

### **Larry Konrade.mp3**

**Diana:** Today is February 6th, 2018. What is your name?

**Larry:** Larry Konrade.

**Diana:** Where do you live?

**Larry:** 529 West 6th, Ashland, Kansas.

**Diana:** What is your occupation?

**Larry:** I am a public accountant, and I also own a guide service, a hunting/outfitting service here in Ashland.

**Diana:** How old are you?

**Larry:** Fifty-one.

**Diana:** So when did you first become aware of the Starbuck Fire, hereafter referred to simply as "the fire"?

**Larry:** Well, of course everybody could see the smoke outside, so it didn't take long to hear on the street, on the telephone, and texts that there was a fire to the southwest Ashland, in Oklahoma, in Beaver County and it was moving away. But I guess the first I heard of it was basically through text messages.

**Diana:** In the afternoon?

**Larry:** Actually, it was in the morning.

**Diana:** So where were you?

**Larry:** I was in my office. It was in the heart of season, so yeah, I was in my office.

**Diana:** So what were some of your thoughts and actions when you first learned the fire was coming this way?

**Larry:** You know, we really didn't do anything to begin with in the morning, but you just continued to look outside and see the smoke. As the smoke got heavier, you know, you kept thinking, "Gosh, I hope they get this thing under control."

My initial thoughts were, "Yeah, it's just another fire and they'll get it put out." But then as the wind got stronger and stronger and it just kept burning longer and longer, you started to get more and more concerned.

**Diana:** So did you evacuate?

**Larry:** I did.

**Diana:** Where did you go?

**Larry:** We went east, when we got a... I guess it was a text from the sheriff's department.

**Diana:** Did you get the alert?

**Larry:** I got the IRIS alert. You know, then it really hit you. You were like, "Oh my God." And so I called

my wife, and she said, "I'm headed home." I said, "I'll meet you there in just a second."

So I basically gathered everything in my office. In our accounting office, we started gathering all of our records for clients' tax returns that we were working on and putting them in our vault and so on and so forth.

I guess in a period of maybe 15 minutes, we did that. Then everybody went on their ways. I went home and grabbed some cash out of my safe. Susie and I grabbed our pets, loaded up both vehicles, called our daughter and her husband. They were doing the same thing and then we left kind of in a four-vehicle caravan and headed east to Protection. On the way over there, we were talking to Carrie Kay and she told us to come over to Neal Kay's house. So that's where we initially went in Protection.

We wasn't in Protection at Neil's house 20 minutes and then the wind switched while we were there and started blowing out of the northwest. And it wasn't five minutes after the wind switched when we knew we needed to get out of Protection.

**Diana:** How did they alert you in Protection that you needed to move?

**Larry:** You didn't need to be alerted because it was so much worse there than it was at Ashland when the wind switched. When the wind switched in Ashland, it was still blowing out of the southwest and the smoke was kind of... It was basically, to me, it was still west of us, and south and west of us, but the smoke line was still to the west of town. When we left of course, and were in Protection, and when... It took a while to get from Ashland to Protection because there were so many people leaving.

**Diana:** Can you remember what time you left?

**Larry:** As I recall, Diana, I mean, I don't think it was until that 4:00 range before we actually left and went over there. But it took quite a long time to get over there, because there was so much traffic heading over there. I mean it was like, you looked up the road, as far as you could see, there's vehicles headed to the east, you know, evacuating.

When I left town, I didn't have a lot of gas. And so the first thing I did when I got to Protection is I went to the Cenex, or not the Cenex, I guess it's the Co-op has those pumps now, but I pulled in there to get gas then we went to Neil Kay's house. And again, we weren't there for 20 minutes and the wind switched.

We never got notice that we needed to leave Protection, but the smoke was so bad and so dark that the streetlights came on and the wind was blowing. Of course, it wasn't any lighter than it was all day.

**Diana:** Was there ash?

**Larry:** There was ash. It was like it was blizzarding ash. I mean it was blowing in the streets just like you would see snow blowing, in the gutters and things like that and across the street. All the street lights come on, and I mean it was...

