

Historian Diana Redger interviews her Aunt Bessie Seacat in March of 2020.

Diana Tell me your full name.

Bessie Bessie Pauline Kumberg Seacat.

Diana OK. What is your age?

Bessie Well, it will be 97, born on February 28 of 1923.

Diana What year did you graduate from high school?

Bessie 1941.

Diana Where did you live in Clark County?

Bessie I lived at Sitka.

Diana Which is a city which is an eastern part of the county. Did you live anywhere else?.

Bessie No.

Diana When did your family move to Clark County?

Bessie 1908 or 1910.

Diana And why did they come?

Bessie My dad was Fred Kumberg, who moved from St. Jacob's Well, where he was working with his brothers on the ranch there. The brothers all left in 1910. Two brothers went to California and my dad came to Sitka and bought the old hotel and land there.

Diana So do you know what ranch they worked for when they were living at the St. Jacob's Well?

Bessie I think it was Smith's Ranch. But I've always read it was something else. That was in Aunt Tildie's book.

Diana So what generation are you in Clark County?

Bessie I'd be second generation.

Diana What was your family's traditional role in the area? Were you a rancher, a farmer or a merchant? What roles did your dad have?

Bessie My dad was a farmer and a rancher.

Diana Was he an elder or a statesman to the to the City of Sitka? Did he hold any offices?

Bessie Yes, he was on the church board. I don't know what other one he had.

Diana How close to Sitka did he settle?

Bessie How close?

Diana Was it considered part of Sitka where he homesteaded, where the hotel was?

Bessie That hotel was north of Sitka, about a fourth of a mile.

Diana What type of crops did he grow?

Bessie Wheat and sorghum. I don't remember any other.

Diana Did he grow hay?

Bessie Yes, he had hay.

Diana And what kind of livestock did you have?

Bessie White-faced Herefords.

Diana How did he farm? What did he use to farm?

Bessie He had mules and he had a caterpillar tractor. I remember Mom telling me that I would look out the window and say "Mule" when I was two years old or so maybe.

Diana So do you remember when you got the tractor?

Bessie I don't remember that.

Diana Do you have any family stories about the Dirty Thirties or the Depression? How about the 1920s? Do you remember that dust clouds?

Bessie Yes. I was just ready to tell you about that. I was taking piano lessons from Wayne Nelson, who lived in a little house across from Eldora McMinimy's house now. That's where Wayne Nelson lived and I had to walk out there. There was a big black cloud that came up that day and it got dark, but I was safe. I mean, I got there at Wayne's place, but I do remember that rolling in.

Diana Do you remember a lot of dirt in your house?

Bessie There was a lot of dirt in the house. It sifted in all the time.

Diana Were you still living in the hotel?

Bessie No, that was in in the house that was remodeled in 1930. In 1929, when I was in first grade, it sifted in, and my mom would put sheets up in front of the windows to keep it from coming in so bad. They had to clean, it didn't do any good to clean till it was over.

Diana So were there a lot of dust storms?

Another thing during that time, there wasn't enough green grass growing and so on for the animals. I remember Dad having to w... with the baby calves. He just had to knock them in the head. I remember him doing that.

Diana Because they had no feed and no way to keep them alive. Did you have mules during that time?

Bessie No, I don't think so. I don't remember the mules. It was just that Mom had told me about that, that Dad had mules then. And then he plowed the garden with a plow, but he used the horses, he had two horses on it.

Diana The big horses, Clydesdale-type or Percherons?

Bessie No, just regular horses. Their names were Molly and Bird. He'd hitch them up to the wagon for getting hay. And I think Mom drove that wagon one time, I remember us going down toward the Ritter place and the Browns. I don't know what that was for.

Diana So where all did he have land? Just right there at the house, or did he have some in different places?

Bessie There was land there in Sitka. I don't know what year he bought the north place. It was four miles north. How many acres is that?

Diana There's 560 in CRP, but there's extra grass up there.

