Ranching Bill Shaw

Diana: 02/18/2021

Diana: Tell me your name.

Bill: Bill Shaw.

Diana: Where do you live?

Bill: In Kansas.

Diana: And when did your family first come to Clark County? Probably the Klingers...

Bill: 1877

Diana: Why did they come to Clark County?

Bill: They came from Ohio and my great-grandfather homesteaded southwest of Ashland, seven miles south near where the feedyard is now.

Diana: Was it one hundred and sixty acres?

Bill: Yes.

Diana: What were their names?

Bill: It would have been David and Catharine. They had four children. One of which would be my grandfather, Israel Jenison Klinger. The other children were Lillie Blanche, Orella May and John Vernon who homesteaded in Oklahoma, down around Laverne. Lillie Blanche married Thomas Gardiner, but not related to the Gardiners here.

Diana: A different Gardiner. Was their house on the property?

Bill: When David Klinger bought the quarter, there was a sod house. And then, as I understand, the crops kind of failed and he sold produce to Fort Supply to survive. Then evidently, they planted wheat numerous times and they either hailed out or failed. He quit growing wheat, and that's when he started with the cattle and livestock.

Diana: Did he own his own, or did he watch other people's cattle?

Bill: I think initially they watched other people's and then eventually got into the business themselves.

Diana: Do you know what type, what breed?

Bill: I don't know that.

Diana: When did they start to expand the land that they owned?

Bill: Well, Israel Jenison, my grandfather, homesteaded the quarter right north of where the home place is.

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Diana: Were the children born in Clark County or were they born in Ohio?

Bill: I'm pretty sure they were all born in Ohio.

Diana: How did they come here? Did they come by wagon or the train?

Bill: By wagon, and I still have a table that came on the wagon.

Diana: Did they use horses or mules or oxen?

Bill: Horses, I believe.

Diana: How did they acquire land? Did they homestead all of it?

Bill: No, I think that's all they homesteaded, what David did and then what I.J. did. Then I think from that point on, they purchased more land as times got better. I know they eventually built the house that was on the home place, which is where my mother would have been born.

Diana: That's all southwest of Ashland.

Bill: Seven miles, it's just right south of the feedyard.

Diana: So what type of typography, what type of land is there? Is it rolling hills? Is it flat? Is it good pasture?

Bill: It's sandy loam, mostly. Of course, back then all dry land, obviously. The farm ground was good wheat ground, the grassland was good grass; Little Sand Creek runs through it and it has springs there, which I'm sure in that time were even better than they are today. I think a pretty desirable area, really.

Diana: Did he go back to growing crops at some point?

Bill: Yes.

Diana: Did he go to wheat then or something?

Bill: Yes, wheat. And I don't know that much back that far, not until my parents' generation. And then I can kind of tell you what transpired.

Diana: Was there a school on the property?

Bill: Yes.

Diana: Do you remember what it was called? It became the Klinger School, right?

Bill: It was the Junction Valley school originally and then became known as the Klinger School. That's where my mother and Dwight Klinger both were schooled.

Diana: So how far was it from where they lived?

Bill: A couple hundred feet.

Diana: Really! Is there a foundation still there?

Bill: There's a couple of big elm trees there, that are left from when it was there. But yeah, it was right on the corner and their house was just down the lane, just a little way.

Diana: On the part that I.J. got, did he build a house?

Bill: No, no. He developed it, since they were required to do it. He built a well. I think that was one of the requirements. But no, there was no house there. I'm not sure where he lived, other than the homeplace. I know when David retired, he moved to Ashland, and I know then I.J. I lived on the home place.

Diana: When David retired, do you know where he lived here in Ashland?

Bill: I do not. I know where my grandfather moved to, but not David.

Diana: OK, where did he retire to?

Bill: It's Gary Fischer's right north of the old hospital

Diana: Where Gary Fischer lives. OK. Do you know anything about their cattle operation, what they charged people to watch their cattle or anything and how much it grew?

Bill: Watching the cattle, I think they did that for a while until financially they could swing using their own livestock. Then from there, it just grew. Then I think they got back into the farming, obviously, and tied that in with the cattle operation.

Diana: Were they active in the community?

Bill: David was on the school board of the local Klinger School and was active in local politics for many years.

Diana: What would have been the closest community? Would it have been Ashland or Acres?

Bill: It would have been Acres.

Diana: Oh, yeah, cool.

Bill: As I recall, it was in Edwards Township or something, which no longer exists.

Diana: There's a whole bunch of things out there that no longer exist. So, do you know what type of ways that they fed their cattle? They've done it all with horses?

Bill: Horses and by hand, I'm sure.

Diana: Right. And they raised all their own feed.

Bill: I think so.

Diana: Talk a little bit about your grandfather, I.J., do you know more about his operation?

Bill: Yes. Oh, I can remember shocking feed and which fields he planted to feed and which he planted to wheat. He had a horse pasture that he kept the horses in. It was similar to what we're farming today.

Diana: Didn't he have a lot of acres by the time you were small and remember?

Bill: I think, for the time, yes, a fair amount of acres. I know my mother and her brother Dwight Klinger pretty much split that land when I.J. passed away. They made sure that each one got the same amount of grassland and the same amount of farmground. And then, of course, Dwight really was focused on the cattle and then he got into the irrigation stuff later. But he was mainly a stocker. He was very adverse to a feedyard. When my father started the feedyard, Dwight thought he'd lost his mind because of the risk involved in that. And that was in 1963. I.J., moved to Ashland in the 1926.

Diana: Talk about your family, the Shaw family, because they weren't from here, right?

Bill: Well, my mother, obviously was.

Diana: Yes, but your dad.

Bill: My mother was born on the homeplace, educated out there and I think finished school in Ashland. And then my dad actually was from Topeka. He was a city boy. His father was a grocer and had no farming or cattle experience whatsoever. They were married during the war, World War II, and then returned back here after the war. My mother went to K-State and graduated. My dad had no college education.

Diana: But your mother did some different occupations while she was in the Manhattan/ Topeka area.

Bill: She worked... well after she graduated in 1938. She got a degree in commerce, as they called it back then. She taught commerce in Matfield Green out of school then worked in the Legislature in Topeka where she met my dad and they were married in 1942.

Diana: Yeah.

Bill: My dad enlisted in the Navy, and was stationed in Pensacola, Florida, I believe. My mom worked in Parsons Kansas at an ordinance plant and then in Kansas City for TWA working with primitive computers of the day.

Diana: When did they decide to move back to move to Ashland or Clark County?

Bill: I think after the war.

Diana: Did they live in town?

