

Flint Hills Ranching Impact Oral History Project, Phase I  
Partially funded by the Kansas Humanities Council  
Hatcher Interview, April 2007, Final

1 **Interview conducted by Belle Grimsley; Recorded on Marantz 660 Digital**  
2 **Recorder; Transcribed by Bill Smith**

3  
4 **Track 16**

5  
6 **Belle:** My name is Belle Grimsley. This is Friday, April the 20<sup>th</sup> 2007. The time is 6:30  
7 p.m. and we are in the kitchen of the Fox Creek Ranch which is located four and one half  
8 miles north of the junction of Hwy 50 and Hwy 177. I will be interviewing Bill and  
9 Jeanne Hatcher and this is for the Flint Hills Ranching Project. First thing, I am just going  
10 to ask a lot of questions. OK, we'll get some background information. Which one of you  
11 would like to start first?

12  
13 **Jeanne:** I will.

14  
15 **Belle:** Jeanne will start first. Will you tell me your name, what year, and where you were  
16 born?

17  
18 **Jeanne:** Jeanne Hatcher, I was born in 1941 in Ottawa, Kansas.

19  
20 **Belle:** Where do you live now?

21  
22 **Jeanne:** In the Flint Hills, on the Fox Creek Ranch, Rural Route One, Box 19.

23  
24 **Belle:** When did you come to the Flint Hills?

25  
26 **Jeanne:** You mean to live?

27  
28 **Belle:** Yes

29  
30 **Jeanne:** I came in 1984.

31  
32 **Belle:** OK, now I'm going to switch to Bill. Tell me your name, what year, and where  
33 you were born.

34  
35 **Bill:** Bill Hatcher, and I was born in Emporia, in 1930, January the 10. That was my  
36 home until we moved out here, on the ranch, in 1984.

37  
38 **Belle:** Alright, how long have you been ranching?

39  
40 **Bill:** Well, we were involved with the Sale Barn in Emporia, my father and Ohme Peak,  
41 they had a partnership, and they ... My father started that Sale Barn in the late 20s, and  
42 by doing that, they were involved with ranches all over Chase County. They worked with  
43 clients and buyers and people interested in livestock. That is where they were so involved  
44 with the Flint Hills; found people to fill the grass and to buy the cattle.

45

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46 **Belle:** And when did you buy the ranch?

47

48 **Bill:** The ranch was bought in 1946.

49

50 **Belle:** Would you describe the ranch? Physically, how many acres, how many head of  
51 cattle did you deal with, on average? Is the ranch located on the upland hills or a river  
52 bottom?

53

54 **Bill:** Be a little over eight sections, about 5,600 acres, and it is now leased out to some  
55 Texas people through Council Grove people that are taking care of the cattle. They  
56 double stock the cattle on the ranch and they allow about approximately two acres per  
57 animal on the ranch. There is about forty-seven hundred acres, I suppose, that is grazed  
58 that way. The rest is in brome grass, and the creek bottom goes through the ranch.

59

60 **Belle:** Which creek is that?

61

62 **Bill:** Fox Creek! (laughter by all)

63

64 **Belle:** I just had to ask that! (pause) What unique features or unusual landscapes can you  
65 find on your property?

66

67 **Bill:** (pause)

68

69 **Jeanne:** We have a waterfall!

70

71 **Bill:** We have waterfall on the north end. It is not a big waterfall. But it is quite  
72 distinctive, when the water is coming over it. It is kind of an extra special spot, where the  
73 water comes over the waterfall. It is only about a three or four feet, but it is interesting to  
74 see.

75

76 **Belle:** I'll bet it is! (pause) Is it always continual? Like a spring, maybe?

77

78 **Bill:** As long as we don't have a drought. There can be times when there is not much  
79 water in the creek, but we are blessed with good flow in the creek, now!

80

81 **Belle:** Yes, after all the moisture we have just had. (pause) What is unusual to you about  
82 your life?

83

84 **Jeanne:** Well, I think is beautiful, because the creek runs the full length of the ranch.  
85 And, so we have bottom land as the hills, the Flint Hills. And we have **three** hills over on  
86 (end of track)

87

88

**Track 17**

89

90 **Jeanne:** east of us we call the three sisters, huh, I don't know, they just named them that.

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91  
92 **Bill:** They think it came from an Indian legend.  
93  
94 **Jeanne:** OK. That is one thing that is unique about the ranch. (pause)  
95  
96 **Belle:** OK, let's go down to ranching in the Flint Hills. Let's see. We already know what  
97 kind of ranching operation you have, it is a cattle ranching operation. Right?  
98  
99 **Jeanne:** Right.  
100  
101 **Belle:** With some brome grass...  
102  
103 **Jeanne:** Right.  
104  
105 **Bill:** Yes.  
106  
107 **Belle:** Do you lots of ... you don't have any other crops either, like alfalfa?  
108  
109 **Bill:** Not now. Not now. We used. We have it all in brome grass now.  
110  
111 **Belle:** What crops did you have before, besides brome?  
112  
113 **Bill:** Usually a silage crop, we'd have corn silage, or we'd have sargo silage. At times,  
114 we had planted wheat on the ranch, in the past.  
115  
116 **Belle:** Were those successful?  
117  
118 **Bill:** For those times, it worked alright. Because in those particular times, we were  
119 wintering cattle on the ranch. We don't winter cattle here now.  
120  
121 **Belle:** OK...  
122  
123 **Bill:** We just have a cattle buyer come on for the summer grazing.  
124  
125 **Belle:** What are the primary activities of a ranching operation? Alright, I'm going to help  
126 you... I'm going to go with you today, what would I do?  
127  
128 **Jeanne:** Well, today, we don't do much, but, just a few years ago, if you want to know  
129 about that, we had the cattle... we'd work them, we branded them, we gave them all  
130 kinds of shots and we fed them. When the pastures were ready we drove them out to  
131 pastures on horses. We let them graze and sometimes we supplemented the cattle, early  
132 on, if there was not enough grass, with what we called cake, which is a sorghum protein.  
133 Then, we checked the cattle on horseback. If there were any sick ones, you roped, and  
134 gave them a shot for foot rot or pink eye. ...just watch them all summer. Then round

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135 them up and bring them in in the winter time... I mean in the fall. We would weigh them,  
136 and sell them. Or, take them to a sale barn and sell them.

137

138 **Bill:** Or possibly to a feed lot. (laughter)

139

140 **Jeanne:** Yes, we did take many to a feedlot in western Kansas, to feed. (laughter)

141

142 **Belle:** OK, backing up, going along with what you were saying, if I were coming out  
143 here... the first thing, ...Ok, I have spent most of my time in a small town, even though I  
144 was raised on a dairy farm... but we didn't have the horses...

145

146 **Jeanne:** ...right...

147

148 **Belle:** ...except, you know, to look at... we didn't ride them... So, the very first thing I  
149 would have to do is... someone would have to help me learn how to ride a horse? How to  
150 put on the saddle and bridle, and this type of thing?

151

152 **Jeanne:** Sure!

153

154 **Bill:** Sure!

155

156 **Belle:** All these things you are describing take just take quite a few months, years, to  
157 learn how to do those things. You mentioned the shots for the cattle. Did someone on the  
158 range to that? Do you have the veterinarian come out?

159

160 **Jeanne:** We do that.

161

162 **Belle:** You do that.

163

164 **Jeanne:** Sure.

165

166 **Bill:** Jeanne did a lot of it!

167

168 **Belle:** Oh, my goodness. (laughter)

169

170 **Bill:** She brands a lot of them, too! (laughter)

171

172 **Jeanne:** The Veterinary... it is right on the medicine... how many ccs to give for a  
173 hundred pounds... for the calf. And it was for... sure that they didn't get pneumonia...  
174 we'd give them shots for bugs... and, black leg...

175

176 **Bill:** Black leg was big one...