Bessie Dad had extra grass, it went clear to the Coverdale place.

Diana On the north side?

Bessie East side. Because I was helping him build fence there. He was building fence. I was five years old and ran down the slope of the hill and broke my arm. We had to go to Ashland to get Dr. Burkett to set it.

Diana Did you go to the hospital or did you go to his office?

Bessie Well, I don't know for sure. The table that I laid on is in the museum now! I can still remember the painkiller they gave me, the antiseptic. I think Mrs. Burkett did that. It was in a great big round ball and on top of it. And when it burst, then that's when it took effect. But Dad had a Model A, the old "Hoopie" they called it and it was a real rough road to get to town.

Diana Did he own the land at the Sitka Corner then, too? Where did he get that later? Or had he always owned that.

Bessie I don't remember when he got that one. He did have that.

Diana Was it 80 acres?

Bessie There were two 80s on each side of the road.

Diana So there were two eighties north of the highway and two 80s south of the highway.

Bessie One 80 down south and one 80 north.

Diana So were there any effects of the Depression on the farm? Besides having to get rid of livestock and not having grass? Did his crops grow pretty well then?

Bessie I don't think so. I don't really remember how long it was or how bad it was. I don't remember when he bought that land in the north, which we called the North Place, but it seemed to me like it was in the Dirty Thirty time. Probably got it real cheap when he bought it.

Diana So what type of things happened in the 30s? What grade were you in?

Bessie Well, I was in the first grade in 1929.

Diana And then your folks built a house during the thirties.

Bessie 1929, the year I was in first grade.

Diana I thought they built the house that David lives in later.

Bessie I was a sophomore in... I thought it was '37.

Diana You were in the seventh grade.

Bessie I was a sophomore.

Diana No, you were an eighth grader because you took those pictures off the roof. You said you were a seventh grader or an eighth grader.

Bessie I said that?

Diana At one time. Why did they build a house in the 30s? How could they build a house, I guess?

Bessie Because they built it 1929. Were the Dirty Thirties in '29 and '30? I don't really know when that was.

Diana The Depression started in '29 and right through there, there were the Dirty Thirties were in there too. SoSo, the fields started blowing in the 30s, about, the banks crashed first in '29 and '30, and Hoover got in and tried to do a couple of things to help everybody by stopping the banks closing and doing that. And then he tried to do some things for the farmers because the dust started blowing in the early 30s. So how how old were you when you took piano lessons?

Bessie Well, when I was older. I was in fifth grade. No, it was a sixth grade. It was Wayne Nelson, and he was the one that gave us harmonica lessons. I was in the sixth grade at that time.

Diana So that would have been about 1934 or '35, because you'd have been about twelve and you were born in 1923. So that would have been about 1935. SoSo, then they remodeled that one house in 1929. But why did it become necessary to build a house later?

Bessie Good question. This house was built and was remodeled, had termites and they actually ate up the house. I mean Dad would... Whenever guests would come, Dad always showed them the house. And then he would take his fist and poke on the door jams or the places in the house. And, you know, it would just be broken.

And mom always had to keep the closets looking good and everything looking good in the house, causebecause he was always showing off the house and how the termites had eaten it up.

Diana So when did he finally decide you needed a different house?

Bessie Well, that's when the termites ate up the house and destroyed the house.

Diana Did somebody fall through the floor?

Bessie I don't know. I don't know the catastrophe or not. That's about all I remember at that time.

Diana And where did you live while you were building the new house?

Bessie We lived in the garage. It was in the summertime.

Diana How did you fix the garage to be able to live there?

Bessie Well, they didn't do very much fixing on it because it got so hot in there. You know, we had a refrigerator in there and the beds in there and everything. And I remember that Grace passed out one time and was laying on the bed from the heat. It was a very trying time, a difficult time. And then my dad got Grace and I up at five o'clock every morning to milk the two cows. Grace called her cow Bessie and I called my cow Grace!

Diana So how big was this garage?

Bessie Well, you saw the garage.