At that point, I said, "Neil, we need to get out of here," and he agreed. Everybody loaded up, and at that point the smoke was so thick... Well, I shouldn't say, "At that point." It was so thick you had to have your lights on to drive. We got everybody caravan-ed up again, and when we got to the gas pumps on the highway south of town, I pulled into the gas pumps because I knew that Myron Edmonston's wheatfield was right there to the south.

Susie and Hayden and Kelsey all pulled in there, and I looked at Hayden and I said, "We might be too late." I said, "We need to just stay here and that way we can get on this wheatfield if we need to." There just people driving everywhere, in and out of there where the gas pumps were. Well, we ended up taking our pets, because the smoke was so thick, and putting them inside of the vehicles with us.

Then there was somebody that came, we were parked right there on the corner of the lot and the gas pumps.

I can't remember now who it was, but it was somebody that I knew, came from the east. And so I was able to communicate with them and ask them how bad it was, or whether there was fire at the highway, and whether a person could go east,

Whoever that was, said that the smoke was only about a mile and a half to the east, and that if we went down, we could get through. So we decided to go, and we did. Sure enough, I guess it's Cavalry Creek that runs through there. We wasn't too far, probably on that next mile where Less Harmon's things start, that's where the smoke started clearing. We were able to get on the east there. We ended up, at the same time, I got a call and they said Dave Bouziden's house was on fire.

So instead of staying in Coldwater, we went around and went up to Greensburg and back to the Minneola, hoping that we could get back. So we stayed there in Minneola. I finally got a hold of David and he said not to come, because there was nothing that we could do and that there was a bunch of power lines down. And of course, by that time, it had gotten dark.

So we sat in Minneola until 10:30 that night, thinking that the road back to Ashland, the highway. they would open it back up. They never did, and finally the police said, "It's not going to open up.

So we ended up going back to Dodge City and ended up spending the night with my cousin and his wife, Darren and Sherry Thomas. I got up early since we all had our vehicles. Hayden and I got up early the next morning early and made our way back through the country and got back down to David's house.

**Diana:** What was your first thought? Did you come through on the country road.

**Larry:** I came through Bloom, south of Dodge City through the Coronado Bridge and through Bloom and then down through where you go by **Garry and Lou Esklin's????** house.

**Diana:** So when did you first hit the fire damage?

**Larry:** The fire damage... You could start seeing the fire because I came back in the dark. In the morning, you could first start to see the fire just south of Bloom and across from Garry and Lou Esklin's??? to the east in Bluff Creek. Right there, you could see a lot of fire there and then kind of at a north east angle, if you looked back towards Bucklin, you could see different places where there were fires and fire trucks going around in canyons and pastures.

**Diana:** So were you seeing the flashing lights?

**Larry:** The flashing lights, but not a lot of fire trucks, just a few. That's real canyon country up there, so there's probably a lot of area that you really couldn't see.

**Diana:** So were there are a lot of flames still jumping really tall?

**Larry:** No, by that time the wind had kind of laid down a little bit. I mean it was just... There wasn't as many flames as I thought there would be, but it had basically to the south... The further south you got, the less flames there were. Now, once you got up, say like at the rock house and you could see a lot further south, then you could see a lot more flames, say like down on the Cimarron River area and stuff like that that was still burning. But like the immediate areas just above the rock house and looking down through Ashland and stuff like that, there wasn't a lot of big flames, because everything had already burned.

**Diana:** Was it getting daylight now so you could kind of see the devastation?

**Larry:** I reached... You know, kind of when it started giving light, I started getting into the rockhouse area, and I started... I just stopped right there and started to looking, yeah, it was surreal looking out across the landscape. You know the telephone poles and fenceposts, things like that were still burning. Trees and things like that were still burning. I really didn't start getting into any dead cattle until I was north of the

rockhouse about two miles. Then I came upon, you know, five head or so that were in the ditch that were burned and dead. There wasn't anything alive that I see there.

But it was just like you were on the moon, and then the wind had blown so hard that ditches were full of ash and it was just like a snowstorm of ash had come through there and from the wind had blown the ditches full.

It wasn't until I got down out of the hills, like on some of Bouziden's ground, that I started seeing cattle that had been burned really bad.

