

Flint Hills Ranching Impact Oral History Project, Phase I  
Partially funded by the Kansas Humanities Council  
Burton Interview, 9 June 2008, Final

1 **Interview conducted by Bill Smith; Recorded on Marantz Digital Recorder;**  
2 **Transcribed by Bill Smith**

3  
4 **Track 63**

5  
6 **Bill:** Ok, this is Bill Smith with the Flint Hills Ranching Impact Study, partially funded  
7 by the Kansas Humanities Council. I'm with Tom Burton at the ranch at Pioneer Bluffs.  
8 Always like to start off with what year and where were you born?

9  
10 **Tom:** I was born in Emporia, but we lived in Bazaar, which is about six miles to the  
11 north of Matfield. I moved to Matfield when I was about, or my folks moved, when I was  
12 about six years old. I have lived here ever since. I lived a year or two in college and two  
13 years in the service.

14  
15 **Bill:** So you are a native.

16  
17 **Tom:** I am a native. Never could get very far away from home.

18  
19 **Bill:** Never could get far from home. My mother was as Coon Rapids, Iowa girl. Never...  
20 born, raised... she traveled some, but... she always thought of herself belonging to that  
21 small Iowa community, and nothing else.

22  
23 **Tom:** I can see where that would be true. I never even... you know they say if you get in  
24 the army, you get to see the world? I got to Fort Carson, and spent the whole two years  
25 there. Got an office job, never got anywhere.

26  
27 **Bill:** You were talking before that you came here to this ranch following Jim Hoy. [Said  
28 the name wrong; we corrected me together]

29  
30 **Tom:** I came here in late fall of 1961.

31  
32 **Bill:** What was your job, why did you come?

33  
34 **Tom:** Really, I met Wayne... Of course, I had worked, like Senior work days, and  
35 things... I had worked for Wayne's father, here on the ranch, in high school.

36  
37 **Bill:** Were you just out of high school at that time?

38  
39 **Tom:** I had gone to college for a couple of years... and, I laid out a year, to work for City  
40 Service Gas Company, and got drafted.

41  
42 **Bill:** Good old military.

43  
44 **Tom:** Good old military. When I came back, I had worked for City Service long enough  
45 they would have had to give me a job, and they were going to send me to Guymon,

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46 Oklahoma. And I was going to be working... My uncle was Superintendent there. I was  
47 apprehensive about going that far away, and working for a relative... how other people  
48 would feel. Anyway, Wayne offered me this... saw me at a ballgame. Hey, why don't  
49 you come down and work for a couple of weeks, then, planting oak trees. I had a month,  
50 before I had to report to Guymon. Probably a week after I came here, the head cowboy  
51 that had been here for several years... Wayne got into a slight disagreement, and he quit.  
52 Wayne offered me the job. I took it. That's how I got to stay at home, I guess.

53

54 **Bill:** Got to stay home, and made a life right here.

55

56 **Tom:** Correct.

57

58 **Bill:** Where you really wanted to be.

59

60 **Tom:** Where I wanted to be, and doing what I wanted to do...cowboy. I love to be on  
61 horseback. I spent the summers, you were just kind of on your own, you know. You have  
62 cattle, a certain amount of pasture to take care of.

63

64 **Bill:** Talk about that a little bit. What was it like?

65

66 **Tom:** It was really, I guess that was what was nice. Just ride... I'd leave about 7 o'clock  
67 in the morning. I'd load the horse in the pickup. If you had to travel like three or four  
68 miles to a pasture, Wayne would let you take an old pickup that he had. But if you were  
69 closer than that, you had to ride to those pastures. They'd give me the far away pastures,  
70 so I did have a pickup. I'd leave about seven in the morning. We had a lady that cooked  
71 for us. There were about 13 of us that worked at the... There were only about two  
72 cowboys, but there were farmers, and yard men, and this, that and the other, that worked  
73 here. She fed everyone dinner. I lived in the bunk house, so she fed me and other boy  
74 both breakfast, and evening meal, and she would pack our lunch.

75

76 **Bill:** You would take your lunch with you when you would go out during the day.

77

78 **Tom:** You would get back about 5 or 5:30 in the evening.

79

80 **Bill:** What were you doing out there in the field, besides riding your horse around?

81

82 **Tom:** Of course, you rode fence.