Diana Yeah, it was a two cartwo-car garage, right?

Bessie Probably it was. So I don't know how big that was.

Diana So you guys got up and milked Grace and Bessie every morning. Is this just during the summer when you went to school, too?

Bessie It was evidently through the summer that they built that house and it was Mr. Putter who did that.

Diana The carpenter that built the house. Was he from Sitka?

Bessie I don't think he was. I think Ashland, but I'm not sure.

Diana So in the 30s, about the time they were building that house, what were the businesses that were in Sitka? Was there a bank?

Bessie Yes.

Diana Did you have a grocery store?

Bessie Oh, yes. One grey grocery store, Shermans was the drugstore, where you got ice cream, you know, an old-fashioned fountain.

Diana There was only one bank?

Bessie One bank, and that was Stewart, who had that, and there was a farmer's co-operative. They let the farmers go off the exchange. That was an elevator run by Tom McMinimy.

Diana Did Wallingfords have an elevator there at that time, did it come later?

Bessie I think that came later. I don't remember.

Diana So during the thirties, did the bank have to close? Or did it close?

Bessie I don't think so.

Bessie I think they were there until Ashland closed, or the school consolidated, and I don't know if it was there that long or not.

Diana Do you remember what year the school consolidated in in '44 or '45? Had to be or later.

Bessie It would probably be.

Diana So no businesses in Sitka were really affected by the bank closures or the Dirty Thirties?

Bessie I don't think so.

Diana So did most farmers and ranchers, did they have to take other jobs to make it through that time when they couldn't produce?

Bessie Evidently, because there were a lot of folks in Sitka that were really poor, they just couldn't hardly make a living, real poor.

Diana Do you remember people moving because they couldn't make a living anymore there?.there?

Bessie I don't remember them moving at that time. Just that they were poor. You know, everyone struggled with making a living.

Diana Was your farm asked to raise extra crops? Could you raise any at all?

Bessie I don't think they were asked to raise extra crops. I don't remember that.

Diana Did he mainly plant wheat during that time, to try to make it?

Bessie I think so.

Diana So how did your garden do?

Bessie Well, the garden seemed to be doing well, if we watered it. And we always had a good garden. It used to be north of the house and then the garage later moved there east of the house.

Diana Was it where that tree row is now on the north side of the house?

Bessie Yes. Yes, it was.

Diana And then later they moved it to the east side of the house.

Bessie That was later, when I was in high school or in junior high, because we had, I think we had a push mower for the yard. Well, I mean, a digger, you know, for the garden.

Diana So what kind of vegetables did you grow in the garden?

Bessie Well, it was a lot of potatoes and corn and green beans and my mom would cook when her relatives would come and so would my dad's people, theypeople, they would come, like a couple of carloads of them. They didn't ever tell you when they were coming. And soso, when they came, mom had to have dinner and she'd go out and dig up potatoes and and bring corn in and get chickens so she could have dinner.

Diana So she raised chickens?

Bessie Yes. She had chickens.

Diana Do you know how big a flock did she have? She had baby chickens there all the time?

Bessie Yeah. She hatched baby chickens out. Buff Orphingtons is the kind she raised.

Diana Were they supposed to be good layers or good eaters?

Bessie They're good eaters.

Diana So good for fried chicken.

Bessie Yeah, for fried chicken. And then through the summer, we had two fried chickens every day for dinner.

Diana Every day?

Bessie Every day. And she would go out and get to wring their necks off and let them flop and then bring them in. And we'd have fried chicken every day through the summer.

Diana With fresh vegetables from the garden.

Yes.

Bessie I remember them eating turnips, cabbage, potatoes and lettuce from the garden. She had lettuce from the garden, I remember that because I didn't like to pick lettuce. And soso, she had all kinds of vegetables.

Diana So this kind of goes back, what happened to the place during WWI and WWII. Your dad was on the war board during World War I, wasn't he?

Bessie World War 2. Dad was in on it.

