't have to pay income tax on their combining and stuff. So the farmers, when they got done cutting wheat here, they'd go to the bank and get a roll of one hundred dollar bills from the farmer's part. And then they come by me and peel off hundred-dollar bills.

So, I didn't keep track of it much either, until later on when the IRS moved in and now the farmers have to keep records where they could deduct it and the combiners have to keep records showing their income.

*Diana:* How many people did you have work for you?

*Frank:* I had one young high school kid working for me.

*Diana:* And so how many different high school kids have worked for you through all the years you ran your shop?

*Frank:* Oh, probably six

*Diana:* Did they stay usually through...?

*Frank:* Well, my business growed and then I started putting another truck on the oil field, stuff like that, and I ended up with maybe 6 employees at a time. And then when I closed up, I just had two. One of them had been there 33 years, which was Vernon and the other had been there twenty-eight. A lot of them worked part time. They was farmers and worked for me part time. Then we had your dad, he was our inspector.

*Diana:* So, when you when you were welding on oil fields, most recently, didn't you have to be certified?

*Frank:* Yes.

*Diana:* So how did you become certified to weld on oil fields?

*Frank:* Well, the first year I was here, that winter, they built the launching system for the Atlas Titan Missiles all over the United States and the City of Shreveport got all the work building that stuff. It must have been three or four thousand people right there in that little town where I lived, Blanchard, that worked on missile stuff. And so I went down, and my brother-in-law called me and said "What are you doing this winter?" I had work lined up, but I'd get more pay down there building on that stuff.

Well, I went down and tested. All these pipeline welders with their fancy little trucks were coming out of Wyoming and Montana. And they lined up the street down from the plant I tested in. Thirty-two a day, and I was the only one that passed. Pipeline welders, and they're good. They couldn't take the test. I mean, they couldn't pass. They left, and the next day there'd be another 32.

Well, I had one pin hole on my x ray. One pin hole means that you failed. But they needed workers so bad, the boss come to me and said, "Can you weld up this stuff off these oil rigs?" Because they built oil rigs too. "If you can weld up that big old a pile of stuff over there, we'll keep you for a week and then you retest and if you pass your test, we'll put you on this missile stuff."

So I did. I cleaned up their big pile of iron and stuff, and they found out I could do it. When I retested, I passed. On that day, there was 32 pipeline welders went down the road because they didn't make their test, but they certified me with the U.S. government.

*Diana:* So have you stayed certified all the time you've been welding or have you had to retest?

*Frank:* I had to retest every year for when I welded for the Kansas Gas Company.

*Diana:* Were the two people that stayed with you long-time? Were they both certified to do wells too?

*Frank:* Vernon Hess got certified, and Casey Roberts, with the gas company. We welded gas lines from Medicine Lodge, Coldwater, Protection, Ashland, Englewood... We had to take out all the gas lines and put in new ones, the gas company came in and did all the welding for them.

*Diana:* When did you start manufacturing trailers?

*Frank:* 1970's.

*Diana:* Did you make a swather trailer?

*Frank:* Yeah, I made 40 of them.

*Diana:* How do you decide how to do that?

*Frank:* Well, I had just come up with... This guy heard that I could build things. And he lived

up there east of Fort Dodge on 40 Highway He feed-farmed for 10 miles in there, and to get in on that highway with all them trucks and everything and move your swather... You can only go about eight miles an hour. And he said, "Can you build me a trailer?" Well, I done some research, and your dad helped me a lot, designing that. You could run it up on it and the ramps would fold up and you'd hitch on to it and take off.

*Diana:* You made one for him, right? For my dad?

*Frank:* The Heston Company was what your dad had. I made quite a few for them, and I made two them for the New Holland Company, for people down at Buffalo, Oklahoma. They had to be different. I made a whole bunch of them.

*Diana:* When did you start making trailers?

*Frank:* That was a trailer!

*Diana:* Yeah, but I mean, didn't you make a lot of horse trailers?

*Diana:* Well, one of the first trailers I built was in the air force. I had a general that became a friend of mine. Come to find out, he was a personnel manager officer for the Second Air Force and the Eighth Air Force. He was in both of them at Shreveport, in a big office just down the street from me. He had a son that was a cowboy clown/bullfighter, and I run a auto hobby shop in the Air Force for the last two or three years.