83

84 **Track 64**

85

86 **Tom:** About every other week, I would ride the fence around these pastures; and, of  
87 course, you rode through the cattle. If you could, of course, you would try to get a count.  
88 If one pasture would have about 1200 cattle in it, it was just impossible... [Laughter]

89

90 **Bill:** Can't count that high?

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91  
92 **Tom:** No, I couldn't count that high. (By the) time you counted part of them, some of the  
93 others would be back in behind... it was just impossible. I lucked out the first year, I  
94 don't remember... I was one short the second year. The first year, we had Black Leg, the  
95 cows came up from Texas, Porter and Winter Cattle Company, we lost like 28 with Black  
96 Leg. You had to have the brand; you had to prove that the steer was dead, to the owner...  
97 at least, that was what Wayne told me I had to do. So I had all the brands, and we had all  
98 the cattle, and... I remember we were eating at Cassiday... the restaurant. And Wayne  
99 told this... I believe it was Tommy Winters, the gentleman that was here... he said, we  
100 lost like 28, 30 head, or something. Tom will go out in the pickup and get you the brands,  
101 and you can look at them. He said, well hell, I don't want to look at no brands. They're  
102 dead, they're dead. [Laughter] I thought, son of a gun, I ... some of those cows were a  
103 little ripe when I would find them.

104  
105 **Bill:** You really didn't want to pull those off?

106  
107 **Tom:** No, I didn't. But, I went to all that trouble...

108  
109 **Bill:** But, you had to have them there, in case he wanted to see them!

110  
111 **Tom:** That was my orders. It worked out great. He filled the pastures for several years.

112  
113 **Bill:** Did the ranch have its own herd? Or, were you strictly feeding the feeder cattle?

114  
115 **Tom:** He did have his own herd, but he would buy a few cattle, when I first came here.  
116 I'd say, 5 or 600. His own herd was down in the southeastern part of the state, around  
117 Howard. He had pastures down there. They would ship the calves back up here when  
118 they would wean them and we'd have them to take care of. But, as the years went along,  
119 as he got older, he did go through a divorce, a couple of years after I came here, so he lost  
120 some of his country. Mrs. Mary Price Rogler, from Reading, she got half of the pastures;  
121 so it got a little smaller and smaller, and he got to buying more cattle and more cattle.  
122 Finally, it got to where he filled about everything himself, for about ten years. He had a  
123 feed lot.

124  
125 **Bill:** When would that have been?

126  
127 **Tom:** That would have been about the middle 70s, up until about... He had the feed lot  
128 that would hold about 1,000, and then help just got harder and harder to find. We phased  
129 the feedlot out.

130  
131 **Bill:** You were taking the cattle off the grass and putting them in the feed lot.

132  
133 **Tom:** Correct. And he also bought cattle to keep the keep lot full.

134  
135 **Bill:** So that became somewhat of a separate operation, for awhile.

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136 **Tom:** It did. He had some super, super nice people. It was a tough job. Wayne expected a  
137 lot of them, and it was kind of a seven day a week deal.

138

139 **Bill:** They are there all the time, and somebody has to be there.

140

141 **Tom:** He had all this machinery, the feed trucks, auger trucks, and everything in the  
142 elevator. It was just about impossible to keep help. So, we phased that out. He kept  
143 buying cattle, as he got older. He still kept a sizable amount; but, we started taking in  
144 other people's cattle, again.

145

146 **Bill:** You kind started one way, went another, and then kind of came back where you  
147 started?

148

149 **Tom:** Where we started...

150

151 **Bill:** You weren't involved in the farming operation, at all?

152

153 **Track 65**

154

155 **Tom:** Well, I had worked here about two years, and one evening, Wayne called me up.  
156 Had the old crank telephones.

157

158 **Bill:** Oh, yes. I still have one of thos.