177

178 **Jeanne:** They'd get disease...diseases... these are more like inoculations that you would  
179 give your children.

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180

181 **Bill:** And viruses are always changing, so we'd try to keep up with the best medicine,  
182 from the veterinary. There was always new medicine coming along, because they'd get  
183 immune to certain types of medicine. Just like in human beings, you have to constantly  
184 be changing... to a better antidote, to offset pneumonia, and things like that.

185

186 **Jeanne:** Also, we put ear tags in them with our names on 'em, and our phone numbers, in  
187 case...the calves... got...

188

189 **Bill:** ...strayed...

190

191 **Jeanne:** ...got lost. (laughter)

192

193 **Belle:** Did that ever happen?

194

195 **Jeanne:** Oh, sure!

196

197 **Bill:** Oh, sure! (simultaneously) ...it happens.

198

199 **Jeanne:** Well, they get mixed up with the neighbors... so you can see your ears tag, next  
200 to their ear tag... and you'd say, well they don't have any green ear tags and we do so  
201 there are ours over here and there are there's over there. That's how you did that.

202

203 **Bill:** It might be interesting... we adjoined the Z Bar Ranch ... three and a half miles...  
204 exclusive...to our ranch... we are near to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

205

206 **Track 18**

207

208 **Belle:** That's great. Oh, I was going to ask you something else about ... Oh, fences...did  
209 someone, apparently, had to spend a lot of time, riding fences? Did you have rock  
210 fences? Barbed wire fences?

211

212 **Jeanne:** Barbed wire fences.

213

214 **Bill:** Barbed wire fences.

215

216 **Jeanne:** Well, they started putting them up in 1946, when you bought 'em, didn't you?

217

218 **Bill:** Yes, they used a lot of big, older cattle, in the earlier days. Like in the twenties, and  
219 after World War I, mostly the cattle were not fed anything, they were only grass fed  
220 cattle. They'd take them right of the grass and take them to Kansas City. That is where  
221 the packing houses bought them. And it is completely changed, now. People like those  
222 fed cattle. So, ...

223

224 **Jeanne:** So what about the fences?

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225

226 **Bill:** Four year old cattle were usually the ones that were stocked... and were brought up  
227 on the trains. So, three wire fence would hold those cattle. Where now, you need to have,  
228 with yearling cattle that weigh 500 to 600 pounds, you have to have better fences.

229

230 **Belle:** I see...

231

232 **Bill:** When you are on the highway, you certainly need better fences.

233

234 **Jeanne:** And I think, through the years, so the cattle would graze better, they put a lot of  
235 cross fencing in, and Bill built fence. And he can tell you who built fences, 40 years ago.  
236 And we're still building fence, at times... [Bill chuckling, in agreement, in background]  
237 to make grazing better, and those sort of things.

238

239 **Bill:** The tendency for the cattle in all this, to graze in Kansas, they'll go to the south end,  
240 because they'll go into the wind. And if you have your ponds, maybe, a little bit to the  
241 north end of the pasture, it will help graze it more evenly. It's hard to get ever thing just  
242 the way you want it because there's certain places a pond will leak... and it won't work  
243 there. They'll have to be where the geology is right for a pond to hold water.

244

245 **Belle:** How many ponds do you have, do you know?

246

247 **Bill:** No. [gentle laughter]

248

249 **Belle:** Lost count.

250

251 **Bill:** There'd be several.

252

253 **Jeanne:** I don't know. Fifteen to twenty...

254

255 **Bill:** Oh, at least...

256

257 **Jeanne:** At least fifteen to twenty ponds...

258

259 **Bill:** At least that many... Some of them are bigger than others...but...

260

261 **Jeanne:** Lots of ponds.

262

263 **Bill:** Ah, my father and Mr. Peak, they worked at... to put in as many times as they  
264 could... to put water in on the ranch. They worked with the government on pond  
265 programs. We just went ahead and put them on there... because... the water is crucial...  
266 to livestock ... if you don't have water... you better move the cattle.

267

268 **Belle:** [Pause] Let's see... Have you ever ranched outside the Flint Hills, and...  
269 probably...

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271 **Bill:** Yes, we had partners in Canadian, Texas. We had a fairly large operation there...  
272 we have for years. We had cows down there. We would raise the cattle until there were  
273 yearling cattle... the older yearling cattle ranged 600 pounds. Then we'd bring them up  
274 and graze them on this ranch, and the Glendale ranch, which we owned at that time... and  
275 other leased property that we had. And, it worked real well, because in that part of the  
276 country you don't have the hard winters that we have. You can winter cattle cheaper in  
277 the panhandle than you can here.

278

279 **Belle:** Then you brought the calves up here, off of the cows.

280

281 **Bill:** No, the yearlings...

282

283 **Jeanne:** It might be interesting to note that they leased the Jones ranch, which was the  
284 Jones Trust

285

286 **Bill:** The Jones Trust...

287

288 **Jeanne:** That was the ranch...

289

290 **Bill:** That was the ranch...

291

292 **Belle:** OK. [Pause]

293

294 **Bill:** Our partner still runs that ranch down there.

295

296 **Belle:** Does he?

297

298 **Bill:** I mean, he was our partner when ... the family lived in Texas, that were partners  
299 with us on it... and they still run cattle on that ranch.

300

301 **Belle:** Ok. We've been talking about just cattle in general. Is there a special breed of  
302 cattle that grow best in the Flint Hills?

303

304 **Bill:** [negative murmurings]

305

306 **Jeanne:** Probably cross bred...a thin yearling, if you can get a thin one. Not ones that are  
307 around here ... They get fat on their mothers, here.

308

309 **Bill:** And, you don't want those fat ones off of the wheat... because usually the cattle  
310 coming off of the wheat in western Kansas will be very fleshy and will not put the  
311 pounds on like the animal that had been wintered on just grass and a little protein in the  
312 wintertime. It will be much more likely to get those good gains, than those ... fleshy  
313 when they go on... going to have trouble...showing the good gains, that you really need.

314

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315 **Belle:** Ok. Is there a difference of opinion among various ranchers?

316

317 **Bill:** Absolutely. [laughter all around]

318

319 **Track 19**

320

321 **Jeanne:** If that's about the cattle that grow best, probably a cross-bred, thin steer would  
322 be the best.

323

324 **Bill:** Most of them that have been in business very long will go along with the idea to  
325 have the good, healthy when they're thin and put them on the grass. I think you'll find  
326 most of them will go with that.... To get the maximum gain that the need.

327

328 **Belle:** OK... [pause] ... I know how you get the cattle to market now, but have you  
329 always done it by truck?

330

331 **Bill:** No. When we bought this ranch, it was right after World War II. We were still  
332 driving... We were unloading cattle that had come right up from Texas right down at  
333 Strong City, and drive them up here.

334

335 **Jeanne:** On the railroad.

336

337 **Bill:** On the railroad. We'd drive them across the Z-Bar Ranch and bring them right up  
338 here. And put 'em in our pastures.

339

340 **Jeanne:** Then you took 'em back to the railroad.

341

342 **Bill:** Then we'd take 'em back to the railroad. That's how you shipped 'em. And, we  
343 helped our neighbors ship cattle – which is the ranch up here, the Mashed O ranch and  
344 the Division ranch... cowboys with those people. And they moved cattle that way.  
345 'Cause everything went through the railroad, until later on, after World War II, the bigger  
346 and better possum bellied trucks took the business away from the railroads, because they  
347 could deliver them right to the pasture. And, they could do it in a fraction of the time....  
348 And less stress on the cattle.

349

350 **Belle:** What do you think of the movable cattle pens? Were those something that were  
351 really helpful?

352

353 **Jeanne:** Very good. Well, ya! Or else, you have to drive the cattle for miles and miles.

354

355 **Bill:** People have those portable panels.

356

357 **Jeanne:** Portable panels are not too bad!

358

359 **Belle:** Those haven't been around all that long, have they?