He came to me and said, "Can you build a two-horse trailer for my boy, we can't find one anywhere." And they were kind of rare. Anyway, I said, "Yeah, I could. I can do it at night because I get done with work here at 5:00, and I keep the shop open with a different crew till midnight. I could work on it and I'd just get everything and build it." "What's it gonna cost?" "Oh, I don't know. I'll let you know." We turned out to be Helman's friends and I built him a nice two-horse trailer. I go back and forth from here through Chickasha, and I went, and there were 28 plants in Chickasha building trailers at that time. I got acquainted with most of the guys running shops and just spent the whole day down there and I'd buy all the stuff I needed to build this trailer. Well, I didn't know this guy was... He wanted to help his son, and his son was a rodeo clown, and he followed PRCA and he'd like to take a horse with him and maybe a friend.

Well, anyway, I got acquainted with him and I built him a trailer. And then the next one I built was for Sam Mosshart's ex-wife's dad and they moved to Lake of the Ozarks, I think it was, and he wanted a trailer. He was from Englewood, so I built him one, one of the first ones I ever built. I built Bob Seacat (the younger one) a trailer. You look around the ranch and you'll know I built them damn trailers.

*Diana:* Do you know how many you built?

Almost, counting little trailers made out of pickup beds and swather trailers, it'll come close to 800.

*Diana:* Did you get most of your supplies for the trailers from Chickasha? Is that where you went?

*Frank:* Well, I got a lot of them from everywhere. It grewed, like this Wilco International Medicine Company, they're worldwide. And they was buying 25 trailers at a time, or something. And they had me bid on them, and I was too high. So, they bought these ones from Durant, Oklahoma, and they were nice trailers. I bid on 14 of them. And the guy, the boss, was from Holdridge, Nebraska. And so, I got down to them, and all of a sudden, I get four trailers out in the yard that are crap, the ones they bought from Durant, Oklahoma, a year before. The boss was there when I went to work. He said, "Frank, remember bidding on them trailers for me?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "When can you start?" I said, "Well, you got a lot full of trailers sitting out there. "I don't know what to do with them. They won't stop falling apart. They're junk." Anyway, we built 14 of them right off the bat. Never had two alike to build before.

*Diana:* So how long did it take you to build a trailer?

*Frank:* We built one for Larry Krier. He came in ten days before Christmas and he said, "Can you build me a trailer and have it ready for Christmas?"

So we built that gooseneck trailer and got all the parts in Oklahoma, we danced all night and come back and built that trailer. Of course, it was really cute, we had to put a red nose on it and white trim to two-tone it, which wasn't planned when we started, so we had to take an extra day. But two days before Christmas, he took his trailer home.

*Diana:* So, you painted all the trailers yourself?

*Frank:* Well, I painted quite a few, but Vernon painted most of them. He loves to paint.

*Diana:* Painted them at the shop? You had enough room?

*Frank:* We had two paint-rooms and one paint-room we had to make way for the trailer, but it was mean to paint. But if we built four trailers at a time, we'd put them all over in the shop at the same time and paint them all at the same time. t

*Diana:* Were most of them gooseneck?

*Frank:* Yeah, but we built quite a few bumper trailers, too.

*Diana:* So, you guys used to have a contest to see how much they'd weigh.

*Frank:* You had to before you could get a title for them, just like you get on your pickup or your car now.

We'd have state inspectors and everything else, and so we have a little contest and take them and weigh them. We'd also hook them to my Ford pickup and it would run a hundred miles an hour, easy, and got to Sitka and back and give them a road-test of 80 or 100 mile an hour.

People thought we was crazy, but we did it. If you're going to pull them 100 miles an hour, they'd better pull good.

*Diana:* Did anybody ever bring them back to have you fix them?

*Frank:* Absolutely. The last five or six years we was in business, that was one of our big jobs because trailers came back. They knew when they was getting old, and when they was about out of time. Trailers come back and they wanted them rebuilt. Just like new. So we rebuilt probably 30 or 40 of them in a year, put in new floor, new paint jobs and new wiring and turned them loose.

*Diana:* So then, you also went out to a lot of ranches and built pipe fences for them.

*Frank:* Yeah, we did.

*Diana:* So how many how many ranchers around here have pipe fences that were built by Reed?

*Frank:* Well, if you just want to look when you go across Sitka Hill, and there's one of them right there on the Randall place. I got a portable one put together and Charlie Randall's place, at Joe's house. One or two of them that I've been real proud of, Young Brothers hired me to build all theirs up there.

*Diana:* And then did you paint them, too?

*Frank:* Yeah. And there's Mr. Cristman. He was a buyer for Fluor Corporation, the world's largest construction company, and he was inside Saudi Arabia getting ready to build a pipeline in Moscow illegally. And buy everything and keep going.

*Diana:* He was a special guy, Frank York's uncle.

*Diana:* Yes.