159

160 **Tom:** Anyway, he called me... I think I was eating my evening meal... it might have  
161 been my breakfast. Anyway, he called me. He said, I need you to come by the house. So,  
162 I drove by the house. He said the lead man, the foreman, had been here for several years.  
163 Problem arose, and he chose to change jobs. Wayne said, "I'm going to Hawaii in three  
164 days, and I'll be gone two weeks." And, he said: "You're going to have to run it." We  
165 had about ten people worked here about that time. I was the new kid on the block. Some  
166 of them had worked here 30, 32 years. I said, Wayne, you know, I don't think this is  
167 going to work. He said: "You won't have any problem; I'll visit with them." Anyway, the  
168 next morning, he told me to do something else, and he visited with them. About half of  
169 them were happy with it, and four or five chose to leave. One gentleman, kind of  
170 interesting, Vincent Hull, he chose to stay, to make life miserable for me. [Laughter]

171

172 **Bill:** There is always one, isn't there?

173

174 **Tom:** He was a good worker. He was an older gentlemen, and he had the black lung  
175 disease; so he had a little trouble breathing. He wore round glass, with real thick (lenses).  
176 He put out salt and mineral; he treated thigh rubs, in these pastures. Anyway, he kind of  
177 sparred, for probably six months. One evening, he came to the house. I told my wife,  
178 gosh, here comes Vince; I wonder what is wrong now? He came up to the house; he was  
179 carrying a case of beer. He set it down, outside the door, and knocked on the door. He  
180 come to the door, he says, I'll tell you what: let's let bygones be bygones, and start anew.

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181 **Bill:** Well, good for him.

182

183 **Tom:** He was a super, super gentleman. He did, about two years later, he did pass away.  
184 It was interesting. I can see the other people's point. I really could. Here was a kid, you  
185 know...

186

187 **Bill:** But, Wayne recognized in you the leader he needed. These other folks were good  
188 workers, but they probably didn't have the people skills.

189

190 **Tom:** I think maybe some of it was, you said, I was a home-town boy. My uncle had  
191 worked for him, here, for several years; he moved to Redding to his first wife's ranch,  
192 and ran it until he retired. So, I think that might have had a bearing, in what he chose;  
193 what he did. It was very interesting. He...

194

195 **Bill:** Were you married by that time?

196

197 **Tom:** I was married... by that time, yes.

198

199 **Bill:** You had indicated your readiness to settle down... work hard...

200

201 **Tom:** That's correct.

202

203 **Bill:** do a good job!

204

205 **Tom:** I'd lived in Matfield about a year, when Wayne's first wife separated, divorced.  
206 She got the main ranch house, so he moved into the house where I live; and started  
207 redoing it. It was a school house.

208

209 **Bill:** Just up the way, here?

210

211 **Tom:** The Crocker School house, sets back off the road, on a hill?

212

213 **Bill:** OK.

214

215 **Tom:** So, he starts doing all this work on it. He built a guest house, this time... I'm  
216 getting a little ahead of my story. I didn't know that he had a girl friend. [Laughter] But  
217 he did build on the guest house, for his second wife's mother. And just before it was  
218 finished, she passed away. About the time he got done with all the work on this house, his  
219 first wife chose to go back to Emporia because their daughter was not well. So she chose  
220 to sell the house back to Wayne. So, that is when I got to move up to that house.

221

222 **Track 66**

223

224 **Bill:** So, that is where you were at for many years.

225

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226 **Tom:** I lived there for thirty-some years and then moved down to the main house, for  
227 twelve; and then the family did give me that house, when the place sold. So, I'm back up  
228 there. I'm back where I started. [Laughter]

229  
230 **Bill:** We're getting a theme, here, aren't we? Come around and go around.

231  
232 **Tom:** That's right. And, I was going to say: Wayne did go to Hawaii. I had no idea that  
233 Elizabeth Roniger, that was his second wife, was born in Elmdale. She had land of her  
234 own. She was teaching...

235  
236 **Bill:** What was her family name?

237  
238 **Tom:** Roniger. I don't know if you have you heard of the Roniger Musuem?

239  
240 **Bill:** Sure have.

241  
242 **Tom:** Those are her uncles. She inherited her uncles' land, and took very good care of it.  
243 This was kind of a surprise when he went to Hawaii; he just called me up one day, and  
244 telling me that he was bringing Elizabeth home, and they were going to be married. She  
245 was super, super. Nice lady.

246  
247 **Bill:** Well, good. So that worked out well.

248  
249 **Tom:** It worked out good. I still have the privilege... The Roniger's... her land stayed in  
250 her family... of course, Wayne's land on his death to his family. The Ronigers chose to  
251 keep theirs. She had a nephew and a niece. They still allow me to keep that country. One  
252 pasture is at Elmdale and one pasture is at Bazaar. They allow me to have it a very, very  
253 economical rate.