Bill: No, they lived in the country on a place called the Lostutter Place, which were neighbors

of the Klingers out there. They had quite a bit of ground. There was a house on that ground and they rented it from the Lostutters. My grandfather actually rented their land, but when my dad and mom came back here, they lived there and my grandfather cosigned the lease with the Lostutters for that land. It was 1946 when the initial one-year lease was signed with my dad and 50 years later to the year, I bought it from the Lostutters.

Diana: Was your dad more involved in the ranching part or the farming? Did he work for your grandfather? Did he work for himself?

Bill: I think he worked for my grandfather, but then he also got out on his own. And I think my grandfather kind of helped him with that since he had no experience. But he took to it, obviously, because then in '62 he started the feedyard, which was quite a venture at that point.

Diana: When he had his own, before he started the feedyard, did he have a certain breed of cattle that he liked to purchase?

Bill: Black baldies.

Diana: Did he do cow/calf or did he do stockers?

Bill: Stockers.

Diana: Did he have a broker or did he go to the local sale barn?

Bill: Sale barn. Sometimes he would go to another area. I know he bought cattle in west Texas some, on his own, directly from a producer. Multiple different areas, but a lot of salebarn cattle at the time.

Diana: Then bought them in the fall or in the spring and sell them in the fall?

Bill: Both, for grazing wheat in the fall and grass in the summer.

Diana: Did he lease any land to have extra for his cattle?

Bill: The Lostutter land, he leased.

Diana: Did he lease some other?

Bill: You know, and I don't know specifically if he leased ground from my grandpa or not. I know he and my mother bought the Mull Place, which would have been Orella Mull, who would have been one of I.J.'s sisters. And that's where the feedyard got started.

Diana: So what type of things did they feed their cattle? Was it all just grass and wheat or did they supplement with feed?

Bill: Oh, I'm sure they fed baled feed, shocks, back in the day.

Diana: That was more common than baled hay, wasn't it? Mostly sumac?

Bill: I think they would probably market those cattle, you know, in the fall off of grass and

then market them in the spring off the wheat. And I think that's the reason my dad started the feedyard. It was, why can't we? You know, he'd seen Earl Brookover do it in Garden City. That was the coming thing and a way of adding value to your stock and retaining them longer and trying to make a better profit instead of selling it to someone else.

Diana: Do you remember how you got started or how old would you have been?

Bill: I would have been in High School and would have owned some cattle and in 1971 as a senior I bought a half section of farmland.

Diana: How many pens did the Feedyard start with, do you remember?

Bill: Four.

Diana: About how many cattle could they hold?

Diana: Oh, probably 120 head per pen.

Diana: Was it all your own cattle or did they...

Bill: Oh yes, it was all their own cattle.

Diana: How has it grown through the years?

Bill: Well, it grew to six pens and then it grew to seven. And then that's about when I came on board after college and then added more as the years went on.

Diana: What type of pens were they?

Bill: Initially, they were wood posts with five wires and electric wire and then now they're all steel and pipe.

Diana: What about bunks?

Bill: They've always been concrete bunks. Obviously new ones, now, but back then, I'm pretty sure they were all concrete.

Diana: Were they built on-site or brought in?

Bill: Brought in, I think.

Diana: Did you build your own corrals or pens or did you have somebody come in and do that?

Bill: When they bought the place, there were some there, of course, that were just added on to and changed and reconfigured over the years. Some outbuildings were there that eventually were torn down. There was dirt work that was done to make it drain. Over the years, then it's the KDHE and the environmental protection, those things, you know, required more. Initially, with four pens, there was no control mechanism in 1963. It ran out into the ditch and then under the culvert and into the next field. Which back then, with four

pens of cattle, that was not a big deal. But today, obviously, that's a big deal and we don't allow that to happen.

Diana: So how many pens do you have now?

Bill: Oh, probably 75.

Diana: And how many cattle... what's your total amount that you can have?

Bill: Seven thousand five hundred.

Diana: And what do you usually have on average?

Bill: Probably six to seven thousand.

Diana: And when did you start having other people bring their cattle to your feedyard?

Bill: Oh, probably in the 1990's, it was a percentage of the total. Initially a small percentage, and then it's grown to where now it's pretty much all commercial.

Diana: OK, so tell me how that works when somebody wants to put their cattle in your feedyard. Do you have a contract that stipulates what...

Bill: We don't have a contract. If someone wants to feed their cattle, we just basically are agreeing to provide that service. We're going to feed them and we'll charge them a monthly feed bill and care for those cattle. And then when those cattle are ready to go to market, we also provide a marketing service and those cattle are sold to a packer. And then that money comes back to the producer, less whatever feed bill they owe us for taking care them.

Diana: So how long do they usually keep their cattle in the feedyard?

Bill: It depends on the weight of the cattle going in. Usually, I would say, on average, it would be 120 to 150 days.

Diana: And usually how much do they weigh when they come in.

Bill: There again, that can vary, but from 700 to 1,000 pounds.

Diana: And then what's common for them to leave?

Bill: Well, now it's bigger than ever, probably, 1,350 to 1,550 pounds. It is considerably different than it was when my dad started the feedyard. Those cattle, blacks or black baldies or Herefords, were normally what we fed. Maybe a few Charolais. They were very short and very wide and they were fed quite a long time. A lot of those cattle would become prime carcasses, but they had tremendous amounts of external fat. And now today it's just the opposite, the cattle are very large framed. They still grade prime and choice, but they don't have all the extra fat. That's been bred out. We produce a much better, much healthier product than it was in 1963. When I graduated college in '71, it was totally different than it is today, because a fat heifer in 1970 would have weighed 1,000 pounds. Today that heifer weighs 1,350 or even 1,400 pounds.

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Diana: When they bring their cattle in, is there some processing system that you use?

Bill: Yes. The animals go through a process of vaccination, perhaps a growth implant. They are also treated for various worms and flies in the summer and just tagged, identified and tracked.

Diana: Do most of them come from the customer's own pastures, that they've had them there or are they buying them somewhere else?

Bill: Most of our customers now are repeat customers or people that retain ownership of their own raised livestock. We basically sell most of them on what we call grids, U.S. Premium Beef, National Beef. The grids now that the packers offer take advantage of the quality of that carcass, so if the producer has produced this animal and they think it's a high-quality animal, they're going to get paid for that quality.

Diana: When the feedyard first started, what would be the average number of cattle that somebody would put in, would they put a whole pen of 120?

Bill: It's possible. That really hasn't changed a lot. If anything, they may be smaller groups today because we're more specialized in what we're doing. The differences really have to do with the size of the animal, how efficient that animal is, how quickly it can get ready to go to market. I mean, we're now feeding animals that are gaining 4.5 pounds a day and converting 5.8 to six pounds of feed to one pound of gain.
That's a far cry from what it was in 1963, when it was probably more like eight pounds of feed to one pound of gain. So those efficiencies have been gained through genetics, quality of feed, management, a lot of things. But that's probably the biggest thing that's changed.