*Frank:* And so, he owns this farm right here that Harry Cristman had, and I build pens for him. And then I build another set of pens up north of Highway. And we just used regular paint to paint on them. They liked to have them brushed to maintain the brown color, like that stuff up there. And there was no need to paint them. If you paint them, you have to paint them again.

And the pens I built up at Young Brothers, their first pens was about 3,100 feet and we charged by the foot to build them. And Tammy painted them for me. And then after that I made deals with most generally the Methodist youth kids, and they'd take on and paint fence and build corrals and stuff to make extra money. I built a whole bunch of them out at Shaw Feedyards, bunch at Gardiner Ranch.

*Diana:* Did you usually go back after you built some and then you'd go back and build some more for them?

*Frank:* Some of them, some of them not. Some of them knew what they want. Like Mr. Cristman, like the wings they put on for the cattle to go in and out of fields, like a funnel.



Harry built all the post holes by hand and set them all like a regular fence, only they used real wood on it just to get exercise! He was about seventy-five years old and was getting in shape so he could go down the Grand Canyon and come up the other side or something. But it was kind of neat.

But yeah, I build a lot of pens and stuff. I built the Seacat Feed yard. Darned near all the metal work in it, me and Bob did. Electricians would come and wire everything up and make everything work. I got a lot of work out of Ashland Feeders when they bought it from him.

*Diana:* Have you trained a lot of people to weld?

*Frank:* Yeah, I did.

*Diana:* So most of the high school kids...

*Frank:* Well, when I was in high school, our teacher wasn't a welder, he knew crops. So, he put me teaching all the welding. Before, you knew it, I had the whole school. All my classmates were not very good customers of mine, because I taught them all how to do it. They knew they could do a good job, you know?

I look back at that, and I have taught quite a bit of school. I've run maybe four or five different classes through there and assisted or taught them how to do things.

*Diana:* Did you have lots of people just drop in with something they needed fixed right now and you had to stop what you were doing to fix for them? Or did you do that?

*Frank:* Always. There was a couple in a white van that was fixed up for food. They call them "food trucks" now. And they were both wearing white sheets. And they brought me a skillet that had a hole in it, a stainless-steel skillet, and said, "Can you fix this?"

I said, "Yeah, go ahead and park there in front of the shop." I'll never forget this one, so they stood and watched me. Well, I was busy that day, and they were traveling cross-country and they managed this food truck. Well, I had two kids in high school at that time. Tom Betschart was around there, and I took it over to him and said, "Well, just hold it." So, he did and I ground it off.

I told this kid, he was probably 22 years old. He said, "How much is that going to cost?" I said, "Five bucks." He said, "Can you ask God if it would be nice for you to accept that." And I said, "You just pay me, and I don't think I'll need to talk to God."

"Well, we've traveled across country and people don't charge us for getting things done." And I said, "Well, I've got four kids, and one of them is getting ready to start high school, and I have three in high school right now, and I have to have money every day and I have talked to God too, about it, and He ain't helped a damn bit either. And here you come along and want me to fix your skillet so you can eat. Give me five bucks."

Tom was just, "God, Frank. That's kind of mean, to get the preacher for five bucks." And I



said, "I'd have give it to him if he hadn't come up with this story." But anyway, we had a lot of them that way.

*Diana:* Was that the most unique thing you had to weld? Did you have some different things that you didn't expect to have to weld?

*Frank:* Well, I have a brother that is one of the top welders in the Le Tourneau Company, down in Texas. And his brother-in-law was a government engineer, on something. He quizzes me every time I'm down in east Texas. "Which one's the best?" And then I said, "Well, I'll tell you what." George, you know, was standing there, and he gets a kick out of it. "If you're building a tractor that's bigger than anyone in the State of Kansas, set a scoop on it to pick up whole truck load stuff at one time. You get George. If you've got a '59 Thunderbird you're restoring and you're so proud of it can't see straight, and you drive it out on the farm and hit a fence post on the gate, you open and break your rearview mirror half in two. You don't take that to George. You find me because I'm the only one in the State of Kansas that can put that back together."

*Diana:* Have you been involved in the community? Besides being a business owner, did you get involved in things that happened in town?

*Frank:* I was out there working and it was hot and sweaty, and these guys come in there and they said, "We want you to be our mayor. Would you do it?"

*Frank:* And I said, "Me?" And I got involved in the community!

I realized we have a centennial, and they did, too. They said, "We need to find somebody that's crazy enough to party!" So we did, and we had a centennial celebration that lasted a whole damn year.

*Diana:* So how long were you the mayor?

*Frank:* Eight years. That is as community minded as I'm going to get.