254  
255 **Bill:** Reasonable rate. [Laughter]

256  
257 **Tom:** Reasonable. I feel guilty, but that is what they want.

258  
259 **Bill:** Well, that is right. You've provided good service over the years, it is in invaluable  
260 to them, too.

261  
262 **Tom:** Again, they are wonderful to work for.

263  
264 **Bill:** You are still actively involved?

265  
266 **Tom:** I'm still... Wayne leased, I'm trying to think, he leased about 10 thousand acres  
267 from absentee landowners: a doctor in California, he had a couple of sons. One was in  
268 Hawaii, and one lives there in California. He had some people that lived in Washington  
269 State. One lady lives in Texas that owns some land. One lives in Ohio. We have an  
270 astronaut, Joe Engle, he owns some land, out west here. But they all wanted me to keep

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271 that land, and keep leasing it. So I do. And then, the Stratton family that I was telling you  
272 about, two of them live in Seattle, and one of them lives in Houston. Anyway, they did  
273 buy 500 acres of Rogler land, when it sold. So, that makes about 3000 acres, altogether,  
274 right east of Matfield.

275

276 **Bill:** It was adjoining land you already had?

277

278 **Tom:** Yes, it was. There was a lane, a cattle lane...

279

280 **Bill:** But essentially...

281

282 **Tom:** We needed it because of the pens. It had a wonderful set of pens, to load cattle out.  
283 And, it was kind of the only way you could get a truck in to that pasture. You could get  
284 into that pasture, but the pastures they had had... they had inherited from some aunts...  
285 had been in the family for some eighty years.

286

287 **Bill:** It just made good sense to add that five hundred...

288

289 **Tom:** They all... you just cannot believe how nice they all are to work with.

290

291 **Bill:** It just amazes me to hear the stories of people from all over, that own most of the  
292 land around here.

293

294 **Tom:** It is. That is correct. I really thought that I might have slight problems, you know,  
295 but every one of them allows me to have the pasture at a very economical rate. They  
296 could get much, much more for their land. But they think that I would take care of it...  
297 anyway, they think Wayne trained me right.

298

299 **Bill:** They have the same confidence he did. [Laughter]

300

301 **Tom:** I guess that is true. I am very flattered that they do feel that way, but, sometimes I  
302 feel guilty when I sign that lease, knowing... you know, you're talking maybe 15, 20  
303 thousand dollars more. But, there land might not be in as gooda' shape when the cows are  
304 let off of it.

305

306 **Bill:** That really says that they really care about their land, though.

307

308 **Tom:** They do. And that is something...

309

310 **Bill:** And, they all want to, probably, pass it on their children.

311

312 **Tom:** And they all plan on doing that.

313

314 **Bill:** It's a good...

315

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316 **Track 67**

317

318 **Bill:** ...income. Maybe they could get more income; but this is long term income.

319

320 **Tom:** That is what they... they are so happy that you take such good care of it. So, I  
321 guess I'm happy. [Laughter]

322

323 **Bill:** The responsibility to look after... the role you are playing there is what some call  
324 "pasture man?"

325

326 **Tom:** Ya, I guess. Ya. Range management. Pasture...

327

328 **Bill:** Range management. You're responsible for the fences being up to date; the ponds  
329 being where they need to be? Maintained?

330

331 **Tom:** Correct. We get the pastures burned; decide whether to burn... They allow you to  
332 decide: Do you need to cut back, maybe, on the amount of cattle? ...which will cut back  
333 on their income.

334

335 **Bill:** The number of cattle you will put on. You look for the long term benefit.

336

337 **Tom:** You have a dry year, the next year you might want to cut back just a little. Then, if  
338 you have real wet year, kind of like this year, it is just great. Next year, we might push it  
339 up a little bit. It is kind of hard to change, in the middle of a year.

340

341 **Bill:** How often do you talk to those folks?

342

343 **Tom:** Probably, say, twice a year, is about all. Though I'm hoping that one of the  
344 families I was telling you about, that lives in Houston, I sure hope they can come back  
345 here, in the near future. I'd like to show them some pond work, etc. They have told me  
346 they would like to get back.