Diana: Has the way they're fed, like what type of feed? When you first started, was it mostly like cake or something?

Bill: Well, it was probably... I know initially, my dad would take a dump truck and put silage in it. Then he would go to the co-op and buy bags of rolled milo and he would layer the milo and silage and then he and the hired man would take pitchforks and toss it into the bunks. Now that was probably in the late 1940s and early 50s. Later, mechanization came about in the feedyard, along with mixer trucks.

Diana: Did they make their own silage?

Bill: Yes, with a one-row silage cutter pulled behind a tractor.

Diana: And what would they make it mostly out of?

Bill: Forage sorghum of some sort, sedan grass or something like that.

Diana: How has that changed now? Do you still use silage?

Bill: Yes, it's all corn silage, irrigated corn silage.

Diana: Right. How have the nutrients and protein of the feed changed through the years? Is there a difference?

Bill: Obviously, it's better now because we have a nutritionist and those rations are all formulated to maximize the performance of those cattle. You know, that wasn't the case then.

Diana: They were just feeding them?

Bill: Well, they were formulated in a much more primitive way, and we didn't have the quality of feed that we do today.

Diana: Back then, when cattle first came in, was the extent of the vaccination the same or have drugs changed since they first started?

Bill: It's similar on the vaccination side, on the medical side with doctoring sick animals, I think that's improved greatly and it's far safer. There's all kinds of withdrawals and that part has changed dramatically. Records are kept on every animal, and so that animal cannot-- if it's doctored for being sick or running a fever or whatever, if it's doctored, there's a withdrawal for that specific drug. And you cannot ship that animal until it's met its clearance. So that makes a big difference from what it was 40, 50 years ago.

Diana: Yes, that's true. When the feedyard started, how many employees did it have?

Bill: My dad and one other person.

Diana: So they did all the feeding and all the cleaning. Was there much taking manure out of the pens, and that back then?

Bill: They had a little manure spreader that they pulled behind a tractor and they'd load and take it out and spread it, just a little pull-behind spreader. That was it.

Diana: That was the way you fertilized the grain fields then, to some degree?

Bill: We still do. Right.

Diana: How many buildings are on the feedyard and what's your uses like? Do you have a mill or a place where you bag your own grain or something?

Bill: Well, we have a flaker, a steam flaker now, which we flake our corn into corn flakes and that's how we feed our corn. About 70 percent of the ration is corn, flaked corn. And then there's a percentage that's corn silage. And then there's a percentage that's chopped alfalfa hay. There's a percentage that's liquid protein. And then there's a percent of what we call micro-nutrients that go into the ration. And that is all then mixed and fed to various pens. There may be 10 pens that are on a certain ration, so that truck is loaded for those 10 pens and it's mixed and then it's fed out. They all are tracked by GPS and we know exactly what cattle have been fed and when. With each truck being equipped with GPS, the driver can't accidentally feed the wrong ration to the wrong pen. It prevents them from doing that.
So as far as the buildings we have, there is the feed mill, as far as the flaking, and then we have grain storage bins for holding grain, corn and wheat, basically. We have overhead storage for dry materials, either dry rolled corn or perhaps protein supplement, or we can store grains in those overhead bins. We have a liquid storage tank for liquid protein. An

office, a shop, an indoor processing facility for handling, vaccinating, receiving and shipping fat cattle. There's a big equipment storage building and a house.

Diana: Someone lives on the property?

Bill: There's a cowboy and his family that lives on the property.

Diana: Do you have a nutritionist on site or...

Bill: We have a nutritionist that we contract with that's there once every six weeks and is available any time over the phone.

Diana: The person that owns the cattle, do they get to have a say in what their cattle are fed? Or is that figured out by the nutritionists?

Bill: The nutritionist will determine what's best for those animals and we basically have five rations that are used unless there's a special circumstance. Cattle are worked up on these rations to what we call the finish ration, which if they started out on a high silage or high roughage ration, then they would end up on a high grain ration for the bulk of the time that they're being fed.

Diana: How many employees do you have now?

Bill: Fifteen.

Diana: And how much equipment? Do you have more than one feed truck?

Bill: We have two feed trucks, fully equipped. I think we have three front-end loaders, dump truck, tractors, pickups, four wheelers, and horses.

Diana: Do you use horses?

Bill: We use horses.

Diana: Do you have pen riders?

Bill: We have pen riders.

Diana: Do you have a vet or someone?

Bill: We have a vet that's contracted, just like the nutritionist, that will come once every month and are available on call at any time.

Diana: Do you have a way that you pull sick cattle out of the pen and put them into a...

Bill: They'll pull them with horses and then doctor them and then you have sick pens that they stay in until they're ready to be re-doctored or returned to their home pen.

Diana: So most of the material that you feed, do you raise most of it yourself?

Bill: We raise all the silage, the rest of it we purchase. We do occasionally produce a little bit of corn for grain, but mainly just the silage, the rest of it's purchased.

Diana: So how has your equipment improved through the years?

Bill: Dramatically.

Diana: A tractor, does it now have a hood on it?

Bill: Well, like for the feed trucks, for instance, they have automatic transmissions, air conditioning, push-button controls and GPS. You never have to leave the cab. They mix the feed better, and produce a better product in the bunk and there is less wear and tear and they last longer.

Diana: So you don't have very many breakdowns.

Bill: You have breakdowns, it's a high-use item. But compared to what we had in 1963, a B.J.M. mixer that had a standard transmission with a manual PTO. You had to get out to open your gate and manually do everything, put it in compound and go slow, release your clutch, put it in gear and go. The other big thing is you could feed one pen and then you had to go back and get another load. Of course, the only thing was there were only four pens to start with. And then it was six and seven and 10, 15. But eventually, they put scales on the trucks that allow us now to feed multiple pens at a time. The computer that we use will actually maximize the route of the truck. So, it does it the most efficient way possible.

Diana: How long does it take to feed in a day?

Bill: Cattle are fed three times a day, morning, noon, and then afternoon. That third feeding, it's really just to kind of make-up for anything that would not have been fed or might be cleaned up early or be needing more feed. But everybody comes in and starts at 7:00 am. They're usually done by three or four o'clock in the afternoon.

Diana: So how does inclement weather affect the process, like rain or snow or ice.

Bill: Not a lot. Snow, you know, can become a problem. We do have a bunk sweeper, so if it rains and the feed gets wet, the first thing we do is clean that up and then you put fresh food out. Same way with snow or ice. We may have to doze the snow if it's a problem getting around. It really doesn't affect the process of putting the feed together so much. We just had the power outages and rotating blackouts, which that causes more problems because we're so dependent on electricity now.