*Diana:* But you fixed a lot of stuff during that time, didn't you? I mean. Like the park?

*Frank:* Well, really, I got married at that time, to Peggy. I was put in as the commander of the VFW, and we did move around my time.

Right. I was also the master at the Lodge Hall, and I got married all at the same time. I was loaded down, let me tell you. But I enjoyed it all, and so I've done stuff for the community. Mostly on the cattle business, I bought a lot of steel from Wessel, Dodge City, and so did the beef companies. And so, I would go up there to get my steel, and I always met with these guys that done the welding and stuff out at the beef plants and so on. And then Bob Seacat and I, we took, when I was building his stuff, we went to High Plains and him and man that owned it was good friends. I have kept track of what they're building and like the High Plains, that's got mural on the side. Sam Mosshart's little sister, have you been up there to see that mural of the horse crossing the creek, that's Joyce's husband. Stuff like that, you know? And people don't know that. But I was there and Walsman came and said, "Do you know who this cowboy is?"

*Diana:* Jerry, wasn't it? Jerry Bay.

*Frank:* Yeah.

*Diana:* What's the invention or item that you made that you're most proud of?

*Frank:* What I really was proud of, I wanted to build it, but needed women to build it. Women are the best welders there are. I bought these oil derricks north of town and took them down and cut them all apart to make to make something out of them. And at that time, I was ready to give community help, I started building these things to hold the electric pods on transformers on two poles down the alleys in towns, and Ashland needed them and CMS needed them. So, I built a bunch of them for CMS and a bunch for Ashland and a bunch for Meade and quite a few at Plains.

And I used the iron of off an oil derrick that had crashed down. It had been beat up when it hit the ground, you could straighten them all out and make them pods. And they're all still going. And they're rusty sitting up on poles and stuff. This company came to me and they wanted me to build them, great big electric company. And consequently, I was pretty proud of them, and I wanted to build them. And I put together money work, and by using new steel, powder coated and everything else, I was gonna have to triple the cost. So it wouldn't work and I couldn't get any more on oil derricks. And so that's one thing I was pretty proud of. So they stick up in the air and have Welding signs on them.

Another thing we built for the county. Matt Wilson's Uncle Charlie got sick and he'd built all the cattle guards for the county. The county got a truck order of pipe and I had three or four guys out there building them. I liked building cattle guards, and I went to the lake, the new road coming in the side of the lake from Minneola. And I crossed my cattle guards, and there's a sign on them that isn't mine, it's this welding shop in Liberal. Oh, I was about ready to shoot somebody there. And then I did a little research on it and I went over and visited Moss and he said, "One of their guys was out fishing down at the lake and he took our decals and put them on there so we'd get free advertisement that way."

*Diana:* When farmers started putting their land back into CRP, into the Reserve, did that affect your business?

*Frank:* Yes, it affected it very much. You had to start hunting for something, you had to have something because people in this area retired. They were retirement age anyway. They'd been wanting an excuse. Somebody's got to pay taxes on this place and everything else, and they don't want to work anymore. They're tired and they want to go fishing down on the Gulf.

There were four or five of them around here. And that's what they did. They went into CRP. At that time, when CRP started out, they didn't have a government building here in town to tell them what to do and make them jump. And about that time is when I inherited my mother's taking care of the farm. You had to bid on that CRP. I didn't know nothing about farming. I didn't know how to bid and make money on what they were gonna pay me and so on.

I was real fortunate. I was working right beside Mr. Gardiner every day out there building

fences and he was a mentor like you wouldn't believe. And he really liked me and got along with me. He did things I didn't know about, but anyway. I asked him, I said, "I got to bid on this. I don't want to lose it. I need the money for it for the family, 'cause there are five of us kids." He said, "Just put down fifty-one dollars and that'll get you over the top. I know the top is 50 dollars, put down 51 dollars and bid on it."

I did and I got it, and I got it every year. And I knew that because there was people right here in the middle of it. I was out there doing work on the sale barn. And he had Scotty Tune down on the river with the skid loader cutting out them tamarix and piling them up. He called, I was working in there in the barn, Henry called up Scotty and said, "Can you have that skid loader here Monday morning at 9:00?"

Scotty said, "Henry, I don't think so. I only lack two hours of being done in this one field. I hate leave. I need to finish that field. He said, "You didn't understand. I need it in the salebarn because I'm putting on a seminar on how to control tamarix. The U.S. government is bringing in 80 people, and we're going to feed them and I'm going to get \$1,500 for that little machine sitting there to look at. So, I can make money and you can wait until the next day."