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360

361 **Bill:** And goose-necked trailers to haul the horses to work. Lot of people didn't have the  
362 trailers, so they had to ride clear to the pasture. They didn't have trucks to haul them.  
363 They had to ride all the way. And when they got them to the stockyards, they had to ride  
364 them all the way home.

365

366 **Belle:** [Pause] About how many people are we talking... cowboys... cattlemen... people  
367 helping are we talking about, that would be on your ranch while you were doing the  
368 cattle... running the ranch, yourself?

369

370 **Bill:** We usually, when we weren't living on the ranch, we were working at the sales  
371 barn... we took full time help at the sale barn... just be out here in the summer time.  
372 Maybe we put up hay and do things like that. There'd be only about two, or three, people  
373 staying on the ranch year-around.

374

375 **Jeanne:** But when you brought cattle in, you'd...

376

377 **Bill:** When we brought cattle in, we'd use... we had little different thing than a lot of  
378 people did, because we had four or five people that worked at the sale barn, and we...  
379 they were all quite capable ... handle their horses, and...things like that.

380

381 **Jeanne:** But, weren't there always two families that lived here on the ranch?

382

383 **Bill:** Yes! Always two families lived on the ranch.

384

385 **Belle:** And they took care of the fences, and the cattle, and...

386

387 **Bill:** Fed the cattle in the winter time.

388

389 **Belle:** Took care of the shots... [pause] That's really interesting. Let's see. Did we talk  
390 about the differences? You said you raised... you did have some cattle in Texas, and  
391 here... Were there any GREAT differences between how you raised them there and how  
392 you raised them here?

393

394 **Bill:** Well, you didn't have to feed them as much down there as you did up here...  
395 because the winters are milder... the grass is stronger in the winter time, in the Texas  
396 Panhandle. The grass is short, but it has more protein in it. For that reason, in most  
397 normal situations, they can be wintered cheaper than they can in this part of the country.  
398 Especially, if we have a hard winter, like the last two winters have been. [Pause]

399

400 **Belle:** Well, we've been talking about how you spent your time working with cattle and  
401 taking care of the cattle and taking care of the fences. I'm sure there must have been  
402 some time when you did something that was just for fun? What were some the things you  
403 did? Did you...

404

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405 **Jeanne:** Fished!

406

407 **Belle:** You fished?

408

409 **Jeanne:** In Fox Creek, of course... and the ponds.

410

411 **Bill:** Jeanne fishes the ponds.

412

413 **Jeanne:** What do you do for social activities? I don't know. Go to town... to church.

414 [Chuckles all around]

415

416 **Bill:** Go watch the Kansas City Chiefs play.

417

418 **Jeanne:** Oh, well we... She's talking about way back when, Bill ...

419

420 **Bill:** OK! [laughter all around]

421

422 **Jeanne:** What year are we talking about? Well, we didn't move out here until 1984.

423

424 **Belle:** OK.

425

426 **Jeanne:** So, we've only been out here twenty-three years... and, ah...

427

428 **Belle:** What did the families who lived out here do?

429

430 **Track 20**

431

432 **Belle:** Did they play cards?

433

434 **Bill:** I think they played cards. And went to dances... some of them did. Yep. They had church functions. In Cottonwood Falls, and Strong City.

435

436  
437 **Jeanne:** When we first moved out here... it's no longer done, but... when we first lived  
438 here, everyone that lived on the Fox Creek, all the neighbors, when somebody new came  
439 in, they gave them a house-warming. And somebody brought desert, they brought paper  
440 plates, they brought everything, and... just had a house-warming for them... as far as just  
441 getting acquainted. We don't do it any more. But, we did it for... I don't know how many  
442 years... '84 probably to about '88 ...something like that.

443

444 **Belle:** So, how do you think... sounds like things have changed a little bit. Many fewer  
445 families lived...

446

447 **Jeanne:** There are fewer families.

448

449 **Bill:** Fewer families.

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450

451 Belle: ...lived in the area.

452

453 **Bill:** And a lot of the younger families, they may ranch out here, and they also have a job  
454 in Emporia... or elsewhere...they might both...the man and his wife, may have jobs in  
455 Emporia... and also, run cattle too.

456

457 **Belle:** Ok. Do you think everybody in the Flint Hills knows how to ride a horse? Is that  
458 really true?

459

460 **Bill:** Some can ride better than others! [a smile in his voice!] [then laughter all around]

461

462 **Belle:** But they better all know how to ride...

463

464 **Bill:** Oh. I wasn't going to say that.

465

466 **Jeanne:** If they are ranchers, perhaps they do.

467

468 **Belle:** It is just an absolute necessity, I would think.

469

470 **Jeanne:** There is probably some women who never learned how to do that, but... a lot of  
471 them probably did.

472

473 **Belle:** Have four-wheelers replaced horses, somewhat? In dealing with cattle these days?

474

475 **Jeanne:** A little.

476

477 **Bill:** For prowling, and just checking pastures, especially in the summer time, when the  
478 heat is so hard on horses, a person can check cattle so much... if they're not going to  
479 have to do anything in particular... and just want to observe the cattle... they can get over  
480 the hills so easily. These light four-wheelers, they don't... when the ground is a little soft,  
481 or something, they don't tear up the grass. They're very efficient that way. They can just  
482 cover so much territory, where a horse... it would just be too much for a horse. You  
483 might have to use two horses... and you wouldn't get it done as good... especially when  
484 it is extremely hot. It is really hard on 'em. A lot of people use 'em that way. But, they  
485 still use horses a lot, too, when they need to move bunches around.

486

487 **Belle:** In your opinion, what are some benefits from ranching in the Flint Hills? You said  
488 you worked in a sale barn, you ranched in Texas, you have ranched in the Flint Hills.  
489 What are some of the benefits?

490

491 **Jeanne:** Well, it's beautiful!

492

493 **Bill:** It's beautiful.

494

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495 **Jeanne:** It's very peaceful. We have lots of wildlife to observe: turkeys and deer and  
496 birds...owls... you see them all the time.

497  
498 **Bill:** Ya.

499  
500 **Jeanne:** I don't know, what else...

501  
502 **Bill:** It's not like LA, you can always look up and see the stars!

503  
504 **Jeanne:** You can see the stars at night. You can ride... and it is very beautiful. [Pause]

505  
506 **Belle:** What is the biggest change... in the ranching operations...from say, I guess it  
507 would '45- '46, up to now... what is the biggest change that you have noticed?

508  
509 **Bill:** Well, the double-stocking of cattle is kind of a new thing. Wasn't done in the  
510 forties. Most people did long term grazing. They didn't do the short-term grazing. In the  
511 last fifteen years, Manhattan has pushed the double-stocking... if it's handled right, it's  
512 better on the pasture. More pounds come off of the ranch that way. But they have to be  
513 careful about it.

514  
515 **Jeanne:** And the trucking...

516  
517 **Bill:** Yes, the trucks they can just move cattle... they can load the cattle... like the cattle  
518 come up from here, they come up from Waco, Texas, and that part of the country. They'll  
519 drive all night, they'll unload 'em in the morning, and they'll be here. They won't hardly  
520 know they've moved.

521  
522 **Jeanne:** I think Bill has unloaded eighteen truckloads in the last three days.

523  
524 **Bill:** It will take about 34 loads to fill this place. About 80 head per load.

525  
526 **Jeanne:** They came up from Waco, Texas...

527  
528 **Belle:** That was my next question...

529  
530 **Bill:** There'll be about 2400 head.

531  
532 **Belle:** And they will stay here until... July 20<sup>th</sup> or something like that...

533  
534 **Bill:** July 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> – something like that.

535  
536 **Belle:** Then, will you help load them back up on the trucks?

537  
538 **Bill:** No. The man who is leasing the ranch will do that. We don't have to do that... We  
539 have done it...

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541 **Jeanne:** But we will count them, on and off. We will count them.