347

348 **Bill:** They may stop by and visit every few years.

349

350 **Tom:** They've been pretty good at coming, maybe a couple of times a year. But, they've  
351 got their own businesses, their children are in college, ...

352

353 **Bill:** Each of them has full lives.

354

355 **Tom:** ... leaving home, and have there to visit and here to visit. There's one boy in Maui,  
356 Hawaii, that, he was supposed to be back to go through a pasture over by Saffordville;  
357 he hasn't made it yet. [Laughter] He said he lives between his little ranch, I think his  
358 ranch is something like 40 acres, he has avocado orchards on it; but anyway, one side of  
359 him is Willie Nelson, and on the other side of his is Oprah!

360

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361 **Bill:** Oh, my!

362

363 **Tom:** And they are both are offering him astronomical prices for that land.

364

365 **Bill:** His 40 acres. And, he doesn't really want to sell!

366

367 **Tom:** He really doesn't want to sell. He is very interesting gentleman to talk to.

368

369 **Bill:** I'll bet he is, always has a new story to tell.

370

371 **Tom:** Correct. But, I was... getting back to the farming part. After I became the lead  
372 man...

373

374 **Bill:** Then you had the responsibility for the whole thing.

375

376 **Tom:** ...I had the responsibility for the whole thing. And then, after Wayne's death, I  
377 was made president of the corporation. The Emporia State Bank was the Trust Officer.  
378 You can't believe how super; just absolutely super, super to work with. Wayne had  
379 warned me that I might have some problems... working with a young fellow, Steve Bell;  
380 it was just the opposite. They just allowed you to... we went through some years when  
381 we lost big money, on the cattle business. We went through some years when we made  
382 money. He stuck with me, even though family members wasn't real.. Well, they were  
383 never unhappy with me, but they were wanting to sell, or do something to... But, he  
384 stuck it out, until I was 70; everything worked out well, for me.

385

386 **Bill:** How do you feel about how the sale came out?

387

388 **Tom:** I would have felt a lot better if I would have owned it, but... I think it worked out  
389 very good. I think everyone who purchased land has taken excellent care of it.

390

391 **Bill:** They got it for the right reason.

392

393 **Tom:** My son bought 700 acres. That would be this land the lays back to the west here,  
394 beyond this bluff, up here, and it goes back to that astronaut I was telling you about. The  
395 astronaut, Joe Engle's wife, first wife, would go back to the...

396

397 **Track 68**

398

399 **Tom:** Rogiler family; she passed away. It isn't fenced, so my son's land, and his land, is  
400 together; although we do know where the line is, it doesn't have a fence. The 1000 acres  
401 is all pastured together. And then, he had the privilege of buying the pasture on west of  
402 that; that I should have bought, but I was so sure that I was going to get some of this here,  
403 that I passed on it.

404

405 **Bill:** He was able to get it, though.

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406

407 **Tom:** They offered him the same deal as they did me; this family in New Hampshire... at  
408 about half of what the land was really worth. It worked out great for him.

409

410 **Bill:** In your forty plus years, what have you seen as far as differences in practices, either  
411 with the pasture or with the farm land? Has it stayed pretty much the same, or have there  
412 been significant changes?

413

414 **Tom:** There have been some changes. I think the biggest change I noticed in the  
415 grassland, it that we used to take in cattle from Texas, New Mexico; kind of a far  
416 distance. You didn't hardly take in cattle from someone local. It was mainly from Texas,  
417 around Lampasas, Texas, filled about all of our country. But now, it seems like it kind of  
418 changed around, and the cattle we take in are all local. In fact, I was trying to think, I  
419 guess all the cattle we have take in is from just one person; and he has taken our pastures  
420 for about thirty years.

421

422 **Bill:** Really?

423

424 **Tom:** Jack Jones, of Flint Hills feed lot, right north of Emporia. The feed lot has closed.

425

426 **Bill:** Yes, I saw that. How is the change in the packing plant... is it going to impact, at  
427 all?

428

429 **Tom:** I don't think it is going to impact his buying cattle and putting on grass; the only  
430 thing is, of course, he'll just send them west, I guess, to be fed.

431

432 **Bill:** He'll have to use the feed lots that are out there... and bring them back here, or send  
433 them where ever... you can't bring them here.