Diana: Do you have a backup?

Bill: We do have a backup. It's not really enough and we're probably going to address that after this last period of extreme cold.

Diana: How does that extreme cold, like the temperatures that we've had the last week, below zero for so many days in a row? You have to feed more to keep them...

Bill: Yes. Basically, you're feeding a little bit more and you're probably gaining less because

the animals are using that energy to stay warm rather than produce beef. So, yeah, it's more costly. The cattle have fared pretty well through it, as long as those cattle stay dry, they're fine, they're very tolerant of the cold.

Diana: How do you keep them dry? Do you have sheds?

Bill: I mean, we're just lucky that it didn't rain. If they get wet, they lose their insulation and then they get really get cold and then you have lots of problems.

Diana: What about water sources?

Bill: We have wells throughout the feedyard and we have continuous-flow waterers in each pen, and those cattle are fed or watered through that process. And those continuous-flow waterers have sensors in them that as it gets colder, they run more water and that keeps the water open and keeps it from freezing. Which works really, really well.

Diana: Is that on the electrical system, the sensor?

Bill: The pumps are. The sensor is actually an ingenious drain plug that expands and contracts with the temperature to open or close the drain. If it gets colder, the drain opens and then more water flows into the tanks, so you're circulating that water. You do waste some water, but it's cheaper to do that than it is to try to heat the tanks in some way.

Diana: So how do you get rid of the waste in the pens? Do you do that after that pen has sold or do you...

Bill: As far as the manure? Yeah, those pens are cleaned periodically. After every pen leaves, the pens are scraped. The bunk pads are scraped and cleaned, and in some cases, we'll make a mound right in the pens and that actually helps them when it gets wet to stay dry. Then in time that pen will be completely clean out.

Diana: Tell me the size of a pen, the dimensions.

Bill: The size of a pen varies depending on the capacity. We usually generally figure about 250 square feet per animal. So, if you have 140 head in a pen, you probably need 100 by 350 feet, or something like that.

Diana: Then when they are ready for market, do you make the contract for the producer or does he?

Bill: It varies. In some cases, the producer wants a little more hands-on and others let us do it all. It does vary. Typically, we handle it with consultation with that producer. If they want a certain price, then we will try to get that price and if we don't, we don't sell them.

Diana: What's the going price right now for cattle going to slaughter.

Bill: $1.14 a pound.

Diana: Is that good?

Bill: It's all relative. Depends on the overhead and the cost of the cattle going in and the cost of the feed. But right now, that would probably be about a break-even, more or less.

Diana: So where are the packing plants that you sell to most?

Bill: Mostly Dodge City with National and Excel. National has a plant in Liberal, we also occasionally sell to Tyson in Garden City, and J.B.S. in Greeley, Colorado and Lexington, Nebraska. Excel has a plant in the Texas Panhandle.

Diana: Is there a transportation fee?

Bill: Not if the packer buys the cattle on a cash basis. National and USPB pay the freight on grid cattle also.

Diana: From here to there.

Bill: Yeah.

Diana: If it's not cash?

Bill: If it's not cash, you can be responsible for the freight. If they're contracted, you would pay for the freight.

Diana: So how much has the pandemic affected the cattle market?

Bill: Initially, cattle prices were somewhat depressed and they have been somewhat depressed through this whole thing. They're better now than they have been. The beef price, though, overall has held up pretty well because basically, I think it was just a shift from people eating out to people eating at home. They still needed the product; it was just how it was presented.

Diana: Have there been periods through the time that you've had the feedyard that the prices just spun off the wall, either really high or really low? Can you give me an example?

Bill: Well, I remember graduating from college and coming back and we had the oil embargoes in the early 70s. Of course, the cattle market kind of was reflective of the oil market. It was terrible, and the cost of fuel went out of sight. And of course, then people didn't have money to buy beef, so that was a wreck. And of course, I was involved in several pens of cattle and I lost my tail on the first few rounds of cattle. And I thought, "This is ridiculous. I don't want to be in the cattle business, I would rather farm." And my dad said, "You've got to stick with it." So by 1976, I think we saw record profits on a pen of cattle, which is kind of typical for the business.

Diana: How does the cattle market and the grain market kind of work together?

Bill: That's a tough one. They don't necessarily work together. My folks always used to say that between the wheat and the cattle, one would get you through. Then sometimes, they were neither one worth a darn, and sometimes both were good. So, it's kind of all over the place and it just depends on the year. Right now, we have high grain prices, which typically

lead to higher beef prices, but we haven't seen that yet. So, we don't know if that will happen or not.

Diana: Do foreign grain markets have a big effect on grain prices here. Has it changed in the last couple of years?

Bill: Well, it's really been a progression over the last 50 years. When I was a kid, it was about Kansas producing wheat and Kansas produced more wheat than anybody. And if we had a bad crop, the price went up. If we had a good crop, the price went down.
Today, it's a world market. It's one world and one market and Kansas can have a failure, and that may not necessarily affect the market. It might have some effect, but not near the effect that it used to. Foreign markets right now are very nervous because the Chinese have been in the market buying all the corn. And you know, Argentina and the southern hemisphere right now, some of their crops were not the greatest. And so now it's dependent on the United States to step up this spring and raise a big crop to bring the price back down and to satisfy the needs of the Chinese.

Diana: Right, and last year's wind in Iowa really decimated some of the corn crop. So that affected prices there, too, right?

Bill: Yeah. Well, they call it a derecho. And yeah, it flattened over a million acres of corn and that ground produces like 220 bushels to the acre, so that's 220 million bushels of corn. Iowa typically produces a couple billion bushels of corn, and so, yeah, it had a significant impact.

Diana: Are soybeans and cotton becoming bigger crops in Kansas than they were in the past?

Bill: Definitely, cotton has come to the forefront in the last few years as an alternative to corn and soybeans and milo, because they were unprofitable. Grain prices were so low and cotton offered an alternative to that. Now, this year, with corn prices high, and wheat prices high, you'll see less acres of cotton and more of those acres going to milo and corn.

Diana: What about canola?

Bill: It's not a big thing. I don't know much about canola, but I don't see much of it in this part of the world.

Diana: Do you think hemp is going to become big in this part?

Bill: There again, I don't know enough about it to really say. I think it might have some potential. There might be multiple uses for it. I don't know.

Diana: It's hard to say, right? So, you have several employees. How do you pay them? Do you pay them just with wages or do you provide houses or horses or what's your usual way to attract them?

Bill: They're all given wages either by the hour or salary by the month. Some are provided homes with utilities paid. We provide health insurance, dental insurance, and a retirement plan for full-time help, which is pretty attractive these days. And I think we're competitive wage-wise.