542

543 **Belle:** Do you really?? Do you count each cow? How do you do that? How do you count  
544 cattle?...

545

546 **Track 21**

547

548 **Belle:** I know how you count geese, flying in the sky, but how do you count cattle,  
549 roaming around on the range?

550

551 **Bill:** When they come off the truck!

552

553 **Jeanne:** When they come off the truck it is easy, usually, they come off one at a time.  
554 But it is very difficult... it is not as easy as it seems... 'cause you can lose your count.  
555 That's how you do it! You know, and when they load 'em... they go up... you see... you  
556 count 'em goin' on!

557

558 **Bill:** Then, you want to agree... the truck driver too agrees with the count.

559

560 **Jeanne:** In the pastures, counting them, you just ... if you're on horseback, it's easier...  
561 you just kind of go in groups, if you can... if they don't run off, you can do a fair job if  
562 there's not too many, but... it can be difficult. [ both chuckling ] One at a time.

563

564 **Bill:** Bigger pastures are more difficult to count. [Pause]

565

566 **Belle:** Range burning is a long standing operation in the Flint Hills. What are your  
567 feelings about range burning?

568

569 **Bill:** We burn it every time we can.

570

571 **Jeanne:** We didn't burn it this year, because of the drought last year.

572

573 **Bill:** Severe drought last year, and our neighbors didn't want to burn either. And, we've  
574 usually worked very well with the neighbors... because of these big wide open pastures  
575 without cross roads or places to stop the fire. We work with our neighbors on it. We can  
576 light the fire down at 50 and take it up to the county line.

577

578 **Belle:** Ok. That's a long ways... how many miles?

579

580 **Bill:** That's about four different people involved with it.

581

582 **Jeanne:** Probably eight miles.

583

584 **Bill:** Ya!

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585

586 **Jeanne:** Eight to ten miles.

587

588 **Bill:** Over to the Peyton Creek Road.

589

590 **Belle:** I didn't tell you this when I started. I'm a retired school teacher, and I taught in  
591 Council Grove. And I remember smoke, you know, coming from this direction. We could  
592 always tell when the pastures were being burned... because the smoke would always  
593 come...

594

595 **Bill:** South wind would take it up there!

596

597 **Belle:** Absolutely! And, sometimes it would be really... really dark! You know, and from  
598 a long ways away!

599

600 **Bill:** When the grass is big, it's going to be a big fire.

601

602 **Belle:** Do you foresee range burning becoming more or less prominent, in the future, for  
603 this area?

604

605 **Bill:** If they're going to have to make a living on it, they're going to burn it!

606

607 **Belle:** Well, then... we should talk about why... about the reason is for the burning.

608

609 **Bill:** Extra gain on cattle.

610

611 **Jeanne:** And get rid of the old, dead grass.

612

613 **Belle:** And, how about trees that grow up?

614

615 **Jeanne:** Right!

616

617 **Belle:** Does it have something to do with that, too?

618

619 **Bill:** It takes care of those trees...

620

621 **Jeanne:** Cedar trees!

622

623 **Bill:** – or you would have nothing but brush out here.

624

625 **Belle:** Right. I think... from all I've read and heard... it is a very important part of this  
626 area. [Pause] Can you describe some of your experience burning pasture? [laughter] Do  
627 you remember any dangerous moments? Any funny or unusual moments?

628

629 **Jeanne:** We've had lots of those.

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630

631 **Bill:** and several of each...

632

633 **Belle:** Funny? Unusual? ... or dangerous?

634

635 **Jeanne:** Well...

636

637 **Bill:** Wind change... and the fire gets across the highway... that can be very dangerous.

638

639 **Jeanne:** There have been dangerous... It's been several years ago... I was in the back of  
640 the pickup truck with him driving... and, uh, we were into some rocks... and he  
641 couldn't... I had propane... what'd I have, propane...

642

643 **Bill:** Ya...

644

645 **Jeanne:** Lighter... lighting grass and... he couldn't... he drove into a place he couldn't  
646 get out of... so he says, "Throw that in the back seat, and come in!" So we fly away! [Bill  
647 chuckling] To get out of it! ... I know one experience he tells about... he brought his son  
648 out, who wasn't too old... I don't know, twelve, or something... he thought this was  
649 completely boring... and about that time, the wind changed [Bill laughing in  
650 background]... and it flew across the road... and they were out there with gunny sacks,  
651 and water [Bill still enjoying the story...] ... and it became very exciting, then... instead  
652 of being boring!

653

654 **Bill:** It almost went to the Chase County line! [laughter – then, very serious!] The wind  
655 change can be a serious thing, when you have big fire!

656

657 **Belle:** You mentioned gunny sacks...

658

659 **Jeanne:** Right!

660

661 **Belle:** using the wet gunny sacks, and everything. But now I see a lot of... they'll have  
662 somebody on a four-wheeler... and they'll have a tank wagon with water in it... now... I  
663 guess...

664

665 **Jeanne:** Well, we've always... They were one... the Fox Creek Ranch was one of the  
666 first ranches that had...

667

668 **Bill:** The Z Bar Ranch and us were the only ones to have sprayers ... right after the  
669 war...

670

671 **Jeanne:** But you can't take them everywhere.

672

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673 **Bill:** Used to be, people just backfired around their houses and things... because they  
674 knew the fire would come. That's the way they prepared for it, because they didn't have  
675 the equipment to fight the fire. The fire just came.

676  
677 **Belle:** Do they still... do some people still do that, just as a precaution?

678  
679 **Bill:** They should, but they... some do.

680  
681 **Jeanne:** We do it. We go around their places.

682  
683 **Track 22**

684  
685 **Jeanne:** Or, we make a back fire with our... light the fire, and put it out with our water  
686 truck...

687  
688 **Bill:** Ya!

689  
690 **Jeanne:** ...so it won't get to near them, and then you can set the whole place ...

691  
692 **Bill:** You try to be EXTRA careful with it... because there are more people living in the  
693 area... more traffic on the highways... its just a thing you have to be really careful  
694 about... And, we always check with the Sheriff's office, before we light a fire. We don't  
695 light one without it.

696  
697 **Belle:** Do you have to get a burning permit?

698  
699 **Jeanne:** No.

700  
701 **Bill:** No, not in Chase County, you don't.

702  
703 **Belle:** Well, we do in Lyon County. That's why I asked.

704  
705 **Bill:** We're not zoned out here, either.

706  
707 **Belle:** Oh, really?! [Pause] Ok, how has ranching evolved from previous generations? For  
708 better, for worse, or I don't know?

709  
710 **Jeanne:** Well, I think it's easier...

711  
712 **Bill:** It's much easier than... most people have had to ride those horses everywhere...

713  
714 **Jeanne:** And for miles. Bill used to drive them from Emporia to...

715  
716 **Bill:** We'd drive cattle from Emporia to the Glendale Ranch...

717

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718 **Jeanne:** To another ranch, east of here.  
719  
720 **Belle:** How many miles would it have been?  
721  
722 **Bill:** It was over here by... well, the road that goes to Council Grove... goes to Lake  
723 Kahone. We had the Glendale Ranch.  
724  
725 **Jeanne:** 15 miles?  
726  
727 **Bill:** Oh, ya, but there wasn't near as many houses... west of town then.  
728  
729 **Jeanne:** And, we did... we do check fences with 4-wheelers!  
730  
731 **Bill:** Oh, ya! It's good!  
732  
733 **Jeanne:** I think now, it's better, it's easier.  
734  
735 **Bill:** It's much easier; much easier! Takes much less people to do the work, too... I mean,  
736 like, what little farming we do, we just have other people do it, they come in with big  
737 equipment... and they have it done... in no time, compared to what it used to be like.  
738  
739 **Belle:** Does technology have a play in here anywhere?  
740  
741 **Bill:** Certainly!  
742  
743 **Jeanne:** Better trucks!  
744  
745 **Belle:** You have cell phones...  
746  
747 **Jeanne:** Sure! We carry those, for emergencies!  
748  
749 **Belle:** ...email... Well, at one point, electricity wasn't an easy thing to have...  
750  
751 **Jeanne:** No, in fact, the people that started this ranch... back, I don't know in what  
752 year... turn of the century?  
753  
754 **Bill:** The Civil War...  
755  
756 **Jeanne:** They lived in Strong City, because they could have...  
757  
758 **Bill:** No, Cottonwood Falls, Jeanne...  
759  
760 **Jeanne:** Oh! Well, the manager lived in Strong City, so he could...  
761  
762 **Bill:** Oh, ya!