434

435 **Tom:** That's the change...

436

437 **Bill:** You've got to take them to a packing plant.

438

439 **Tom:** I didn't realize, about two and a half dollars a hundred, I think, or two dollar a  
440 hundred, or something like that to get them trucked out west, so, you might as well have  
441 them out there, to start with.

442

443 **Bill:** Go ahead and truck them out there, smaller.

444

445 **Tom:** Smaller, you can handle a lot more cattle in one load.

446

447 **Bill:** Yes, that is an interesting change, in the logistics.

448

449 **Tom:** He just kind of calls you up and says how many cattle do you need and you tell  
450 him. My son runs cattle on quite a bit of our land, also. I have a few of my own.

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451 **Bill:** I got the feeling you are working together? Part of your activities?

452

453 **Tom:** Yes. That's right.

454

455 **Bill:** But he asks you how many cattle you can handle, and he goes and acquires them,  
456 and brings them in?

457

458 **Tom:** That's right.

459

460 **Bill:** Where he gets them doesn't make any difference to you.

461

462 **Tom:** No, it doesn't make a difference.

463

464 **Bill:** It's his responsibility to get them to you and carry them away.

465

466 **Tom:** Correct. He just buys however many, again, however many we need. I do a little  
467 different, and, again, this is the way Wayne did it. I have attorneys and bankers that get a  
468 little nervous. But, I sign the lease with all of these land owners. Then I turn around, and  
469 sign the lease, like, with Jack Jones, and with my son, and some with myself. I guess it is  
470 more customary that I should just take care of them, but I should have, like Jack Jones,  
471 signing the lease with this Monroe family; and he pay me for taking care of them.

472 Because, if something should happen to him, financially or physically, I've got to pay  
473 this pasture bill. I might be six months getting it from him, if, you know, some problem  
474 should arise.

475

476 **Track 69**

477

478 **Bill:** You've taken on the liability of the pasture.

479

480 **Tom:** But that's the way Wayne did it with my grandmother and father, so we want you  
481 to do it the same way.

482

483 **Bill:** A lot of momentum there... tradition.

484

485 **Tom:** Yes, there is.

486

487 **Bill:** Well, if they are not charging you exorbitantly for the pasture, you're probably  
488 better off.

489

490 **Tom:** It works. I'm sure it does work out.

491

492 **Bill:** But you're also taking risk.

493

494 **Tom:** You're taking risk.

495

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496 **Bill:** But, they know that, also.

497

498 **Tom:** I think they do.

499

500 **Bill:** It evens out. You may have some loses; but then you get the gains when everything  
501 goes well.

502

503 **Tom:** You're right. You know, there isn't a lot of double stocking, now, for just half of  
504 the year. We haven't started that, yet.

505

506 **Bill:** Oh, really?!

507

508 **Tom:** That may be something that we are going to have to look at, in the future. That  
509 would up the price for these land owners, some. It's something that Wayne did, some. He  
510 wasn't a great believer in it. So, I guess I'll just go along.

511

512 **Bill:** That's interesting. Who tends to make that decision? Would that be you... or a  
513 negotiation? You're in the position to make, aren't you?

514

515 **Tom:** Again, these people allow me to make the decision. I try to... when I write them in  
516 the spring, are they going to let me have it another year, will I take it another year, I do  
517 try to tell them what we could do, if they so choose: double stock, and you're probably  
518 looking at more money. They all write back and say: well, you make the decision,  
519 whatever you decide. This Jack Jones, that fills a lot of our country, he kind of wants to  
520 go full season. He likes the full season. So, that's one reason why, we just go along with  
521 it.

522

523 **Bill:** Everybody's happy. Why mess with a good deal?

524

525 **Tom:** You do worry a little...or wonder...

526

527 **Bill:** If other people are doing it, and think that it is a lot better, should we be doing it?

528

529 **Tom:** Should we be doing it? You know, there is a lot of difference between, I can tell  
530 you, the Stratton family that I was telling you about; two of the family members live back  
531 in Seattle and the one in Houston. They have been offered twelve dollars an acre, more,  
532 than I'm giving. When you're talking 3000 acres, you're talking about some dollars. You  
533 wonder how long... Well, let's say, one of these days, this is going to change. They are  
534 going to give this land to their children. When you start dealing with another group, the  
535 next generation, they may see it differently. And, it's hard for me not to see it different.