Diana: Do you provide the horses for the pen riders or can they bring their own?

Bill: They provide their own horses. We don't do that, but we do provide the feed, shelter and the care for the horses.

Diana: Right. Have you had long-term employees through the years?

Bill: Yes, my dad hired Richard Theander about four days after he graduated from college in the 50s. Richard worked 47 years for my dad and myself and then retired. Carl McGonigle worked for about 18 years. Gary Fudge worked for about 18 years. It was a system where we were more closely knit and a smaller group. Now, we're more of a commercial setting and have more employees, so there's more turnover, but we really have fairly steady help.

Diana: So back then, the employees did a little bit of everything. Now are your employees more specialized?

Bill: Specialized? Yeah, we do still have to move around with different jobs in the feedyards if somebody's gone or sick. But yeah, it's more specific. If we have a guy running our flaker, that's what he does every day. He doesn't go out and run a tractor and then come back to it. We have people that drive the tractors.

Diana: Do you have people that are more on the farm side than on the feedyard side?

Bill: Most of them are feedyard.

Diana: Just a few on the farm side because the farm's...

Bill: The farm's more seasonal and with the equipment we have today, we can do it pretty quickly. So it's not as labor intensive.

Diana: Did you farm when you first came back, or did you work out at the feedyard when you were in high school?

Bill: Yes, I worked in high school and when I came back.

Diana: And did you do the farming then?

Bill: Oh yeah.

Diana: And what type of tractor did you have?

Bill: Well, my little row crop tractor was a 4030 and it didn’t have a cab. We started irrigating in the 1970’s and so we were experimenting with Roundup when it was brand new. I don't know if you remember the wicks that we would use to wipe the crops with Roundup. You'd get a tube and fill it full of Roundup and then we'd have little ropes that would wick the roundup and just wipe the weeds with it and try to kill the weeds that way, which I look at that now and kind of laugh. But that's what we did and I used the 4030 to apply it. We used the 4030 to plant our row crops with a 6 row planter. Pretty basic.

Diana: So how long did it take to plant a field then?

Bill: Well, to plant a quarter, it took a long time,

Diana: A couple of days?

Bill: Oh, easily. Now we can do it in a few hours.

Diana: Back then, did you have more than one tractor?

Bill: Yeah, I think we had that little 4030, and then we had... I don't remember exactly when we got it, I think it was 6030 or something like that. I remember, and it was a big tractor, and it had a cab with a heater but no air conditioning.

Diana: Did you have to break the windows out?

Bill: Or open them. Yeah, but that's what we farmed with. We had another tractor, a 4630 that we pulled the sweep plow behind.

Diana: Did you have your own combine.

Bill: No, never had.

Diana: You always had somebody come in and harvest?

Bill: We had our custom harvesters. When I was a kid, it was Neshem Harvesting from Berthold, North Dakota. They cut our wheat, and I think they cut it for like 35 years. They would go all the way to Texas, all the way back to North Dakota. They did it forever and then he retired. His son did it for a while and then he quit and we've had Mike Parker from Waterville, Kansas do it now for probably 15 years.

Diana: So back then, did they cut it and haul it to the elevator? Do you remember what the different prices were for that?

Bill: Well, one of the reasons that we have the bins at the feedyard is to store wheat. Initially, it was more about wheat than it was corn. What we use as our shop right now was actually built on a loan from C.C.C., to store wheat, flat storage.

Diana: What did the harvester charge to cut? Because now they charge so much to haul it and so much to cut...

Bill: It's still the same, like now it's 24, 24, and 24. Back then it was probably six, six and six. Or four, four and four.

Diana: Did it change if you had a bumper crop?

Bill: Well typically, yeah. And that's still the case. I mean the better the farm does, usually those prices go up.

Diana: How long did it take him to cut your crop? Was the harvester in town for a long time?

Bill: Yes, they would set up shop and they'd be here a couple of weeks.

Diana: Because there were lots of people to cut back then, right?

Bill: Yeah, well, the combines weren't nearly as big. It would take longer. They had bobtail trucks, they didn't have big semis. It was a slower process if you brought it to town, and stood in line to dump it. If we were unloading it at the feedyard, you'd have to wait because we'd have to run it through the auger. It just took longer.

Diana: When you took it to an elevator, did you take it to Acres or did you take it to Ashland?

Bill: It depends. We could haul to Ashland Co-op, Acres, Ashland, Sitka, Englewood... So, we could take it to Ashland or Acres. As I recall, they all paid about the same.

Diana: There was usually a penny difference, depending on how far the train had to bring it back.

Bill: We started storing it at the feedyard and then we would contract it and have it hauled out, and of course, get a little more for it. We also saved any storage costs and we still do that.

Diana: Who did you contract with? Was it a local hauler?

Bill: No, basically you would sell it to a brokerage or someone that would provide the transportation and include that in the cost. So, if it was going to a mill in Wichita, in some cases you might get 25 cents a bushel more for it, picked up on the farm, versus you trying to haul it somewhere.

Diana: So, you usually shipped it by truck, mostly, not by train. That was just for the elevators to do.

Bill: Yes. We didn't have any way of loading it on a train.

Diana: When did you get big tractors and drills? Have you had a lot of different tractors?

Bill: Yeah, I would say, the bigger, really bigger tractors really didn't come until probably the 90s. And now they've evolved dramatically in the last 20 years with technology.

Diana: Do you use the GPS where it can track how many acres you're planting?

Bill: Yes. We're not row-cropping a lot. So we don't go to a grid system or anything like that, but yes, we are using a GPS.

Diana: And you have the kind of tractors that you can calibrate, or the drill, too, can be calibrated.

Bill: And the planter.

Diana: Do you have good Internet services out there, broadband, that you can talk on when you're in the tractor?

Bill: Sure.

Diana: In the last couple of years, it's improved?

Bill: It's been pretty good for quite a while. We're with United, good service.

Diana: Tell me some stories about times when we have had disasters like snowstorms. Do you remember any that we've had?

Bill: I can remember a couple, the biggest one in my memory was in 1971, the Blizzard of '71, which occurred at the tail end of February. We had seven pens of cattle at that time with electric fences. And Richard Theander lived in the house at the Feedyard. He was the only employee there.
It snowed... I don't remember what the official amount was, but we had drifts that were eight or 10, or 12 feet tall. I think it finished snowing on Sunday morning or something like that. Dad was fit to be tied because he couldn't get to the feedyard. We went out in the garage and opened the garage door and it was a wall of snow. We shoveled all day to get to where we could see concrete out on the driveway and got that far. Then there was trees on each side and it was drifting across the road. There was no way to go anywhere.

Diana: Did you live in the country?