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763

764 **Jeanne:** ...so he could talk to the people who owned this area.

765

766 **Bill:** Ya, the Z Bar manager lived ...

767

768 **Jeanne:** ...because there was electricity.

769

770 **Bill:** ... lived in Strong City so he could use the telephone.

771

772 **Jeanne:** There was no electricity out here. So, they... the roads that were out here, when  
773 Bill first went out here... there was a dirt road...

774

775 **Bill:** There was some gravel on it... but if we had an inch of rain on it, driving from here  
776 to Manhattan... it was quite an experience! [Laughter] And the road was built... the  
777 highway out here... was built in 1956.

778

779 **Belle:** Ok, that's 177?

780

781 **Bill:** 177 highway... and before that... it was just narrow bridges and sharp turns...  
782 gravel road... more like a trail, almost... to Manhattan. But now, its big business, when  
783 they have a football game in Manhattan. The road gets really busy! The people from  
784 Wichita come up this road. It's a lot a traffic, then! [Laughter]

785

786 **Belle:** Right! [Pause] What are some of your memories of this area? It says it can be  
787 ranching, a particular event, or life in general. There's some really good memories? Or  
788 just plain memories?

789

790 **Bill:** Oh, we've had a lot of good memories here! I've enjoyed it!

791

792 **Jeanne:** We've picnicked at the waterfall...and, uh, I don't know...

793

794 **Bill:** Well, my sister came back with her children. They moved... her and her husband,  
795 moved to California shortly after she was married... and they bring the children back to  
796 the Flint Hills in the summer time. Some of 'em are ten years old, and they hadn't seen  
797 the stars, in that area, that they could remember... 'til they came out to Kansas... they  
798 could see the stars. In the Los Angeles area, they didn't have that privilege. [laughing]

799

800 **Belle:** They saw movie stars, maybe...

801

802 **Jeanne:** There is always a good rodeo out here... of course, there is one in Lyon County,  
803 too, so... Life in general, like I said before, just...

804

805 **Belle:** I love your house! Do you have some fond memories...

806

807 **Jeanne:** Oh, yes!

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808

809

**Track 23**

810

811 **Belle:** ...memories of planning the house and how you wanted to adapt the house to  
812 exactly how you wanted it?

813

814 **Bill:** Well, we went to Kansas City and saw it...

815

816 **Jeanne:** Saw it...well, we had fun... we helped build it... in some ways... and our  
817 younger son helped build some of it. It was a... it's been a fun thing. We've enjoyed  
818 living here.

819

820 **Belle:** I noticed the sign on the gate, because I always stop and read all the signs...and it  
821 said, "to pavilion area" – can you talk a little bit about the pavilion area?

822

823 **Jeanne:** Well, that is not ours.

824

825 **Belle:** It's not yours?

826

827 **Jeanne:** No, it belongs to our son.

828

829 **Bill:** Youngest son...

830

831 **Belle:** Ok.

832

833 **Jeanne:** So we don't really have anything to do with that.

834

835 **Bill:** That's...

836

837 **Jeanne:** He has roping events in there, mainly, and he trains horses.

838

839 **Bill:** He breaks horses, also.

840

841 **Belle:** Do you ever give him any advice?

842

843 **Jeanne:** Well, we try not! [laughter all around]

844

845 **Belle:** Does he break horses for other people, or does he break them and sell them...

846

847 **Jeanne:** For other people, mainly...

848

849 **Bill:** Mainly.

850

851 **Belle:** Ok. So, ... this is for you. Explain why you have stayed a rancher in the Flint  
852 Hills. And, why you will remain a rancher in the Flint Hills.

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853

854 **Bill:** Well, I'm supposed to be retired now, but I still get involved with ranch... but, we  
855 enjoy living here. We've had the privilege of being able to go to Texas in the winter  
856 time... since we don't have cattle here.

857

858 **Jeanne:** You have...I know she said the question was for you... but, you have loved the  
859 cattle business.

860

861 **Bill:** Oh, yes!

862

863 **Jeanne:** There is no doubt in our minds that he loves working with cattle... buying  
864 cattle... seeing them grow... he loves to be a cattleman.

865

866 **Bill:** Always look forward to find some one that might buy one. [chuckle]

867

868 **Belle:** Ok, so you do spend some of your winters in...

869

870 **Jeanne:** We spend two months in Texas.

871

872 **Belle:** In Texas.

873

874 **Bill:** We don't have cattle on the ranch in the winter, now.

875

876 **Belle:** Uh hu... Well, I was just interested in that because you mentioned that you are  
877 retired... But, some people when they retire, they move closer to a metropolitan area,  
878 maybe sometimes... some times it's the other way...they move to a country area, a  
879 country setting. I noticed you've chosen to stay right here.

880

881 **Jeanne:** Probably for financial reasons. [laughter] Ranching is not that prosperous!

882

883 **Belle:** I thought you were going to say it was because of the water fall.

884

885 **Jeanne:** No, the cattle business is not... it does not make you rich. Let's put it that way.

886

887 **Belle:** I think this is absolutely...

888

889 **Bill:** I think most people in the cattle business say... if they are fortunate enough to make  
890 some money it, they have earned it.

891

892 **Belle:** Ok. What are some of the best stories passed down to you by your family about  
893 life on the ranch, in the past? Did you Dad ever live out here? He was mostly the sale  
894 barn, right? In Emporia?

895

896 **Bill:** He never lived out here...

897

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898 **Belle:** He never was a rancher?

899

900 **Bill:** He lived close by the sale barn. But, the business took him to Oklahoma, Texas, all  
901 over... all over the Flint Hills.

902

903 **Jeanne:** But you have stories, because you and Lee came out here and worked all the  
904 time.

905

906 **Bill:** Oh, yes. We've had different kind of wrecks on horses on ice... and all those kind  
907 of things... [chuckle]

908

909 **Jeanne:** He got lost in a pasture and had a bet one time. I remember that story... of which  
910 direction to go.

911

912 **Bill:** Oh, it was foggy, and I didn't know how to find my way out... so we had to follow  
913 the fence out.

914

915 **Belle:** How long did that take?

916

917 **Bill:** Oh, not long. An hour, maybe...

918

919 **Belle:** An hour.

920

921 **Jeanne:** Some of the stories about burning pastures, we get too late at night, and too  
922 much smoke, and you had get out and walk in front of the vehicle for fear you would  
923 drive into a ditch.

924

925 **Bill:** Drive into a ditch... That's when it's dangerous, driving out there when it's dark.

926

927 **Jeanne:** The funnier stories...

928

929 **Bill:** Because there can be some ravines you... you wouldn't want to drive off into...

930

931 **Jeanne:** I can't think of funny stories... sad stories...

932

933 **Belle:** Getting lost in the fog... it sounds ... without a...

934

935 **Bill:** This country, in the fog... it all looks alike...

936

937 **Jeanne:** Some of the pastures, the sun isn't shining, you can get lost easily... you know,  
938 over 5000 acres...

939

940 **Bill:** You can lose direction.

941

942

**Track 24**

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943

944 **Jeanne:** 5000 acres of land.

945

946 **Bill:** People who live here don't lose direction...

947

948 **Belle:** I was going to ask you, after this happened, you were lost in the fog... after that  
949 did you take a compass or anything with you...