Diana And he was too old to be drafted for WWI, right?

Bessie Yeah. I think so. And then besides, he was farming. His brother was drafted in World War One, the only one. The other boys were on the farm and younger.

Diana So and then in WWII, he was on the draft board?

Bessie Yes, you're right.

Diana He did Selective Service?

Bessie Yes, and we have a citation from President Roosevelt thanking him for that. And for the many years he was on that draft board, the duration of WWII. And that was... He had to go to Ashland to be with the other men.

Diana Were you drafted?

Bessie No. The ladies were not drafted. I volunteered.

Diana So during WWII, did he have any trouble with getting items that he needed for the farm? Since there was rationing going on?

Bessie I'm sure he did.

Diana Do you know what kind of things?

Bessie I missed all of that, because I was not at home.

Diana Where were you?

Bessie I was in Hays after I graduated. Then I went to Wichita and worked in a defense plant, Cessna. And soso, all the food, you know, that was limited. I didn't know anything about those because I was in in Wichita. Well, I was eating out, you know. And and I remember Mom having to limit things and couldn't get certain things and so on. But all that I missed.

Diana Did she have ration stamps?

Bessie I think so.

Diana So and then then you went into the Marines so you didn't have to worry about ration stuff. Right. They gave you whatever.

Bessie Yes. We had good food in the Marines.

Diana So describe the land that your folks owned. Was there any particular topography? Was there anything major about it? Was it just really good farmland?.farmland?

Bessie I think it was good farmland. Yes, it. Part of it was on the north side of the railroad track and part of it on the south. And then you go in and the road went underneath the bridge, the railroad bridge to get to the other part of the pasture.

Diana Did it have a creek to have a water supply?

Bessie There was a creek on the other side. I don't remember that on the north. You remember that on the north? Yeah, well, my dad thought Grace and I had to have a Shetland pony, black and white, and a new saddle and bridle and everything to go with it. And that was the stubbornnest horse To get to that that creek on the north side, on the south side, he would not go across. We'd have to get off and pull him across or just not, so that was... But anyway, we did have that. But I do. I guess I remember that creek on the north side, too.

Diana You ever remember it being out of its borders when they had a big rain?

Bessie I remember when it had ice on it, because Grace and I would go skating on the ice.

Diana So what about the land that's the north land. Was that all farm land or did it have pasture there, too, to graze cattle?

Bessie I think it was farmland, because on the south side was grass. There was two pastures on the south side, and the milk cow would be clear over there on that east part. She'd go clear out there and I'd have to go and get her.

Diana What was her name? Was this is after Grace and Bessie?

Bessie No. That's when I liked to saddle up the horse, it was Dad's horse, and then go after the cow, which I had to do every day. Sometimes we had to go clear to the east on the other side of the railroad track to get that cow. And then I used to, before I was riding their horse, when I was younger, we'd walk down there and the grass was tall. I mean, knee high, you know.

Diana How old were you when you had the Shetland pony?

Bessie Maybe third, fourth and fifth grade. Yeah, that's high school (looking at a photograph). I think there.

Diana Yeah, it looks like it. Oh, what about the part that was up there by the Coverdale's land? Was that all pasture?

Bessie It was pasture.

Diana All of it was pasture. Did you move cattle up there? Do you ever remember moving cattle from the homeplace up to that place to put on the pasture?

Bessie Don't remember that. I don't remember driving cattle from Sitka, that place, to the north place. I remember riding the horse up to the north place. It was on Dad's Charley horse. He called him, Charley. It was his favorite. I rode up there one time without a saddle and I turned to come back home, that horse was running... I couldn't hold him down, he was running to the barn, you know, and I got so tired I fell off. You don't forget those things!

Diana How far did you have to walk?

Bessie Well, imagine I got back on. I can't remember.

Diana The horse didn't run away then.

Bessie No.

Diana So did your dad homestead any of the land that he had?

Bessie No.

Diana He purchased it all.

Bessie Yes.