Bill: We lived in Ashland and he was trying to get to the feedyard, and he could communicate over the phone, the landline, with Richard, but he couldn't get there. I believe it was Wednesday night when we finally made it to Sand Creek. Then we couldn't get past the hill where it was drifted through and the county wasn't able to buck it with their equipment. That was as far as we could go. So, we stopped and we thought, "OK, there was a tractor along the creek." We have a bunker silo there and there was a tractor. And we thought, "OK, we'll walk over the railroad track and we'll go down there, get the tractor and take it over the hill, over to the feedyard."
Well, the little flapper around the top of the exhaust is the only thing you could see of the tractor. It was completely covered. So that wasn't going to work. But while we were over there, Richard came over the hill with a tractor and a trailer with hay on it to try to feed the cattle that were in that pasture. So we were able to communicate with him. The next day, the county was able to come around the north way to get into their house and we were able to get out there Thursday. The storm started on Friday and it was the following Thursday before we got in there. Well, the cattle stayed in the Feedyard pens because of the electric fences. Otherwise they would have walked over them and wondered off in the storm. That was a good thing.

Diana: Kind of like memory?

Bill: Yeah. So that was good because the cattle weren't wandering all over the countryside. The worst part about it was, we lost cattle in the creeks because they went down in the creek bottom for protection and then they were covered up and smothered. It was early summer before we knew exactly how many cattle we'd lost.

Diana: Was it a large amount?

Bill: I don't think terribly bad. Probably 20 head or so in one creek in one bunch.

Diana: I've heard people talk that feeding them wasn't really so bad, it was getting water **to** them. Did you have trouble with watering the cattle?

Bill: We had trouble with everything. Yeah. Getting feed to them. I know my dad went up in one of their helicopters to drop feed. I didn't ever do that, but he went up to identify where to go and where the feed was and where to pick it up.

Diana: Were they able to set the helicopter down near a feed stack and pick up feed pretty easily?

Bill: You know, they did it.

Diana: And these would have been small bales, right?

Bill: Yeah, and then they had the big C-130 planes just dropping feed to wherever they saw cattle. You know, in the snow. The biggest challenge was just getting to the cattle. Some cattle wandered for miles and were never found.

Diana: But all cattle were branded back then, and it was February. Would they have been having calves about that time too? So probably people lost a lot of calves then.

Bill: Yeah, we weren't in that business, but I'm sure that would be the case for sure. The cattle would probably have been on wheat pasture and had access to the creek and got in the creek for shelter.

Diana: Because there was a lot of snow.

Bill: Yeah, a tremendous amount of snow, the most I've ever seen.

Diana: Yeah, we've had a couple of other snowstorms since then, there was one at Halloween.

Bill: Well, the biggest amount of snow that I remember for a whole season was in 1992. It started on Halloween, I happened to be mayor of Ashland at the time, and I canceled trick or treat on Halloween and moved it to a different date because of the snowstorm. That was the beginning. It snowed all winter through March. I think, as I recall, we had nearly five feet of snow total that winter, which was horrible, dealing with the cattle in the Feedyard.

Diana: Which is pretty abnormal around here, to have that much snow.

Bill: I don't know, we probably get 10 percent of that, normally.

Diana: So, at the feedyard then, you have to do a lot of shoveling in the bunks or...

Bill: Oh yeah. Dozing the pens and keeping them clean. And yeah, it was...

Diana: Kind of like a 24 hour...

Bill: It was awful. I don't know how to describe it. It was just about as bad as it could get.

Ranching Bill Shaw

Diana: So how about floods? Have you seen many floods around here?

Bill: Oh, we've never really been terribly affected by flooding. Obviously, the creeks flood periodically and we have to replace water gaps. But that goes with the territory. As far as affecting our business, no, not really.

Diana: And what about tornadoes? Have you had tornadoes come through

Bill: We had one tornado at the feedyard once upon a time. I can't even tell you what year it was, probably in the 1980's. It came through and took one of our grain bins and twisted it like a can, didn't blow it over, but just twisted it.

Diana: Was it full?

Bill: No, it was empty. I think if it had been full, it probably would have been fine. It just twisted it, and then we had several outbuildings that it blew away and blew all the debris into the feedyard. It didn't kill any cattle amazingly, and then took the rest of the debris across the road and into another pasture. There was relatively minimal damage.

Diana: It came down quick and went back up, probably.

Bill: Evidently. That's really the only major...

Diana: What about fires besides the one in 2017? I'm sure, it did some damage.

Bill: We were very fortunate. We did not have a lot of damage in the feedyard. None of our land burned. I know the land that burned was out at Sitka and north of Sitka, and all of that did, but we were very fortunate because Gardiners to the west and people to the south and to the north, fought the fire.

Diana: Was it a wind change?

Bill: I think part of it was the fact that there were a lot of wheat fields that protected us and the fact of the wind and how it burned. It burned one way and then came back another way and it ran into land that had already burned. Because it got close, very close.

Diana: Have you ever had any lightning strike fires that have caused problems or come close?

Bill: A few over the years, but I don't think anything major. One of the things that I would note is since we put in steel posts, we don't have cattle killed by lightning like we used to. When I was a kid, that was a fairly common thing.

Diana: In the feedyard itself?

Bill: In the pastures, you know, you'd have a thunderstorm come through and the cattle would all bunch up along the fence and lightning would strike and it would go down that fence. And it wasn't uncommon in the summer to lose a few cattle that way. And then once we started using steel posts when we were building fences and using steel posts to replace old wood posts we began to eliminate the problem. Now, that virtually never happens.

Ranching Bill Shaw

Diana: Do you have stampedes in a feedyard?

Bill: No, they're pretty quiet for the most part. Yeah, so that's not really an issue.

Diana: In your operation, is the feedyard the primary and the farming is kind of a secondary?

Bill: They work hand-in-hand, like I said, we raise our own silage, and my son's involved in that too.

Diana: Have you acquired more land since? OK, so you and your father were partners or your parents actually. And then when did you...

Bill: The first land I bought was in 1971 when I was a senior in high school. It was a half section north of the feedyard. At the time it was the highest priced land to ever sell in Clark County! Which was a $151.50 an acre, I'll never forget that.

Diana: Was it an auction?

Bill: It is an auction, and that is what we later developed our irrigation on. I kind of thought that's what we would do with it. And it's adjoining to the feedyard, too.

Diana: So why did you decide to do irrigation?

Bill: Because of the feedyard.

Diana: What do you irrigate, mostly wheat?

Bill: Wheat and corn

Diana: And how many acres you have under irrigation?

Bill: Well, with what Brett has and what we have, we have six circles right now. And that would be five or six hundred acres.

Diana: So, you and Brett are partners now?