950

951 **Bill:** No. No.

952

953 **Jeanne:** He says you always can find your way home.

954

955 **Bill:** Eventually. [laughter all around]

956

957 **Belle:** The horse you were ridding didn't know his way back to the ranch?

958

959 **Jeanne:** Apparently not.

960

961 **Bill:** Not necessarily. If they were tired, or something. If they were tired they'd go home.

962

963 **Belle:** I'd always read stories, about these horses... if you're lost in a storm, just let  
964 them... I've always read those... I thought they were probably true. Just let the reins go,  
965 and let the horse find his way back.

966

967 **Bill:** They're no more likely to find their way home than you do.

968

969 **Belle:** Maybe that was a John Wayne western I was watching...

970

971 **Bill:** No. I think that's probably true.

972

973 **Belle:** Eventually, they will find their way home.

974

975 **Bill:** Some horses are lazy, they're lazy and don't want to go very much... they want to  
976 turn and go back to the barn. They're the kind of animal... that thinks the day is over  
977 before it is over. [laughter]

978

979 **Belle:** In a fog, I guess that would be ok. [Pause] What is the biggest disaster, or worst  
980 accident, to happen at your ranch? Or, many you didn't have any? [Pause] Other than  
981 your fire experiences...[Pause]

982

983 **Jeanne:** I jumped off a horse, once... and got hurt! [laughter]

984

985 **Bill:** Laid on the couch for about a month!

986

987 **Belle:** Really?

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988

989 **Jeanne:** One of his sons fell off a horse...

990

991 **Belle:** Well, let's go back to you jumping off the horse.

992

993 **Jeanne:** Oh, let's not. [laughter] It was stupid, let's leave it at that. [more laughter]

994

995 **Belle:** Something you didn't repeat.

996

997 **Jeanne:** No, I was scared, the horse was running away.

998

999 **Bill:** He was really chasing the cattle... you thought it was going...

1000

1001 **Jeanne:** He was...

1002

1003 **Belle:** Can you think of any other accidents?

1004

1005 **Jeanne:** You've been here much longer than I have.

1006

1007 **Bill:** There have been people hurt pretty bad, on occasion. People just work for us on the  
1008 place. Thank the Lord, we haven't lost anybody that way.

1009

1010 **Belle:** Working with cattle?

1011

1012 **Bill:** There was a child one time, right in this area here... there was another house here...  
1013 the child was in some tall weeds, and a rattlesnake bit the child. And they took that child  
1014 to Emporia, immediately, and the leg did swell up very badly, but he was all right.

1015

1016 **Jeanne:** But, he was barefoot, and that is something you just do not do. And, the lawn  
1017 had not been mowed, for many days, and so... he went out to feed...

1018

1019 **Bill:** It was just carelessness. The parents were really scared. And, I can sympathize with  
1020 them. The small rattlesnakes, here, are just as dangerous as the big ones... The venom is  
1021 something you just don't want to take chances with... avoid it.

1022

1023 **Belle:** About how many years ago would that have been?

1024

1025 **Bill:** Well, it was... we weren't living here, but... it was after '75, because the  
1026 partnership had been dissolved... We'd dissolved the partnership with the Peak family at  
1027 that time... and the family was here.

1028

1029 **Jeanne:** I think it was probably '81 or '82.

1030

1031 **Bill:** Well, no, was it?

1032

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1033 **Jeanne:** I think your dad was alive.  
1034  
1035 **Bill:** Probably it was '81 or '82; when that happened.  
1036  
1037 **Belle:** So that's... fairly recent.  
1038  
1039 **Bill:** Yeh.  
1040  
1041 **Belle:** Do you see... you mentioned rattlesnakes... are they fairly prevalent out here... or  
1042 not...  
1043  
1044 **Bill:** Well, about the time you don't think you'll run into one, that's when they might be  
1045 there.  
1046  
1047 **Belle:** You're always looking.  
1048  
1049 **Bill:** They're not as thick as they are... the rattlesnakes in parts of Texas... not like  
1050 Oklahoma, or something... but they are there.  
1051  
1052 **Jeanne:** I worked out here, since, what? ...since '75, and I've never seen one. I've  
1053 opened lots and lots of gates. Bill used to say, "I see one a year." He hasn't said that for  
1054 long, either.  
1055  
1056 **Belle:** I know western Kansas has a lot of them.  
1057  
1058 **Bill:** They definitely are here. They're something to be careful about. Usually a horse will  
1059 know it before you do. In fact, they might run off... to avoid a snake. [bird chirping  
1060 loudly in the background]  
1061  
1062 **Belle:** What are some of most happiest and joyful moments on the ranch? [chirping  
1063 continues]  
1064  
1065 **Jeanne:** I think sometimes when we've had cookouts with our church people... and,  
1066 down on the creek, we've had...  
1067  
1068 **Track 25**  
1069  
1070 **Jeanne:** ...wildflower tours, were a lot of fun, with our Sunday School class from  
1071 Emporia, when we were there. I don't know.  
1072  
1073 **Bill:** We take rides over the ranch, in trucks and things, and show 'em hills... That was  
1074 fun!  
1075  
1076 **Jeanne:** I think our sons had fun out here, riding and learning to ride, fix fence,  
1077 fishing...doing all those kinds of things.

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1078

1079 **Bill:** They enjoy the Flint Hills.

1080

1081 **Jeanne:** They enjoyed doing that as they were growing up. And now we have  
1082 grandchildren. They have little ponies that they ride. It's a lot fun to watch them grow up.

1083

1084 **Belle:** Do your sons live near here?

1085

1086 **Jeanne:** They do. One of them lives about a quarter of a mile away. The other lives, as  
1087 the crow flies, about four miles.

1088

1089 **Bill:** ...the other side of the ranch. He lives on the other side of the ranch. He bought part  
1090 of this ranch, years ago. That's the older boy. Matthew's down here.

1091

1092 **Belle:** And you mentioned grandchildren. And what ages are they?

1093

1094 **Jeanne:** They are 14, 8, 3 and 1

1095

1096 **Belle:** And they all are learning to ride.

1097

1098 **Jeanne:** Well, I guess the one year old... they said they took her up to the mail box on  
1099 their little horse, Barney, one day. She rode all the way up there, and all the way back, so  
1100 she's learning to ride, too.

1101

1102 **Bill:** About one and a half.

1103

1104 **Jeanne:** The three year old, when she was two, rode in a lot of the shodeos, over in Olpe,  
1105 and around. And, the older ones; the older girls barrel racing, and that kind of thing...  
1106 The young man is learning, too; he's eight years old. So, they all learn how to.

1107

1108 **Bill:** They all ride.

1109

1110 **Belle:** Ranching family.

1111

1112 **Jeanne:** Right. [Pause]

1113

1114 **Belle:** Do you tell them any special stories about the ranch?

1115

1116 **Bill:** Well, it was kind of interesting, the Wood family, how it was put together...

1117

1118 **Jeanne:** Oh, yeh.