And that's why Henry and I got along. I'm standing right beside him. You don't want people to hear a story like that, just because that machine is going to be there is getting \$1,500 for you for showing it off. I found out later he got over \$25,000 before he wrapped up that day. He helped me get the CRP stuff. I don't know how many that it actually affected here, but it ruined our country. It took our farming away from us and made it into ranching country.

I don't know what they're going to do with this deal that going on right now with beef plants all shut down and that's affecting the ranchers. I watch that farm channel all the time. They're buffaloed and they don't know what to do.

*Diana:* So, like your dad's shop. Did your shop become a gathering place for people to come in and sit around and drink coffee and tell stories?

*Frank:* Well, we never had coffee but we had talk. They'd just come in anyway and sit around and talk. They were more observant than you would have dreamed. Ed Hoffman and two or three others went to Branson fishing, every year. They came back and they told Dad, "You ought to go fishing with us." "I ain't got time." "Well, you need us to fix you up with a barometer to tell you when you could go." He got this quart jar, and you put a pop bottle upside down in it with water in it, If it goes up, there's good fishing. And if it goes down on, there isn't, then they watch it every day. Your dad was one of them, too. They'd watch that damn thing, everybody in the whole world knew what that thing was and what it meant. One day window Vernon come in. Anyway, the water's going up and down. And you could watch all day and never see it go up and down. It was weird. They went and got Dad; he's back there welding on something.

George, something's wrong with your danged fishing barometer." I forget who said that, I think it was your dad, telling them. He said, "What do you mean somethings wrong? Has somebody has been messing with it or what?" "No. Nobody's touched it, it's in the same place it was yesterday. It's going crazy. It's going up and down." Dad went up there, looked at it, and it went up and down. Now he said, "Get your butt home. Get your kids in the basement, won't you? There's something wrong."

They looked and there was a tornado south of Sitka, he went and told Mom, "Get in the car, we're getting the hell out of here. There's a tornado coming right up the road south of Sitka."

Mom says, "Let me get the shop locked up. I got to lock the doors and everything. She went through a ritual every night and locked the doors." We didn't have time, we got in the car and went north.

Well, your grandfather had a windmill by the building, one of those they put in the backyard up the corner. We're going up Sitka Hill, and back up on the highway in their old Chevy, and that tornado came right through Sitka and sat right down on other side of Sitka. I can't remember, whether REA had just put in all that electric line. On one side of town, it threw it down on the highway, on the other side it threw it into the field. But when it came to Sitka Hill, it took the windmill of your grandpa's and shed he put his cake in winter when he needed it. It just disintegrated. Dad put the old Chevy in reverse, and we went backwards, clear down to the bridge. The transmission was screaming like a siren, and I was in the back seat. I didn't know car could go that fast going backwards. That's the tornado that come through there. It went on to Wilmore and tore Wilmore all to heck. You talk about the group, they watched that fishing barometer. The whole group. They'd get their pop, they'd walk right in there and look at the pop bottle on top of glass.

*Frank:* Anyway, telling about the tornado...

*Diana:* You retired a couple years ago. Do you miss it?

*Frank:* I miss it 100%.

*Diana:* What do you miss the most?

*Frank:* Going down the street, coming down and going to work. .

*Diana:* And when you get my age, let me tell you, that you can't even get a job at Wal-Mart greeting people. Yeah, it's bad, once you turn 80, and I feel like time-jumped to 40.

*Diana:* Do you have a hobby?

*Frank:* Yeah, I've got a hobby. Now I'm working in the yard with my wife's flowers.

*Diana:* Is there anything else you want to talk about? Anything else you want talk about?

*Frank:* I know we didn't get into raising cattle south of Dodge City, yet. So we did some I'm.

*Diana:* If she wants more...

*Frank:* Talking about a job, the emergency jobs. It snowed and it blowed ice, and Bouziden had a semi-load of cattle that come off of that hill right west of town and lost it and went across the concrete bridge, which wasn't very big. It took the concrete edge off the west side of the bridge and it took the wheels all out from under this trailer and left him hanging. This guy's got to go back to Wichita. So, they bring it to me, somehow, a tractor pulled it to town.

And I couldn't get it in the shop, so we backed it up against the front door, big Neuman trailer, put a tarp over and then got underneath of it and put it all back together. At 4:00 in the afternoon, he was headed back to Wichita! That was just a happening job, first thing in the morning, seven o'clock.

*Frank:* He didn't know what to do, he was beside himself. Some of Bouziden's business.

*Diana:* Was he loaded? Was the trailer loaded?

*Frank:* You know, he'd dumped them up there, so it was empty. And so, what they did with the cattle, I never knew.

*Diana:* Oh, thank you.