Diana This says, "How has your role in the community changed?" Well, we need to go back. When your dad passed away, what happened to the farm? When did your dad pass away?

Bessie He passed away in 1951, and he was 71 years old. Mom stayed on a farm there, but Grace and Albert came and lived there and farmed. I don't remember how soon that was.

Diana I found the deal where Grandma bought her house in town in 1952.

Bessie So that was just a year.

Diana Yeah, so did she sell any of the cattle or what would happened?

Bessie I don't think she sold the cattle; I don't remember that.

Diana Did she go into partnership with Grace and Albert?

Bessie I think so. I don't know.

Diana So was the land that was your dad distributed between his daughters?

Bessie Yes, we had the two eighties and the house in town and you had the north place and the Sitka house right there and the land there.

Diana So is there still farming going on or ranching on that area?

Diana Yes. You know more about that than I do.

Diana Well, we'll have to ask somebody else those questions there.

Bessie David?

Diana Yeah. So did the family have outside help? Did your dad have a hired hand?

Bessie He did. He had... there was a Bill Dome, who helped him in the summertime.

Diana To farm?

Bessie He farmed at the north place, and I'll tell you how I remember that! On that road that goes to the north place that's north of the highway, there was a windmill and then a tank on the land that's on the east side about halfway up there. This boy would stop and jump in that tank and take a bath and get cooled off. Because he was driving the tractor at the north place.

Diana So that was a good place to stop and refresh!

Bessie Yeah. When they built the house, Dad had several of them. I've got a picture, I can't remember their names right now, Domes.

Diana Besides Bill?

Bessie It was Sabina Dome's husband. What was his name?

Diana His name is Bill, because Bill Dome is in that picture. Was it Wilson?

Bessie No. He did have help from those boys.

Diana Did anybody else work for him? Do you know how he paid them?

Bessie By the week. Yeah, I'm sure he did, he paid them by the week.

Diana And it was it was money, not in goods. Right.

Bessie In money. Yes, he gave them money.

Diana So. How do you think ranching and farming has changed in the last 100 years?

Bessie They've got more sophisticated equipment, tractors and combines and plows, huge ones.

Diana And when they do cattle, do they always use horses? Or do they use three-wheelers or other types of apparatus?

Bessie We always used horses.

Diana You didn't have anything else back then, pickups or on foot. Do you remember any family stories of disasters? Besides the termites!

Bessie There were tornadoes that were a scare, a lot. And Mom and Grace and I, would go to the cave and to be safe. Of course, you'd have to take a snack and take a light and take water or something to drink and we'd go down there and stay awhile. But I don't remember my dad ever going down there, so evidentlyevidently, he was in the field or or someplace else. My folks told me of a tornado that happened when I was a baby and I don't know what the damage was. I don't remember them saying what that was, but do you remember the Jenkins family? A black family that were plumbers?

Diana Yes.

Bessie The dad was at our house and the folks told me that I was a baby and I was sitting on his lap while we were waiting and waiting during that tornado.

Diana Do you remember what direction tornados came from, or just that there was a lot of them?

Bessie There were a lot of them.

Diana Where was the cave from the house?

Bessie It was to the south and west.

Diana Did it have a door?

Bessie There?

Diana No, it's there. Did they did have wooden door on it?

Bessie It had a door, I'm pretty sure.

Diana Because that part's not there.

Bessie Yes, it had one.

Diana Did Grandma store canned stuff down there in the cave? Did she store food?

Bessie Well, I'm sure she did. I don't remember that, but she did do a lot of canning.

Diana There were shelves down there. Right. Do you remember?

Bessie I don't remember.

Diana Do you remember if there was a school on the property?

Bessie No, there was not.

Diana Where was the school, besides the one in town?

Bessie It was on the Brown place.

Diana Like east?

Bessie It was east.

Diana And was there one up north somewhere? Like by Fry's?

Bessie That's south of Ashland. But the Frys went to the Brown School when they were little. And it may that... And they had to walk.