**Diana:** Were they still walking around?

**Larry:** Not really walking around, just standing there.

**Diana:** So where do you go? Did you go to Bouziden's headquarters?

**Larry:** I did. I found Kit and asked him what we could do, and he said that if I could go back to the house. What I ended up doing was going back to the house and get rifles and a bunch of ammunition. That was the main thing at that point right now that they needed help with. Just going through the pastures and looking for cattle that needed to be put down. So I went to town, got my rifles, got shells. About that time my son-in-law showed back up. So we went up on Bouziden's and spent most of the morning putting cattle down for them.

Had they started putting cattle down Monday after the fire came through?

**Larry:** I think Bouzidens, when the fire came through, initially I think a lot of the cattle, before it got dark, that were right around the house. I think they were putting some of those down.

**Diana:** Were they all on pasture? There's wasn't any wheat around their house?

**Larry:** There was wheat. A lot of their stocker cattle were on wheat, so a lot of cattle that were on wheat pasture survived the fire. But they have a bunch of cows and calves, and they were all the north of the house. The majority of them didn't make it through the fire.

**Diana:** So were you in a truck or did you get a four wheeler?

**Larry:** I was in my pickup.

**Diana:** Did you have a lot of people with you to help?

**Larry:** My little brother came down and met us about 10:00. A friend of mine from another city, **Byron Harbergast??????**, came down and he helped too. We just kind of split up in two pickups and kind of got them under control as far as them, Bouzidens. I made sure we helped them get through all the pastures that there were cattle in and put down cattle for them.

**Diana:** So how many days did you put down cattle?.

**Larry:** I put... Hayden and I put down cattle but my brother and I, that first day, we put cattle down all day. When we got done at Bouziden's, it took till about noon. Honestly, out of 200. 200-plus head of cow/calves, I think we ended up putting down 10 or 15 head. That's all that survived. There wasn't any baby calves that survived. It was interesting, you know all of the mama cows were strewn, they were all in an area, most of them were in the area up on the side hill, as close as they could get to the next fence. You know, they just kind of got penned in there. All of their little babies were down below them in a draw. And I think probably what happened was, you know, they probably stayed with their babies as long as they could. And the babies stayed there and then they moved away from them and tried to get away from the fire. And all of the mamas and the babies weren't together. All the babies were, it looked like they were to the north of them, the

mothers.

**Diana:** Did you see a lot of wildlife perished in the fire? Did you have to put any of those down?

**Larry:** Yes, a lot. So I can't tell you how many deer and coyotes. A lot of coyotes needed to be put down, and a lot of deer. Raccoons. You know, just burned to where they couldn't move, or that they had gotten so much smoke that they didn't have any lungs left basically.

**Diana:** So what kind of feelings were you having?

**Larry:** It was horrible.

**Diana:** Did it take you a while to get over it? Or did you.

**Larry:** Oh, as far as the whole thing?

**Diana:** Yes.

**Larry:** Yeah, I mean it's not anything that affects me day to day basis. It's just, when we left Bouziden's, I had gotten a call from Greg Gardiner, and we decided to go down and see how bad some of the Dunn Ranch had burned. I knew a good portion of Gardiner's had burned, but the last time I talked to Scott Tune, Saturday night, he was fighting fire and he really didn't know either. But the last time I talked to him, I think, it was about ten thirty that night of the fire. And he told me he didn't think that any of the Dunn Ranch had burned. Some of Gardiner's, he didn't think had burned either but he didn't know for sure. So after we get done and putting down cattle for Bouzidens, we went ahead and went down to the River Road and was going to come into the Dunn Headquarters. And as we were driving down there, you really didn't think that any of that burned because south of town and kind of where the angle is between Acres and where Bill Seacat lives and where it curves by **Jim Sawyers?????** along Bear Creek, none of that country had burned. So as you were leaving town and you were driving all the way down there until you got to Terry Eubanks' tree row, you just thought that everything south was fine. Then you came up over the hill, and it was like, "Oh my God." The sand hills, there was just nothing. It was just sand.

**Diana:** They were bare, it already came through there. Did any of that burn in the next couple of days when the back burn came through?