536

537 **Bill:** This is other people, just like you, here, who are offering to look after their land.

538

539 **Tom:** Correct. And they want to fill it.

540

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541 **Bill:** Get more money, but they'll double stock it; thinking they'll get more out of it.

542

543 **Tom:** Let's just take, for a round figure, let's say I was paying them \$18 an acre net, and  
544 I do take care of the fences. I don't build a new fence; if I build a new fence, they pay for  
545 the supplies and I pay for the labor. I do keep the fence up; I do burn it. I put out the salt.  
546 I stand the death loss. It is really net to them. Other than, of course, they have to pay  
547 taxes out of there. But, they were offered \$30. That's a lot of money.

548

549 **Bill:** 30 instead of 18; that is a lot of money. [Laughter]

550

551 **Tom:** It would be hard for me to turn down. In my position, I couldn't turn it down, I  
552 guess.

553

554 **Bill:** I can also see, on the other side, you're always told: if it sounds too good to be true,  
555 it probably is.

556

557 **Tom:** That's what worries them a little bit.

558

559 **Bill:** There's obviously some more risk that they are taking on there, they've got to think  
560 about.

561

562 **Tom:** Correct.

563

564 **Bill:** They've got their own lives; if they're getting along fine with what they've got now,  
565 feel comfortable...

566

567 **Track 70**

568

569 **Bill:** ...it's pretty hard to make a change.

570

571 **Tom:** It's pretty hard. I think I'm very fortunate that we're dealing with all these pasture  
572 owners that are probably financially in pretty good shape. Me, that kind of lives from  
573 month to month...

574

575 **Bill:** I know about that. [Laughter]

576

577 **Tom:** ...they would be much better financially. I think that these people, maybe, who  
578 made them this offer are taking pretty good care of their land. They're worried that they  
579 use it for four or five years and give it back to them and they won't have anything.  
580 Personally, from what I can see, it has not been that way. They take the cattle out when  
581 they are supposed to.

582

583 **Bill:** The double stocking, where people have done it the way they are supposed to, is  
584 working pretty well.

585

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586 **Tom:** I think it works very well. I really do. I'd have no...

587

588 **Bill:** And, of course, the issue is, is the recovery time on the grass still good...

589

590 **Tom:** Seems like, it sure has been, from what I have observed of their land. If they get  
591 them off at the right time, there have been times when they haven't got them off at the  
592 right time. Then it hurts a little bit.

593

594 **Bill:** Serious overgrazing.

595

596 **Tom:** But, I can't say anything bad about this double stocking, and think it might be  
597 something we want to do.

598

599 **Bill:** You are probably going to get some new generations coming in with some of the  
600 land that are going to want to do it, so...

601

602 **Tom:** I think you are probably right.

603

604 **Bill:** You will probably get to experiment. How does your son feel about it?

605

606 **Tom:** He does a little bit of it on some of his land.

607

608 **Bill:** So, he wouldn't have any problem with it.

609

610 **Tom:** He wouldn't have any problem, at all. Fact is, he's got some cattle that is going to  
611 on the Superior Video Auction that will go in July, like the middle of July.

612

613 **Bill:** Very good. Very useful, thank you very much. Anything else you wanted to talk  
614 about.

615

616 **Tom:** No, I guess you were asking about the farming, the changes in the farming. The  
617 main thing, is when I first came here, we has six or seven people that would come to  
618 farm. You would have these little old Alice Chalmers tractors, CWDs, or whatever they  
619 were, with a little old two row cultivator, a two row planter. We did kind of graduate into  
620 four and six row planters, and bigger tractors; and got down to where you just had two  
621 people did the farming. You didn't work the ground as much.

622

623 **Bill:** More no till?

624

625 **Tom:** Seemed to be you'd just worked and worked and worked the ground; two or three  
626 times over - kind of changed to a kind of no till. I don't know if you would call it exactly  
627 a no till. We didn't work the ground; you used spray, didn't have to do all this cultivating.  
628 So, there was some changes.

629

630 **Bill:** I guess that has been in this thirty, forty years, hasn't it?