Bill: Brett's independent of my operation. We basically have an operation where we have a partnership that owns the land and then we lease the land from the partnership individually.

Diana: Is it a partnership or a corporation?

Bill: The land is owned by a partnership.

Diana: Is a feedyard a corporation then?

Bill: The feedyard if a c-corp corporation.

Diana: Which means what?

Bill: It's really what you would consider a corporation. There's c-corps and s-corps. My ranch

operation is an s-corp, which is more like a proprietorship. And that's why Brett set up as a proprietorship, so he has his operation and I have my operation and we just share the land. We lease it separately. And he does his operation on his land and I do it on mine. Both of us can run cattle in in our own business.

Diana: Do you own cattle privately yourself?

Bill: Yes.

Diana: Have you acquired a lot of land in the last, say, 30, 40 years here?

Bill: Oh, yes. I'd say it's probably doubled in my time.

Diana: Do you lease a lot of land or do you mostly...

Bill: We lease some summer grass and we lease some farm ground, both. I don't really lease any farm ground other than from our own operation. Brett does lease other ground.

Diana: Yeah, so let's see. I.J. was your grandfather and then one of his children is Dwight, which he had four daughters that they all own land.

Bill: They operate the C.K. Ranch and Farms. Laurel Vartabedian and Jenison Klinger are involved in that. Diane Shupe has her own operation.

Diana: Yes.

Bill: And the kids and grandkids are involved now.

Diana: So, Diane's is called Bear Creek, is that something Dwight bought?

Bill: Yes.

Diana: And where's that from what you have? Is it south?

Bill: Bear Creek is on Bear Creek, south of Ashland.

Diana: On the actual river, or the creek. And the part that Jenison and Laurel have, what's it called? Was it called C.K.?

Bill: Yeah, it's kind of been combined, I mean, they have names for the different patches of ground, but yeah, it's all under C.K.

Diana: Is that name for Catherine or Dwight or something?

Bill: Catherine Klinger

Diana: Yes. Was it for Catherine Carruthers and Dwight Klinger? Do you know if that's where it came from?

Bill: Well, you know, I think it's Catherine Klinger. The land south of the feedyard, which had

been the homeplace, we call that Rafter K now but it used to be called Rafter J. My grandpa's brand was a Rafter J for Jenison. It's kind of confusing.

Diana: Do most of your fields have a specific name to identify them by who had them before or is it mainly a position?

Bill: Yes, a lot of them do. The Osborne quarter...

Diana: Were those mostly neighbors?

Bill: Yeah, now the Osborne name has been around as long as I can remember. Yeah, I'm sure that's who owned it originally. South of town, the Klinger girls have the Workman quarter. Workman was a common name in Ashland. A couple generations ago.

Diana: Was that one of the first pieces that Dwight bought there. Is that close to the airport?

Bill: It's south, on Bear Creek. He started farming with it.

Diana: This has been a family operation pretty much since it all started, the Klingers and the Shaws and stuff. Do you plan to continue this as a family operation?

Bill: Hopefully, that's the plan. Brett's really the only one of our kids that's here, but the girls are part owners and they have an interest in it and they wish that they could participate more, but their lives don't allow for them to be in Ashland.

Diana: Are any of your grandchildren interested in being involved in the ranching or farming part?

Bill: Probably a little too early to tell.

Diana: Yeah, they're kind of...

Bill: The oldest one is 14 and youngest one is three. Brett's kids are obviously very much into the Giles Ranch and are definitely country kids. So, I would say they have a good chance. They will just need to decide whether they want to be a rancher or a farmer!

Diana: Yeah, that's true.

Bill: I don't know about the rest of them.

Diana: On your property, on the grass, do you have a management plan on how you take care of your grass?

Bill: We do full-grazing for the most part, some of it we do for a 90 day period and others are full season. We manage that based on animal units and try not to overgraze it. Our grass out north of Sitka is only grazed in the summer. We do whatever the recommended animal units are per acre, and stock it accordingly.

Diana: Did it come back well after the fire?

Bill: Actually, yes. The grass may be better, but it's taken a while and of course we've had some good years since the fire, so that certainly helped.

Diana: Has the moisture been pretty good to help with your pasture land and your crops?

Bill: Yes. This spring will be one of the better springs we've seen in a long time, lots of moisture.

Diana: OK, so tell me how your family's been involved in the community. You said your grandfather was on the school board.

Bill: That would have been my great grandfather. I.J. was actually a state representative and was a Democrat. Mr. Cauthers, who was Catherine Klinger's father, was in the legislature at the same time I.J. was, and they served together and Mr. Cauthers was a Republican. My mother was a registered Democrat and my dad was a Republican. Somehow they got along!

Diana: Did they always remain that way. Where she was a Democrat and he was a Republican?

Bill: Yes they did.

Diana: Did your folks serve on any boards?

Bill: My dad was on the Ashland Oil Board and the co-op board. He was a Mason. I don't believe he ever served on city council or the school board or anything like that.

Diana: When did you start getting involved in community activities?

Bill: The day I came home from K-State.

Diana: Who hit you up?

Bill: Oh, gosh, I don't remember.

Diana: That was pretty early.

Bill: It was real early, and I couldn't learn to say no, but I'm not sorry I did it. It was a lot of work, especially when we had young kids and Jan would be home with them. Some nights, if I had meetings. I wouldn't get home till midnight.

Diana: So, you were on the co-op (board), before you became mayor, were you on the city council?

Bill: I was president of the council. I was on the council for about eight years prior to becoming mayor. And then I fulfilled an unexpired term of about three years and then I served a full term of four years in the 90s.

Diana: And how long were you on the co-op board?

Bill: Oh, goodness. Probably four years or so.

Diana: Were you on the library board?

Bill: I was on the library board. I was building chairman for the new library and it was built in 1984.

Diana: How many years do you serve on the library, eight?

Bill: I can't remember. I would guess about eight.

Diana: You didn't fill somebody's unexpired term or anything like that?

Bill: No, that was just on the city council.

Diana: So how did they decide to build the library?

Bill: The Berryman family and the Shrewder Family which was Eloise Berryman, Louise Berryman and Ted Shrewder donated the money for the construction. R.J. Seacat bought the land where the old Methodist Church stood and donated it to the library for the new building. Then the building was constructed. I oversaw the construction, along with an architect from Wichita.

Diana: Did he build something else here? The architect?

Bill: He designed the Stockgrowers Bank, which came after the library.

Diana: So how long did it take to build the library?

Bill: Oh, it probably took six or eight months. Then once the building was finished, the community was charged with raising the money to furnish it and to create an endowment. We went out and raised about $140,000, as I recall, and it took about $40,000 of that to furnish the building originally. And then the rest was put in an endowment and I believe Tex Shrewder donated another quarter of a million dollars and that all went into an endowment, which they still have, and that helps run the library, which is a fabulous addition to our community.