**Larry:** That had all burned Monday night. .

**Diana:** On the first night, on Monday night.

**Larry:** Monday night that was all gone, and that burned all the way to Oklahoma. The hog farm set on the south side of the Dunn Ranch, and the hog farm right there, they lost six thousand hogs right there, right across the state line. That was pretty surreal scene.

When we came down and then we started going through the Dunn Ranch, then we ran into Greg Gardiner about halfway through. Of course he was just devastated. He had been putting down cattle most of the day and that's what he asked us, if we could start putting down cattle because the pasture to the west of the Dunn Headquarters had a lot of cattle that it needed to be put down.

**Diana:** What kind of injuries did they have, besides burns? Were they blind?

**Larry:** Yeah, most of them were burned blind and their ears were burned off and their bodies were so burned that, you know, there wasn't any hair left. And it was just cracked. They almost look like a rhinoceros in a zoo. But you could see the cracks in their skin. And you know they were they were bleeding and bleeding out their mouth and having a difficult time breathing.

Some of them were laying down. A lot of them were standing, if they still had enough left the stand, but I mean they weren't moving. It was just sick.

**Diana:** So did you have a hard time finding enough ammunition?

**Larry:** We ran out of ammunition about... I had three boxes of shells, which would have been 60 rounds, and we ran out of ammunition on that first pasture of Gardiner's on the Dunn that we started putting down cattle. So I ended up calling my wife and daughter, and they ended up bringing out more ammunition. I don't know that I kept track, but on a per-day basis, but I know we put down, just on Gardiner's, somewhere in the neighborhood of 75 to a hundred animals or of their cows, basically that day and then the next day.

**Diana:** Did you get in on helping to record and bury the animals?

**Larry:** All they needed us to do was to put the animals down. I was... They had already lined up people that were on heavy equipment and were hooking them up and things like that.

I'm not a heavy equipment operator; I know what my limitations are. So I would tear up more than I would help. I did not get involved in that, other than communicating with the guys that were dragging the cattle into the pits and stuff, to let them know where they were at, in other words.

**Diana:** How did you keep track of that? Because those pastures are huge.

**Larry:** You just remember.

**Diana:** Did you have a map or something that show that we've got 60 head over here?

**Larry:** Just communicating with Greg and Erick Gamble.

**Diana:** Because they're familiar with the pastures.

**Larry:** They're familiar with the pastures and we are too. I mean, we've guided deer hunts on those things. So we were basically just through communication.

**Diana:** So did you lose anything through the fire, because like you said, you do guided hunts. Do you have deer stands and things like that?

**Larry:** We lost a lot of feeders and stands. Those kinds of things can be replaced. What hurts the most in the outfitting business is the actual wildlife resource itself. You know, after the fire we went around and filled all of our feeders and changed out the ones that were burned up and got them going.

I have a good friend from Salina, or actually Sylvan Grove. He's an outfitter and I kind of helped him get started. He and his family are cattle people and they put up a lot out of alfalfa. He helped us a lot.

**Diana:** So, what's your most vivid memory of the fire?

**Larry:** The dead animals, the cattle and wildlife.

**Diana:** All over. So you were out most of the day, up most of the night, because Monday night before you went and stayed in Dodge. Did you get a chance to eat? And where did you find food?

**Larry:** Well, when we got to Dodge City.

**Diana:** What about Tuesday, when you were putting down cattle? Did they bring you food, or did you have to just wait?

**Larry:** I don't know. I think we just had some snacks stuff. I don't really remember eating. I don't remember being hungry.

**Diana:** Were you just too busy and that was such an awful thing?

**Larry:** I'm sure we ate something and took something, but I don't recall what it would be. Though I do remember the third day, we went to the Gardiner Headquarters and got something to eat there. By that time, there was a group of guys in Texas that came with a chuck wagon. I can remember going over there and eating some stuff there, but that first day after the fire, I just don't.

**Diana:** That wasn't important?

**Larry:** I don't know. I just don't remember it. I'm sure I ate something. There was just a lot on my mind, and putting down animals all day just isn't something that makes you hungry.