1119

1120 **Bill:** It was put together by buying out a man who had served in the Civil War. They  
1121 were able to homestead 160 acres out here; if they would spend so many months out of  
1122 the year on that property, for five years, it was theirs. A lot of them did that. They felt

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1123 they could not make a living on that small acreage, and that's how this ranch, most of it  
1124 was put together, was by buying out those 160 acres.  
1125  
1126 **Jeanne:** And also the railroad.  
1127  
1128 **Bill:** And the railroad.  
1129  
1130 **Jeanne:** The railroad had bought land.  
1131  
1132 **Bill:** ...bought a lot of land.  
1133  
1134 **Jeanne:** So they bought some of that.  
1135  
1136 **Belle:** And this was somewhere in the 1870s? ...along in that time?  
1137  
1138 **Bill:** And the railroad, in turn, sold that land for capital, to put the Santa Fe railroad all  
1139 the way to Santa Fe, New Mexico. They were granted that land to promote, to populate  
1140 the state.  
1141  
1142 **Belle:** And that's how the Fox Creek ranch was...  
1143  
1144 **Jeanne:** The nucleus of it was... and then, after that, his dad... he only bought what,  
1145 2,800 acres, to begin with, in '46?  
1146  
1147 **Bill:** That's what the Wood Ranch was.  
1148  
1149 **Jeanne:** Then they added up to 6,200 acres, something like that. Had to sell some off, for  
1150 estate taxes...  
1151  
1152 **Bill:** My sister did not want to own land...  
1153  
1154 **Jeanne:** Well, we bought hers out, though.  
1155  
1156 **Bill:** ...in Kansas, so we had to buy her out. She had other... well, she'd lived out in that  
1157 part of the world for... raised her family for 30 years... can see why she'd want to do  
1158 that. [Pause]  
1159  
1160 **Belle:** In a hundred years from now, how do you want people to remember your ranch?  
1161 [Chuckles in the background] That's an interesting question. [Pause]  
1162  
1163 **Jeanne:** That it's beautiful! [Pause] Just the legacy of the Flint Hills, I guess. Hopefully,  
1164 the Hatchers took care of it. And, if generations want to live here, why, they can live  
1165 here. And if they don't, they can sell it. [Chuckles]  
1166  
1167 **Belle:** Do you envision staying all together, or do you think it might be...

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1168

1169 **Bill:** That would be too hard to predict. It's hard enough to predict your own lifetime, let  
1170 alone the next one... [laughter] For me...

1171

1172 **Jeanne:** Right!

1173

1174 **Bill:** [laughing] I'm sure they will have their own struggles, and trials...

1175

1176 **Jeanne:** The ranch is wonderful, but it is not sacred. [Chuckles] That's how we look at it.  
1177 Some people think, you know, that you always have to have it. But that's not how we  
1178 look at it. It's God's creation, it's his ranch...

1179

1180 **Track 26**

1181

1182 **Jeanne:** ...and we're just taking care of it for awhile. And, we hope, whoever has it, will  
1183 take care of it. Guess that's the way I feel about it.

1184

1185 **Bill:** Well, that's the way it is.

1186

1187 **Jeanne:** Right!

1188

1189 **Belle:** Well, I'm sure you would hope they continue... whoever owns it will continue  
1190 with the stewardship of the land.

1191

1192 **Jeanne:** Sure, that's what I mean...

1193 **Bill:** They'll take care of it. [Pause]

1194

1195 **Belle:** Well, and then looking... This is the sesquicentennial year for Emporia and for  
1196 Americus, too...and, I know, we've been look back on when Americus, and Emporia too,  
1197 were both founded, which was about the same time, because they stole the county  
1198 seat...from Americus. [laughter] But, anyway, looking back, and reading the records and  
1199 the names and everything, I'm sure one hundred years from now, the Fox Creek Ranch,  
1200 owned by Bill and Jeanne Hatcher, this will be part of the history people that will be  
1201 looking at.

1202

1203 **Jeanne:** I don't think they'll have as good a history, because I have all the abstracts, and  
1204 I can go back in there and can even tell you what President signed the deeds. And, that is  
1205 so interesting. And when they did away with the abstracts, they did away with a lot of  
1206 history! And this ranch, to prove that it is very hard to make a living, it was up for sale on  
1207 the Sheriff's steps, in these abstracts, at least two times, in the last hundred years. And  
1208 Mr. Wood owned the ranch, he's the one who put it together. He had a cousin, over by  
1209 Elmdale, that baled him out, every time, so he did not have to sell the ranch. And, he was  
1210 having a very hard time, and going broke with it in 1946, and that's how Bill's dad found  
1211 out about the ranch being for sale. So he was able to buy it. He and Olma bought it in

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1212 1946 and '47; and some of the pieces they added to it were many years later and were in  
1213 other peoples families. [pause] That's part of ranching.  
1214  
1215 **Belle:** And this is the history from almost a hundred years.  
1216  
1217 **Jeanne:** Probably a hundred years...  
1218  
1219 **Bill:** Probably!  
1220  
1221 **Jeanne:** Yes, it would be more than that. It would be the 1880s on up, I would think. I  
1222 could have looked at the abstract... I have them.  
1223  
1224 **Bill:** The Wood family originally came down to Chase county because they were in  
1225 Lawrence, ran the newspaper up there, and the Quantril raid burned his newspaper  
1226 business up. And he moved to Chase County.  
1227  
1228 **Jeanne:** Sam Wood.  
1229  
1230 **Bill:** Sam Wood  
1231  
1232 **Jeanne:** And it was his son that put this ranch together. [Pause]  
1233  
1234 **Belle:** Ok. Well, in thinking about a hundred years ago, what little we know, probably,  
1235 about how the ranch was run; it is probably very similar to how it is continued today... as  
1236 far a taking care of it, pasture...because it isn't overgrown with trees, obviously.  
1237  
1238 **Jeanne:** Sure. I guess they burned it on the back of horses...  
1239  
1240 **Bill:** They burned it...  
1241  
1242 **Jeanne:** They rode horses and trailed it... across there...  
1243  
1244 **Bill:** Or, just carried a box of matches, and lit it is, as they rode along, on horseback.  
1245 [pause] Or, they would drag a... they would put a wire or something...on a tire...and  
1246 light that tire on...and that would light a lot of fire! They'd pull it with a horse, or they'd  
1247 pull it with a truck...and that would string a lot of fire in a hurry [chuckle]. ...'cause little  
1248 chunks of rubber would fall off, and burn...it was a cheap way, but it was fast.  
1249  
1250 **Belle:** It would be! So I, ...probably in another hundred years, I can just picture this  
1251 ranch, the grass land, pretty much like...  
1252  
1253 **Jeanne:** You cannot do anything else with it...there's not water out here... to put any  
1254 kind of developments...you'd be able to get a well, once in a while, to put maybe a single  
1255 dwelling.  
1256

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1257 **Bill:** But you'd have to bring water from the Cottonwood River up here. Even like they  
1258 brought water up from Strong City for the Z-Bar Ranch.

1259  
1260 **Jeanne:** But there's really nothing you can do, but have cattle on it. Unless you want to  
1261 put buffalo... [Laughter]

1262  
1263 **Bill:** As the population grows, I can see how people might buy an acreage just to escape  
1264 city life, and to have another place in the country. Even now, there are people doing that.

1265  
1266 **Belle:** Oh, yes. You mentioned water. Does your water come up from Strong City?

1267  
1268 **Jeanne:** No, we have well water.

1269  
1270 **Belle:** Well water?

1271  
1272 **Jeanne:** Yes, we have well water.

1273  
1274 **Belle:** Oh, I see.

1275  
1276 **Track 27**

1277  
1278 **Belle:** You probably have propane, is that correct?

1279  
1280 **Bill and Jeanne, together:** Yes.

1281  
1282 **Belle:** If, based on your experiences, I think we just sort of mentioned that, how do you  
1283 see Flint Hills ranching evolving in the next ten, twenty years... that would be a little  
1284 shorter than a hundred years...do you see very much change, in that short time?

1285  
1286 **Jeanne:** I think it is a very hot commodity, that people are wanting...rich people are  
1287 wanting... and I think that the price has gotten so high, that there are going to be the big  
1288 money people come in, and buy people out. Because they just cannot resist the money...  
1289 and then, the ranchers are going to, maybe, get bigger and bigger. And, that has  
1290 happened, in the last twenty years.

1291  
1292 **Bill:** It has already happened.

1293  
1294 **Jeanne:** It has already happened.

1295  
1296 **Bill:** It has already happened in Chase County, a lot.

1297  
1298 **Jeanne:** So, [pause] I think there will be bigger ranches. The main thing,... they'll have  
1299 to run them about the same, just about, there's nothing else you can do with the land.