Diana: It is.

Bill: We're very fortunate to have it.

Diana: So what boards are you on now?

Bill: President of the Ashland Community Foundation, and that's all!

Diana: That's it?

Bill: Well, I'm on the Ashland 2020 as kind of an ex officio. I'm not really an active member, but I take an interest in that.

Diana: And what type of things has the Community Foundation done? And when was it established?

Ranching Bill Shaw

Bill: The Community Foundation was started in 1996. I'm not bragging, but I was the one that kind of brought that to fruition. It was designed to help the various nonprofits in the community. We had 10 board members and we tried to get representation from across the whole community and then apply for a 501 c 3 tax-exempt status. It has been modified a little since. We still have ten board members but we don't have to come from any specific area in the community, but just the community at large. We try to get a wide, broad range of people, but someone that is willing to serve. We've done a lot of great things with it and continue to do a lot of great things.

Diana: Do you have a lot of fundraisers for the foundation?

Bill: We don't really. We do two fundraisers on behalf of the foundation annually. One is the Lucky Ducky race, which is usually over the July 4th holiday. And then the other one is a mailer that goes out at the end of every year. And those are our two real main fundraisers. This past year we raised about $68,000 from our mailer that went out at the end of 2020. We still have money coming in 2021 from that. The duck race usually nets somewhere around $10,000, which all of that money goes into what we call our Grow Ashland Together Fund. That fund is what we use to make most all of our grants within the community to nonprofits.

Diana: Right.

Bill: I think since the Grow Ashland Together Fund was started in 2012, we've funded nearly $365,000 in grants from the Grow Ashland Together Fund.

Diana: What type of organizations usually receive those grants

Bill: It has to be a non-profit, a wide range-- school, city, library, 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts museum... Gosh, the list goes on. The Christian Camp. I'm not even beginning to think of all of them. We just approved a grant to help fund a community garden through the 4-H Extension, the Library for a landscape and irrigation project, and Ashland 2020 to help professionally update the Chamber of Commerce website. I mean, there's just a lot of things. The Ashland Community Foundation helped fund the AED's or Automated External Defibrillators that the EMTs are getting. The EMT's are getting five ADE's, one for each ambulance in the county. The Foundation was able to pull together five different entities to the $163,000 project completely! That is amazing!

Diana: Yes.

Bill: We also just funded the library. I think we're contributing half the cost of the landscaping and irrigation system that's going to go in at the library.

Diana: It's time to replace.

Bill: It's way past time, because I can remember personally helping with the original landscaping in 1984.

Diana: Did you help Leta?

Bill: I helped Leta. Leta Broadie told me what to do and I did what she told me. Betty Hardesty was also very involved.

Diana: How was it important to the community and Clark County to have the Community Foundation in place when we had the fire in 2017?

Bill: Big deal. Huge deal. We were very, very fortunate that it was in place because we had the mechanism to receive the donations from around the country to help the people locally in this county. Typically, our scope is just Ashland, but in that case, we wanted to include all of Clark County and we received $1,700,000 in gifts from people all over the United States. And that money was passed through, every dime, to the local cattle ranchers and farmers in this county that applied for that money.

Diana: You had a certain application?

Bill: We had an application that everyone filled out. They filled it out, and based on what information they gave us, we arrived at a formula that would pay them so much for hay, so much for cattle, so much for fencing, so much for each item. It was all based on the information that they gave the Foundation.

Diana: Did that include houses that were...

Bill: We made direct payments initially to anyone that lost a house and then also to people for the contents of their homes. I believe we gave out $10,000 if you lost your home and contents. We just wrote people checks immediately for $10,000. That allowed them to find a place to live or buy clothes or whatever.

Diana: Do you still receive donations from some of the people that donated to that fund?

Bill: Not a lot. There may be a few. We receive funds, interestingly enough, from people that received funds from the fire. They remember how much help they received and now they want to pay it forward. The Community Foundation helped the Stock Growers Association in Montana, when they had their big fires. We've helped with tornado relief in central Kansas, near Great Bend. We've helped with tornado relief by Emporia. We helped with the fires in central Oklahoma. We helped with the Beaver Fire in Beaver, Oklahoma. They had no mechanism in place to receive money. They're very interested in the Community Foundation and how it works and would like me to come to Laverne and to Beaver, Oklahoma, to explain we've done and how it's benefited the community. So that is in the works once the Covid is behind us and I can get down there.

Diana: Did the Community Foundation help with the hospital?

Bill: The Community Foundation has helped with the construction of the new hospital. We were challenged with a $250,000 grant, by an anonymous donor, to match that as a community, and we did. We actually raised more than that. That money then was applied to the bonds for the construction of the hospital to reduce that bond issue by about a half million dollars, which would save the community taxpayers literally hundreds of thousands of dollars over the life of those bonds. So those are 20-year bonds. And we now have a new fund set up which has, I believe, about $30,000 in it, that will be used prepay some of the bonds when they are called in 2024 and reduce the taxpayer burden even more. And so,

we're challenging the hospital and the community to raise money to pay off these bonds early.

Diana: Are there any other things that the Community Foundation is looking at doing?

Bill: Not specifically, we just try to be the vehicle to make things happen. The way I look at it, if someone comes to us and says, "We'd like to do this project and we just don't have enough money." We would say, "OK, we can provide half the money, if you can come up with half the money?" This way they have some skin in the game, but yet we can make it happen for them. I think we're the vehicle to get it going. You know, the Rec Commission. Take a look at what's happened at the ballparks. The Recreation Commission has been able to plant trees, build a batting cage and improve the baseball fields through grants from the Community Foundation. They have complete these projects but they are going to do more. They are getting ready to do work on the dugouts. If you can just kind of get the ball rolling, it keeps going.

But what we have at the library and the city. We've done a massive pass-through gift on the streetscape that's going to happen in Ashland. Three hundred thousand dollars, from an anonymous gift, which allowed the city to be able to afford to do this. Without that, they probably couldn't have done it.

There's a lot of things like that. The VFW has a beautiful, nice, newly-remodeled building as a result of pass-through gifts from the Community Foundation.

The school has new bleachers and new air conditioning systems that have all been helped out. New whiteboards in the grade school and high school, new tennis courts, as a result of the foundation. I think the list just goes on and on. There's a lot of things that have been done that wouldn't have happened without the Foundation's help.

Diana: And I think that list will probably continue through the next couple of years.

Bill: We hope so. In the next couple of years, we will continue to urge people to apply for grants. Our only stipulation is you have to be a non-profit.

Diana: Is there anything else we need to talk about?

Bill: I don't think so. I think we covered it all.

Diana: Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.