**Diana:** You just kind of want to get away from it. So did you get to talk with those people and maybe discuss your emotions and having to put down all these cattle?

**Larry:** No, it was just something that needed to be done. It's something that when you have a landowner ask you to do it, you do it.

**Diana:** Pretty hard to turn him down, isn't it. So who are some of the people or agencies that proved most helpful during the fire or after the fire?

**Larry:** I think the... you know, once they were able to get firefighters and everything... I mean, I think it was just a coordinated effort. All the firefighters that came, the EMS people that came... As far as that's concerned, I mean.

**Diana:** Were you part of that committee that got together to say, "We've got to do something, we can't do this all on our own. We're kind of overwhelmed."

**Larry:** Yeah, I was on the committee.

**Diana:** Who kind of thought that that needed happen? Or how did it come about?

**Larry:** That all came about, I mean I got a call from Randall Spare and Kendall Kay. They had talked to someone who had been through that disaster in Barber County, and they said that was one of the things that we needed to concentrate on as a the community, was trying to get various committees that would, as a committee as a whole, that can take on challenges that they basically have the resources and the knowledge to take care of., in other words. Of course, I was involved in the Ashland Community Foundation side of it and was in charge of cash and donations, in that respect, and getting those facilitated and done.

**Diana:** So did donations just start coming in? Or was it something that people wanted to give something, and we needed to set something up pretty quickly? How did that come about?

**Larry:** Well, the foundation has been in existence since 1996, and although our organization was not put together for this type of a situation, it really, really worked good because it gave people an avenue to make tax deductible contributions. Whereas, if we wouldn't have had our local foundation, then those contributions would have needed to go to some other type of charitable entity. You know, sometimes that involves going outside of the community so to speak.

We really feel like it benefited our local community in a way that it possibly wouldn't have if we wouldn't have that organization in place at the time.

**Diana:** You think local people trusted the foundation more than they would have somebody else?

**Larry:** I think so. I mean we had a lot of local contributions, but there was so much there were so many contributions that came from outside of our community from people that had relationships with individuals or big companies and so on and so forth. It just, you know that fire not only consumed parts of Oklahoma, but Clark County, Comanche County and some of Meade County, and then Texas as well.

I think it kind of gave us a little bit of an advantage as far as our Clark County, because that's what ours was organized for.

**Diana:** So they set up a fund that would benefit the people that had lost their homes or fencing or whatever from the fire. Can you give us a ballpark number of people who applied for the fence?

**Larry:** We had 19 people in our county, as I recall, that applied that lost their personal residences or where they lived, not necessarily they owned the residences, but they were living.

**Diana:** Affected by it.

**Larry:** And then we had a 126 applicants of producers that lost either cattle, fence, equipment or all of the above, that were able to apply for those funds that were donated. And those donations were distributed in... Well, I can tell you the exact date. The first distribution was made June 26 to the landowners. And then shortly after the fire, we had received enough donations for those people that lost their homes. We made a special allocation distribution to those people that lost their homes in the fire within two weeks after the fire.

**Diana:** So was it the foundation itself that decided how to allocate the money, or did you have a special group that did that?

**Larry:** We had a board within our organization, a committee within our board itself that made that decision. As far as what we thought we would allocate towards.

**Larry:** We had two separate applications. . We had one for housing, you know people that lost their homes and dwellings and personal belongings, and then we also had a separate application for the producers. Just in general, we allocated all donations. Thirty percent went to the people that lost their homes and the remaining 70, there was a thirty/seventy split, basically.

**Diana:** So besides monetary donations, did the Community Foundation receive a lot of other types of donations also?

**Larry:** Yeah. I mean, of course. We weren't in charge of tangible property, other than if people that donated a donation wanted a receipt, we facilitated that.

**Diana:** So if you gave a truckload of hay and you wanted a receipt, then you could come through the Community Foundation?

**Larry:** The Ashland Feed and Seed would give out our names, or any of the others that were doing that, or any of the others that were on this oversight committee. That was one of the things that they did, is when we put our groups together, they had names and addresses or who they needed if somebody needed a donation receipt for a load of hay. Then they knew that they needed to get a hold of either Jan Endicott or Larry Konrade. And we did a lot of those donations, but in the situation that was involved with tangible property, we really don't... Our foundation can't assign a value to that that because we have no idea whether they were bringing alfalfa hay, feed hay, grass hay. All that's worth different amounts.