1300  
1301 **Belle:** You have more absentee, ... more absentee land owners...

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1302

1303 **Jeanne:** That's right... correct...

1304

1305 **Belle:** Run by people who live on the ranches

1306

1307 **Jeanne:** There are lots of absentee land owners, in Chase County.

1308

1309 **Belle:** The family farm has become less commonplace in the last seven decades [word  
1310 corrected later], do you see a similar fate for ranches...

1311

1312 **Jeanne:** Yes... we just kind of answered that...

1313

1314 **Belle:** So, the people running ranches will be more efficient... with more land... or will it  
1315 take the same amount of people... how do you see that.

1316

1317 **Jeanne:** Well, they don't hire as many people.

1318

1319 **Bill:** They don't hire as many, no. Most of them don't even try to run cattle here in the  
1320 winter time, on the large operations. They just put the cattle on here in the summer time.

1321

1322 **Jeanne:** So, they'll just hire one cowboy, for thousands and thousand of acres

1323

1324 **Bill:** Cattle...

1325

1326 **Jeanne:** ...and then they'll leave it up to him to hire ...

1327

1328 **Bill:** Crews, to help bring them in...

1329

1330 **Jeanne:** Twenty cowboys to help bring them in. Whereas, ten or twenty years ago, there  
1331 was more hands on...

1332

1333 **Bill:** And, there'd be herds of 300 head, instead of 3,000 head, at a time.

1334

1335 **Belle:** Ok... [Belle made note of mispronouncing "decades"] What else... we've talked  
1336 about a variety of things. What else would you want people to know about raising cattle,  
1337 or ranching, and life in the Flint Hills?

1338

1339 **Jeanne:** Well, one the popular things is, because of the flint in the hills, and the different  
1340 minerals in the rock, it is one of the richest grasses in the world; and cattle can actually  
1341 get fat here, in the summer time, whereas, they can't on most grasses. That is what I  
1342 understand. Is that right, Bill?

1343

1344 **Bill:** For summer grazing, it is considered by the college, at Manhattan, people that have  
1345 studied grasses all over the world, consider this, for summer grasses, the finest grasses in  
1346 the world, for the summer grazing.

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1347

1348 **Jeanne:** It is really good from about the first of May until the first of September. And,  
1349 our cattle can gain, our double stock cattle, from the middle of April to the middle of  
1350 July, they can gain over 200 pounds, and they probably can't do that, anywhere else. So,  
1351 it's one of the reasons...

1352

1353 **Bill:** Of course, we want to remember, for people not involved with cattle, it takes the  
1354 right kind of cattle, and they have to be thin, in order to do that... and then, you have to  
1355 have the blessings of the rain at the right time. But, we have had cattle, the last few years  
1356 that have done that.

1357

1358 **Jeanne:** Another thing about ...

1359

1360 **Bill:** The man who had the cattle, and grazed them on this place.

1361

1362 **Jeanne:** I think they do round up some cattle now, on four-wheelers, but I think it will  
1363 always remain, that there will be cowboys in the Flint Hills.

1364

1365 **Bill:** Because there are some rocky places...

1366

1367 **Jeanne:** That you just can't go, with four wheelers.

1368

1369 **Bill:** Don't go too well... But, there are people who use four-wheelers and horses, a  
1370 combination of both. [Pause]

1371

1372 **Belle:** And, life in the Flint Hills?

1373

1374 **Jeanne:** It can be lonely.

1375

1376 **Bill:** True.

1377

1378 **Jeanne:** As well as beautiful... I think you have to learn to love it. And, sometimes, to  
1379 see the landscapes, and the

1380

1381 **Track 28**

1382

1383 **Bill:** Sunsets...

1384

1385 **Jeanne:** sunsets, and the birds; we have lot of blue heron, that make their way up and  
1386 down the creek. We can watch those. It's an interesting life that most people do not know  
1387 about in Kansas. They know it about Wyoming or Texas, but don't know there's a place  
1388 here that's about thirty miles wide, and the length of Kansas, that is ranching country.

1389 And, I think people should experience it.

1390

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1391 **Belle:** Do you think the recent National Geographic magazine will help educate a few  
1392 more people about...  
1393  
1394 **Jeanne:** I think so.  
1395  
1396 **Belle:** ...about this particular region of Kansas?  
1397  
1398 **Jeanne:** I think so. Yes. We have traveled quite a bit, and it hurts us when they say things  
1399 bad about Kansas. And they do, they do frequently.  
1400  
1401 **Bill:** [chuckles] They're used to driving across I-70 highway – that flat land.  
1402  
1403 **Jeanne:** All the way to Colorado...  
1404  
1405 **Bill:** They get bored. Driving to the mountains...  
1406  
1407 **Belle:** Kansas is not flat, I know. People don't understand Kansas. I've never lived  
1408 anywhere else, but I've been other places, and I love Kansas. 'Cause if you don't like this  
1409 part, there are billions of other parts that are so different...and I love the Flint Hills.  
1410  
1411 **Jeanne:** And the Flint Hill, I don't know if we have mentioned it; this is the tallgrass  
1412 prairie. People come and want to know where the tall grass is...they don't understand it is  
1413 relative to short grass prairie. And, the tall grass is there, it might get to 12-15 inches tall.  
1414 But the shoots, if you have good year that send up their seeds, can be six to seven foot  
1415 tall. And that doesn't happen anywhere else, I don't think, in the State of Kansas. Except  
1416 where you have bluestem grass... and I don't know where... I'm sure it occurs other  
1417 places, but... that's a uniqueness to the Flint Hills. It's wonderful. It's beautiful. The fall,  
1418 when it turns, is a rosy brown everywhere. It's just gorgeous, to me. Along the creeks,  
1419 you have trees. We have a lot more trees that we used to have.  
1420  
1421 **Bill:** Yes.  
1422  
1423 **Belle:** Is that good?  
1424  
1425 **Bill:** Well, I don't know. When we bought this place, it was shortly after the big drought  
1426 of the thirties, and the Cottonwood River even dried up, in parts. Some of these ravines  
1427 that come down into Fox Creek were absolutely bare of trees; and now there are trees in  
1428 these draws, you can see trees in the pastures along the draws. Also, the country has been  
1429 blessed with the many, many ponds that have been built, in the last thirty years. A lot of  
1430 water in the Flint Hills was not here before.  
1431  
1432 **Jeanne:** I think the trees are good in the draws. You get wildlife that way and the cattle  
1433 can rest, out the sun, if it is 100 degrees outside. And up in the draws, we don't want  
1434 them out in the pastures. [laughter]  
1435

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1436 **Belle:** Right. But you burn so you make sure you don't have that.

1437

1438 **Jeanne:** Right.

1439

1440 **Belle:** Do you go fishing a lot? You mentioned that often.

1441

1442 **Jeanne:** I used to go fishing a lot, but not anymore. Not so much. But I hope to this  
1443 summer. The girls are getting old enough I could take the three year old fishing. The  
1444 older two, especially the older girl, we used to go fishing a lot.

1445

1446 **Bill:** Quite a bit.

1447

1448 **Jeanne:** We have wonderful bass here. We've got two up here on the wall; I don't know  
1449 how much they weighed, close to eight pounds. They came out of our ponds. One a  
1450 cousin caught, and one my son, Matt, caught. It's very unique.

1451

1452 **Belle:** Well, that's great. Do you have... is there anything else you would like to add?

1453

1454 **Bill:** I think we've pretty well covered it.

1455

1456 **Jeanne:** As far as I know...

1457

1458 **Belle:** Well, I thank you very much. You've done a super job! And we will get back to  
1459 after this is transcribed; at least send it back to you, so you can look it over and see how  
1460 we did. Thank you very much.

1461

1462 **Bill and Jeanne:** You're welcome.

1463

1464

1465

1466

1467

1468

1469

1470

1471

1472

1473

1474

1475

1476