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631

632 **Tom:** Mainly, up until we sold the cow herd in, I guess, that was 2005, we must have  
633 sold the cow herd, or 2004. But anyway, most of the feed, about everything we raised  
634 here, went back into the cow herd. We had about 300 cows, so you'd put the alfalfa,  
635 you'd put silage up, corn you'd chop for silage; maybe you'd have a few soybeans, you  
636 raised for the calf crop.

637

638 **Bill:** So, you didn't sell on the market.

639

640 **Tom:** We sold a very little bit. Most of it went back into the cattle.

641

642 **Bill:** It was managed in such a way that the cow herd would need it.

643

644 **Tom:** Correct. Correct. And, you would keep back, maybe, the calves; and winter them,  
645 and put them back out on the grass the next summer. Although, it seemed like the calves  
646 got so big, that by spring, we had to put them in the feed lot. They were too big to go to  
647 grass.

648

649 **Bill:** Well, you were feeding them good!

650

651 **Tom:** Correct. While I was sitting here, I had to think, I graduated from Matfield. They  
652 had a high school here. The gentleman that lived here was Henry and Maud Rogler,  
653 Wayne's father and mother. They had a beautiful roll-top desk, sat right there. Anyway,  
654 he was head of the Gossler Educational Fund. Mrs. Gossler was a Rogler. When she  
655 passed away, she left \$25,000 in this fund, and you could loan the interest out to a student  
656 that graduated from Matfield.

657

658 **Track 71**

659

660 **Tom:** But, it had to be paid back, with no interest...or, supposedly. It was to be paid  
661 back, with no interest, but you could never make the people's name public, that borrowed  
662 it. And anyway, I did borrow

663

664 **Bill:** You got the benefit of it.

665

666 **Tom:** Henry would write me the check. We done all of our freshman, sophomore, junior,  
667 senior Work Days, there was five in the class, we'd all have our workdays here on this  
668 ranch. All five members of the class. So, Wayne's father and mother were very..., they  
669 were super supports.

670

671 **Bill:** They were still here, when you came to work.

672

673 **Tom:** Yes, they were here.

674

675 **Bill:** That is why you were up at the north place.

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676

677 **Tom:** I worked with Henry and Maud. Maud was the... when you would get... it was  
678 time to settle up; Mrs. Rogler would say: Come in here. How many hours did you work?  
679 She wanted to write down what you did. You swept the barn or you moved hay or maybe  
680 you cleaned the chicken house or cleaned the lumber shed or something. She wanted that  
681 wrote down. Ok, so many hours at a certain price. Henry, every year, he'd say: Mama,  
682 give 'em a little extra. No sir, she was a business woman. [Laughter] No sir, she'd say,  
683 that's what they get. So, you would go out by the windmill, when you go home. Henry  
684 would be sitting out there on that cement tank. He'd give you twenty, twenty-five dollars  
685 cash.

686

687 **Bill:** You got your tip! [Laughter]

688

689 **Tom:** He was wonderful. Mrs. Rogler was wonderful. But, she was strictly business.  
690 Wayne took after mother. He was a nice fellow, but he was BUSINESS.

691

692 **Bill:** That's why he was so successful, over the years.

693

694 **Tom:** And, his brother, and two sisters, were super, super nice people to work with. So,  
695 I've been fortunate.

696

697 **Bill:** You've been very fortunate; a good life.

698

699 **Tom:** ...this family, both the Rogler and the Roniger.

700

701 **Bill:** Well, I hope this Pioneer Bluffs Foundation can continue the tradition.

702

703 **Tom:** I really hope it does. I guess as I'm older, you wonder, can it? But, I know they are  
704 working hard at it. I admire them. I'm willing to do my share. I'm on the board of  
705 directors. I try to build it up to people that I see.

706

707 **Bill:** You do what you can. Each person has their own different contribution to make.

708

709 **Tom:** Correct. But, I would love to see it back, kind of like it was,

710

711 **Bill:** A lot of the folks who have moved away, over the years, like to come back and see  
712 that.

713

714 **Tom:** I think that's right.

715

716 **Bill:** It's been done in other parts of the country. There isn't any reason, with the people  
717 that are involved, that it won't be very successful.

718

719 **Tom:** I know you are right, and they are working hard on it. Jim Hoy is another one  
720 working hard

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721

722 **Bill:** Another part of it. Thank you very much. I think I will turn it off.

723

724

725

726