So basically, when we had people call us, we said, "What did you donate, and what was it worth?" And then we got their name and address and then mailed them a donation receipt. A lot of people would bring in a load of hay and then they would come in our office and we would give them a donation receipt right there.



**Diana:** So were you amazed or surprised by the amount of donations that were made, monetary and tangible? What were your first thoughts?

**Larry:** You know, your first thoughts, when you get this thing together, and it is starting, you're thinking, "I just hope somebody comes and I hope people donate. I hope people know that we're out of here and what's happened to us."

A week after the fire, it was just unbelievable.

**Diana:** Where is all this stuff coming from?

**Larry:** All the stuff coming, I mean semi loads after semi loads. After we put out a mailing and got our Web page up to date with the foundation on how to donate and who to donate to and so on and so forth, every day there would just be tons of donations in the mail.

**Diana:** Do you still received some donations from the fire?

**Larry:** We still get donations. I would say currently, we get two to five donations a week, still. In the height the thing, we have a fairly large post office box for the foundation, you would go there and it would be jam-packed with donations, with letters... We have three folders completely full of personal letters and notes from people that donated money or donated... We get things from quilts to candy to baby clothes to... A lot of people sent Visa cards, prepaid Visa carts. It was just unbelievable.

**Larry:** You went from hoping people were going to come, to going, "Oh my God, how are we going to unload all this stuff?" I mean we spent the next month and a half; that's all we did. Any free time that you had, you went and helped unload trucks, unload hay, unload...

**Diana:** Did you take advantage of that food that came? Like going up to the school to eat a meal or down to the camp?

**Larry:** Absolutely.

**Diana:** Did you also volunteer with helping to serve?

**Larry:** I ate at at both places. I never did help with volunteering to serve; I was always busy with collecting donations or donation receipts, or helping unload trucks. I threw more square bales in that month and a half than I care to ever do the rest of my life.

**Diana:** So can you perceive anything positive that came from the fire?

**Larry:** Oh yeah. I mean, if you can't see God in the help and the overwhelming support that we received. It was just amazing. I think it brought our community together. It made us closer. It made you realize, just like any disaster, what things are important in life and what things aren't. You know, not to take advantage. I mean, our wildlife that we had, although we had a drought that hurt our deer herd, our birds, quail, bob-white quail, in the two years prior, I'd never seen as good a quail hunting as we had. Something that vast and that big, to come through and wipe out 90 percent of deer herd and 90 percent of your wildlife resources. It makes you look back and think how thankful you are for what you had before the fire.

**Diana:** So what effect, physical, financial, or economic, did the fire cause for you or for the community?

**Larry:** I really didn't, I don't have any physical effects. Yeah, when you put down animals for three days straight, that could affect somebody. But that's not something that... I don't think that's affected me. Financial? Yes, it basically made our outfitting business cut down to basically an eighth of what it was prior to the fire, because we can't do any hunts to generate revenue.

**Diana:** Are you seeing deer population starting to rebuild?

**Larry:** It will. The thing about a deer population is, of course, they only have one offspring per year, unless they have twins, but when you've lost 90 percent of your herd and it was down anyway because of the drought in '10, '11 and '12, it's going to be five to 10 years of good conditions with Mother Nature to where it's going to be back to where it was. Now the birds, the quail, I think they'll come back quicker, provided they get the moisture.

We're in a drought situation now; if we don't get moisture, it's going to get ugly.

**Diana:** So the sand hills have kind of rebounded or are they still pretty bad?

**Larry:** We had about as good a rainfall after that fire, once it started coming, that you could actually ask for. But, you know, you go through the pastures now, after we haven't had any rain, and there's not any wheat. Guys have taken their cattle off of wheat way earlier than they normally have and put them in areas where they probably wouldn't normally graze that hard. It's not going to take long if it doesn't rain and we're going to be in trouble.