Diana So how far was the Brown School from the Brown house.

Bessie I'm not sure because I'm trying to figure out where that was. I think it was south, but it wasn't on our place. I guess it was on theirs someplace. It was on their place.

Diana Was it one or two rooms?

Bessie I don't remember.

Diana Had they already built the school at Sitka when you were old enough to go to school?

Bessie Oh, yeah, it was there.

Diana Did you go to the eighth grade in Sitka?

Bessie Yes, I did.

Diana Do you remember your first gradefirst-grade teacher?

Bessie Yes, I remember her, Miss Armstrong. I have her picture over here. She lived with the Floyds, you know, and they had the feed mill there. Her arms were strong-looking, and her name was Armstrong, and she had strong arms!

Diana Was there a place in Sitka that sold coal or kerosene?

Bessie Yes.

Diana Was Reed's welding shop there when you were young?

Bessie Yes. It was.

Diana What about Haydock's?

Bessie Haydock's was there.

Diana Was it a service station.

Bessie They had a service station and that hotel that was right beside it. Do you remember that name?

Diana No.

Bessie Well, there is a family that had that.

Diana And the church was to the west of the station, the Methodist church?

Bessie Yes.

Diana So the Catholic church was just south of the house. Where was the the priest house?

Bessie Right **Bessie** Right beside it.

Diana Was there a place for the sisters?

Bessie That was in Sitka.

Diana Or in Sitka Township, or inside the town. So Sitka had a whole bunch of people that lived there, and then when they started moving stuff to Ashland, they moved a bunch or houses to Ashland. SoSo, they moved that priest house to Ashland?

Bessie And that's where Robert, Bob Osborn lives.

Diana Did they move the Methodist parsonage out to Ashland, too?

Bessie Yes.

Diana Is that what used to be Faye Isenbart's house?

Bessie Yes. Well, there's someone else that lives there, and we talked about that just recently and I went by and looked at it.

Diana Carol Mazza.

Bessie It might have been her.

Diana Lynns are living there now. Don Lynn.

Bessie Oh, he is?

Diana Yeah.

Bessie They moved from their eEighth Sstreet (house)? I know they've been wanting to do that, but when I looked at it recently, it looks so much bigger than it did when I was little. I didn't realize it had so many windows, you know.

Diana That was common, though, wasn't it, to have a lot of windows?

Bessie Yeah, I guess so. My folks had of windows in that remodeled house, all around the porch.

Diana So switching back to cattle. How do the cattle that your dad ran compare to the type that are raised now?

Bessie Well, they're all black now.

Diana He raised white faced Herefords, right?

Bessie Yes.

Diana Are the cattle bigger or smaller now than they were then?

Bessie I can't say, they look like they're a pretty big to me. Well, it's when the bulls started after me!

Diana So did he have a rather large herd of cattle?

Bessie He hadHe had cows and calves. I think at first it seemed like he went to stocker, or feeder calves later. But then I know he had cows and calves in that field that is south of the barn. And you see there is another fence there at the priest's house, you know. So when when Grace and I went to school, my dad made a stile and stepped over the fence there by the house. And then we would go to the fence, the barbed wire fence to the next place, field, and have to walk through that field over the railroad track to the school. And we had the watch for the cows because sometimes they would take after you, or the bull. So, you know, there were bulls in there.

Diana How did you get through the second fence? He didn't put a stile on that, did he?

Bessie Mama told us, she said for one of us to put our foot on the wire and press it down and pull it up and one of you go through. And then that one helped the other one to get through. So we helped each other to get through that fence and there was one at the railroad. And then there were a lot of rattlesnakes there. So it was hazardous.

Diana Were there houses that you had to go by to get school when you went through there, when you went through the pasture?

Bessie The Floyd's house was there. Opal Haydock's was there.

Diana Is that where Opal lived, was the Floyd house?

Bessie Opal Haydock, what was that man she married?