**Diana:** Are we out of all that donated hay that we received? It's all gone?

**Larry:** It's pretty much gone.

**Diana:** You don't have anything to replace it with. What can you do or have you done to prepare for a future fire or any kind of an emergency? Like your business, you said you put everything in the vault.

**Larry:** Sure.

**Diana:** Do you have an offsite place to keep files?

**Larry:** We really don't. I mean, we have a backup system there at our accounting office that we we can save it, so to speak, out on the Cloud, and so on and so forth, but we also have two hard drives that back up every day. In the event of say, like we get a fire like that to where we felt like the town and a bunch of the buildings and our office could burn down, then you would basically... When the fire came, one of the first things that Randy did was he grabbed the hard drive backups.

So we had all of that. All of our records, as far as our tax returns and everything that goes in and out of our offices, are all scanned and on electronic file cabinets. So I don't ever get there, but if we had to, I think we could survive.

**Diana:** So what about personally at home? Is there something that when you got home you thought, "Oh we should have taken that?"

**Larry:** Yeah, about everything. You know, I grabbed some things out of the safe, you know, like jewelry that my mother gave us. You know sentimental things. Of course, I had some cash in my safe that I grabbed. But I mean, you would hate to leave lose all of that stuff, but that's all stuff that can be replaced. You know, I was more concerned with some pictures and things like that. I think a lot of the pictures that we left behind, I would think twice about grabbing those.

Some of the personal belongings would be the hardest things to replace.

**Diana:** So what about the community? What kind of things can we do, that we've learned from this that would make us better prepared?

**Larry:** You know, I think we've done outstanding job. I look back at the whole thing, and you know, the only thing that comes to mind that I can think of is that one of the things that saved the city from burning is

the wheat fields on the north side of town and the extraordinary effort from the fire department.

**Larry:** But I think there's maybe some CRP ground and some ground around the city itself that could maybe be maintained a little bit better in the case of a fire to keep it from getting in the town. You know, there's some things that I've done, I've gotten a bunch of wood and things like that away from my house to where they won't ever have a chance of catching on fire or catching the house on fire.

You know, our town's so lucky that it didn't burn down. I just don't think that in that wind that once the fire started in town that there would have been any way to control it.

**Diana:** Were you amazed that when they did give the evacuation order, that most of the people left?

**Larry:** Yeah. I mean, maybe I was a little bit more amazed at the people who stayed.

I just didn't feel like with my family and my daughter and kids... I just didn't feel like there was any reason to risk.

**Diana:** What about your son? What did you tell him? Or was he aware of what was going on?

**Larry:** Yeah, we talked to him on the phone. And of course, with Facebook Live, a lot of... of course I don't do Facebook, but I think there were people going around town that were on Facebook Live. Of course he's the older generation, so I think he was giving us the update of what was going on in town, which was more than what we knew.

I kept in communication with a couple people that were there, that stayed there because of their businesses and so on.

I just don't know. I think if the fire had gotten into town, I don't know whether a person could have saved their home. A person staying there, I just, I don't see your life from other people's lives at risk when there's not a whole lot you can do to control it.

**Diana:** So were you part of any of the groups that met after the fire? They were kind of like at. Some really got together to see what had happened or what should have happened. Were you a part of any of that?

**Larry:** I was not a part of that. I think the sheriff and most of the EMS and sheriff and those types were involved in that; I was not involved with any of that.

**Diana:** What about that task force that a group of volunteers got together and set up. Are they still active? Like Kays doing the feed and Holly doing volunteers; are they still doing this stuff? Is there any need to have somebody do that in the future?

**Larry:** Oh I think so in the event of any type of disaster. But you know, the foundation itself and the donations, I still have gotten calls, even this last month and here recently from people that either didn't get a donation receipt or something happened to it or they needed another copy or they needed one because they didn't get one immediately. So that continues to go on, but that's no problem.

**Diana:** That's right into tax season.

**Larry:** That's right.

**Diana:** So do you have any other thoughts or anything about this experience that you'd like to share? Anything we haven't talked about?