Diana She married Nolan [00:53:48]Nulk.Mulch [0.0s] She married [00:53:54]Wilmer Wimmer [0.0s] before that. Oh, I think it was before that.

Diana But so you just had to walk by that one and then you were to the school?

Bessie I think so. But that was a street there, they had houses on that street to the west of it. I don't remember any houses on the east except the big school and the little school. See, the first and second grade was in the small one. SoSo, I went there. That's where Mrs. Armstrong was.

Diana Was that brick house there, where Charlie ey and Frances Randall lived? But somebody else lived there then.

Bessie Stewart is the one that lived there.

Diana The banker?

Bessie Yes.

Diana And it was called the Stewart Bank? Or what was the name of it?

Bessie As far as I know, it was the Stewart Bank. Maybe it was the Bank of Sitka.

Diana So, OK. Do you remember what kind of feed or medical needs that the cattle had? Did your dad always hay the cattle or did he grain them?

Bessie It seemed like he raised everything. I don't remember him giving shots to cattle for medicine.

Diana Did he give them pills, did he brand his own cattle?

Bessie He did. And he would have to rope it and lay it down, and Grace and I would help him hold it down because he didn't have any boys and Grace and I helped my dad with everything that he did.

Diana So did you ever have neighbors come help brand cattle or was just you and mom?

Bessie I don't remember the neighbors coming.

Diana Do you remember, did you just brand like baby calves in the spring?

Bessie I imagine so, you know, the calves. And you'd have to round those up and bring them in, too. I guess we did that on the horses.

Diana Did you put them in the corral there?

Bessie Yes, we would bring them into the corral.

Diana And it was barbed wire, wasn't it? Was it barbed wire?

Bessie I think it was wood.

Diana Did he have a chute to run the cattle through.

Bessie I don't remember a chute.

Diana So he just roped them and tied them down.

Bessie I think so.

Diana This is says, "Looking back, what is the smartest thing you ever did? And what would you change if you could?"

Bessie Well. I don't know, I've been thinking about that. I feel like it's not, it was my dad's place and that would be for him to answer if he were here.

Diana Let's go to when you got married and you and George had your own home, what what type of livestock did you raise? Did you raise cattle?

Bessie Yes.

Diana What kind of cows did? Were they white or black or red?

Bessie I was thinking they were red, they were red calves at that time. Through the years, he had many different kinds of cattle.

Diana Did you have exotic cattle?

Bessie Yes. He had exotic cattle, that's the word. We had many different ones. We had sheep for ten years. And so then, when he went into Farmer Stockman Insurance in about '62 or 64, when he went there.

Diana So what type of sheep did you raise?

Bessie Corriedale's.

Diana For their wool?

Bessie Yes, for their wool.

Diana Did you win any prizes on them?

Bessie There's many prizes. So how big of a flock did you have?

Bessie I imagine, I want to say one hundred.

Diana OK, so where was that operation at?

Bessie At Lexington at the farm.

Diana And how many acres of land did you have at that farm?

Bessie We had, you know, six hundred and fifty... 350 at there at the farm (at the house) and then we had the ranch, which was a thousand acres.

Diana Which was west of there?

Bessie It was west and north, as you go to Bucklin. It was over at Bob Seacat's there. That was Bob Seacat Senior's land that was divided up between the four families. So we got a thousand acres.

Diana So did he have a large cattle herd?

Bessie Yes, pretty big. Sure did.

Diana Did you do feeders/stockers or did you do cow/calf operation?

Bessie We did stockers.

Diana Is that when he got into starting to do fertilizer or was that later?

Bessie Well, it was during that time because the boys took care of the cattle. There was Ronald did when he (George) went in to Farmer Stockman. He was an 8th grader and drove the pickup and took care of the farm. George lined him out every week and he did it. And when he went to college, Roger did it. And when Roger went, Bill did it

Diana So they all kind of took a part in how the operation developed.

Bessie In farming and ranching.

Diana So what type of agriculture grains did you grow there?

Bessie The plants? We had wheat and a hay crop.

Diana Did you do milo?

Bessie I think he might have done some milo.?

Diana Did he do any alfalfa?

Bessie No. That's what Bill did when he moved there. He hadHe had alfalfa. And, you know, he worked on that, he liked that.

Diana Cutting and baling the alfalfa? He liked that type of work?

Bessie Yes, and that did well for him.

Diana Then did you have a garden?

Bessie I did have a garden, a big garden, west and north of my house. And with George and his fertilizer business, we did a lot of fertilizing, naturally, you know, with minerals and vitamins and things, we had a good garden.

Diana He did a lot of testing on your garden with your minerals and the different types of things?

Bessie Yes, he did testing, all kinds of things like that.

Diana So did you have a milk cow there, too?

Bessie We did, at first, when we got married, but I don't know how many years we had that.

Diana Did you have chickens?

Bessie We had chickens, well, we got chickens for eating. That last time, the chickens got disease in them and... Oh, no. That was before they got that disease, but we did buy again and then our shed burned down and we had 100 chickens in there, and the fire, they were all killed. That was the last of that.

Diana So did you have a favorite variety of chicken that you got, like Grandma did? Or did you just get any kind?

Bessie Well, it doesn't seem like there was any kind, they were white chickens. I don't know what they were. Layers aren't supposed to be the best kind for eating.

Diana So are any of your family still in farming and ranching?

Bessie Not on our farm.

Diana But are they still... Is anybody in the county?

Bessie Oh, Bill. Bill is in farming and ranching.

Diana Does he own cattle, too, or does he?

Bessie He does own some cattle, besides the Terry Eubanks' estate.

Diana That he watches. So does he raise wheat and still raise alfalfa?

Bessie Yes, he does a lot of alfalfa.

Diana And do they have a garden?

Bessie They have a huge garden and chickens.

Diana Do they have sheep or goats or anything. They have horses, though, don't they?

Bessie They have horses. He still has horses.

Diana So besides him, I mean, there's others that don't live in the county...

Bessie Ronald is in farming.

Diana What about Dustin?

Bessie Dustin isn't in farming. He's in ranching because he doesn't do the farming anymore. It's all cattle and he has horses.

Diana So what would you change if you could, of any of the times that you were on a farm? When you moved to town, were you ready to move to town?

Bessie I guess so. It was so that Roger could move there because he was farming. So that was OK.

Diana But you kept your garden, right?

Bessie I had a garden there, I had a big garden. They plowed that up several years ago.

Bessie After you guys moved off the farm, did you still do livestock or anything or just let Roger take over?

Bessie Yeah, Roger did. But George went out and helped on the farm, too, after that.

Diana So anything else you'd like to add?

Bessie My dad... The next question is, "Are you preparing another generation?" George made the statement one time, he said, "I'm not going to have a lot of money to give my children when I'm gone, but I hope that they will have... That I have given them the knowledge and and know-how to do their crops and for minerals for the crops. This type of thing. And also for animals." And he did, because Ronald is using these practices in his farm. He's still working with Wendell with Wendell Baydear, your, you know, giving them free choice and that type of thing. And he got minerals from Salida, Colorado, George did know those things.

Diana That's that different fertilizers that they put on the crops.

Bessie That's right. And then Roger... uses a compost pile because he learned how to do that. And he also learned from George all the vitamins and minerals and seeds that he gets. So he's doing all that, you know, in a big way.

Diana So and he's still kind of in the livestock area. Although it's not ranching since he doesn't have ranch animals, but he's a meat inspector, right?

Bessie Yes.

Diana He's a USDA meat inspector.

Bessie He is a United States inspector.

Diana And he does most of the cattle slaughter, inspects like the places in Dodge.

Bessie Yeah. That's what he does.

Diana So in a way, he's still in agriculture.

Bessie He is.

Diana Anything else?

Bessie I think that's all right.

Diana Thank you for doing this interview.

Bessie And you're welcome.