**Larry:** No, it's just, you know you asked me one of the things that's most vivid in my mind, and that is the destruction of the animals and the wildlife. The third day that we put down cattle, Greg Gardner called me

up and he said, "Larry, we were finally able to get into the east Cimarron Pasture, which is the pasture on Dun's. It runs right up to the River Road, and it's got the Cimarron River. He said Kayla and the boys were down there and they said there's a lot of cattle down there that we finally found and a lot of them need to be put down. Would you mind going down there?"

So I said, "Yeah, Hayden and I will go down there." That was on Thursday, I believe. And he called me in the evening, and we almost left that night with spotlights, but just decided not to do that, to wait until the next morning. I didn't sleep that night, because we had put down cattle for basically two days, and just seeing the amount of pain and suffering that the animals were going through. It's not something you want to do, but it needed to be done and it needed to be done now.

**Diana:** Is that the most humane way? To shoot them?

It is the most humane way. You just need to know where to shoot them, you know, to make it as humane as possible. That's the main thing.

**Diana:** Were you reimbursed for the ammunition that you spent?

**Larry:** Yeah, I mean, not necessarily reimbursed, but my son-in-law's former boss from Garden City...

**Diana:** Replenished your supply for you? Anything else?

**Larry:** No. I got sidetracked, but the one thing I'll never forget is when we put down those cattle that third day, along the Cimarron River. You couldn't drive, so you had to walk. You don't really think about it when you look down on the river, it looks like it's flat, but there's a lot of undulation to the ground. The most vivid thing that I'll never forget is the smell and the sound, because a lot of the cattle that you ended up putting down, you would hear them before you would see them. They were just so raspy. You would hear them trying to breathe.

**Diana:** Were they mostly in clumps or groups?

**Larry:** Most of the dead ones were, but some of them were scattered out. We were very fortunate; we went up and down the river on both sides twice. That particular pasture is a mile and a half to the next boundary fence. So we spent pretty much all day, one side of the river in the morning and then the other side of the river in the afternoon. And then there were quite a few cattle that needed to be put down on the Sand Creek that runs through the north part of that. It was a long day.

**Diana:** So most of the cattle that needed to be put down fast, were all put down by say Thursday or Friday after the fire.

**Larry:** Right.

**Diana:** And most of them had been buried by then?

**Larry:** Not necessarily.

**Diana:** But they were getting close. So did you have to go or did most of the ranchers themselves go back and look at the cattle later and find others that needed to be put down after the initial bunch?

**Larry:** Right. Gardeners had pastures down on Dun's that are so big and there's so many sand hills and there's a lot of Cimarron River bottom and Sand Creek bottom that it just took some time to get through all of those pastures and find out where all those cattle ended up.

**Diana:** Did you find any that were in good condition?

**Larry:** We actually, in the third day that we put down cattle in the Cimarron River, we were able to find... there were three steers that had come from clear up around the headquarters. Because of the fences being down, they had survived the fire and they were on wheat pasture clear up there by the Dun headquarters. But they had worked their way clear down into the area where we were at. So we called Greg and he got a hold of Kayla and one of their interns and they came down horseback and got them.

**Diana:** So are most of the cattle accounted for? Or did they find most of them?

**Larry:** I think so. I mean, we worked with the landowners to tell them how many we put down and where they were put down. Then a combination of gathering cattle over the time frame the numbers that were put down. Tim Tyree from Tyree Ag came down with his plane and flew to make sure after we went through and put down the cattle that needed to be put down, he went through and flew very day for two to three days after that to make sure we hadn't missed anything. And then also, he helped with the ranchers to know where the cattle were at, where the dead cattle were at that needed to be gathered up.

**Diana:** I'm sure that took a while.

**Diana:** Yeah, I think they lost nearly 600. Millers lost seven or eight hundred and Giles lost six to eight hundred head. When they're spread out over a big area, I know it sounds easy, but it takes time to gather all them up and figure out what you're going to do.

**Diana:** And since most of it is bad terrain too. I mean you can't, not all of it can you go in a pickup. You've got to get a horse or four wheeler, or like you said, walk.

**Diana:** Is there anything else you can think of?

**Larry:** No.

**Diana:** Thank you very much for sharing your experiences. We appreciate it.