

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

1 **Interview conducted by Louise Carlin at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve;**
2 **Originally videotaped by Park Service personnel with a CD copy provided to this**
3 **project for transcription; An initial transcription was made by an ESU Student,**
4 **Stephanie Kuhlman; Audio recorded on Marantz Digital Recorder that inserted the**
5 **tracks, for ease of reference; Initial transcription edited from the digital audio by**
6 **Bill Smith; Final Edit by Bill Smith.**

7
8 **Track 54**
9

10 **Louise:** This might help as we go on to help the thought process.
11 [She hands them a list of the questions she intends to use during the interview] [There is a
12 roar in the background of the audio tape – they are getting ready to start]
13 Your names...

14
15 **Don:** Don Jenkins.

16
17 **Louise:** Ok.

18
19 **Peg:** Peg Jenkins.

20
21 **Louise:** Ok. And where were you born? I think you told me over by LeClede?

22
23 **Don:** I was born north of St. Clere...

24
25 **Louise:** St. Clere, that's it.

26
27 **Don:** ...over south of Havensville, the address was Havensville, 7 miles south.

28
29 **Louise:** On a ranch?

30
31 **Don:** On a small Flint Hills ranch. All three of us children were born at home in the
32 ranch house. The doctor came from Havensville. Dr. McManus. I can still smell the
33 smell of his office. It was his residence. It's really unique. It's kind of back to the
34 frontier type of doctoring.

35
36 **Louise:** And your parents' names were?

37
38 **Don:** William and Fannie Jenkins.

39
40 **Louise:** And your mother's maiden name was?

41
42 **Don:** Lewelling... [Some confusion over pronunciation; corrected in final edit]

43
44 **Louise:** Ok.

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

45

46 **Don:** See, my grandfathers both came from Wales in 1893 and they went to work on
47 what was called the Mack Ranch in Southwest Jackson County.

48

49 **Louise:** So when they came from Wales did they come directly to Kansas?

50

51 **Don:** Yes.

52 **Louise:** To the Flinthills? [Don nods his head]

53 **Don:** Then my grandmother must have been my grandfather Jenkins' sweetheart in
54 Wales. So I think it was in '95 when she came and they married. At that time both
55 grandfathers acquired quarter sections of land in that vicinity and settled in.

56

57 **Louise:** What about you, Peg? Where were you born?

58

59 **Peg:** Oh, I was born in Holton, KS; in Jackson County.

60

61 **Louise:** On a ranch?

62

63 **Peg:** A farm. Farming and cattle operations by my dad.

64

65 **Louise:** Your maiden name was?

66

67 **Peg:** Slocum. [Spelling corrected in final edit]

68

69 **Louise:** Slocum.

70

71 **Peg:** Truman Slocum. And my mother was Virginia Cunningham.

72

73 **Louise:** Ok. Ok. And you two met and married...

74

75 **Peg:** In Jackson County.

76

77 **Louise:** In Jackson County. And where did you start your life together?

78

79 **Don:** South of Soldier, Kansas.

80

81 **Louise:** Ok. That's on the fringes of the Flint Hills in Pottawatomie/Jackson area.

82

83 **Don:** On the west edge of Jackson County. I'd been farming in the Holton/Soldier area
84 for twenty years. After we married, why I sold the farming operation out.

85

86 **Louise:** You do like the row crops and you had livestock.

87

88 **Don:** Like row crops and backgrounding of cattle

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

89

90 **Louise:** After twenty years you sold everything?

91

92 **Don:** Yeah. In '82 I went to look for a ranching job in the Flint Hills. Eventually...

93

94 **Louise:** What took you to, well you said in the Flint Hills, you were on the fringes. What
95 drew you to that area? You wanted to get into ranching? ...or more?

96

97 **Don:** Yeah.

98

99 **Peg:** The dream of living in the Flint Hills.

100

101 **Don:** The thing was that my earliest memories of the Tallgrass; one of them was mounted
102 across the Flint Hills rocks in the wagon to go dig out the den of coyote pups. My dad
103 dug 'em out and cleaned up the two litters of coyote ...

104

105 **Track 55**

106

107 **Don:** ...pups that were in that same den. And we have a photo of my sister and I in the
108 barnyard with all these coyote pups around us. And I don't know, there must have been at
109 least a dozen. And of course the fate for all the coyote pups wasn't all that good cause
110 they were worth a dollar a piece in the county. I can remember that. What happened after
111 that, I remember the pups all died. There were probably four or five.

112

113 **Louise:** So you went to look for work in the Flint Hills? Where did you end up at?

114

115 **Don:** This was the location

116

117 **Louise:** Here at the Z-Bar Ranch at that time.

118

119 **Don:** What had happened was we were looking and things; we didn't come up with
120 anything. So we took a job at a feed yard... a farmers' feed yard out in Ingalls, Kansas.
121 We was there for just a couple three months. The word is Junior [Orville Burtis, Jr.]
122 called, he had a résumé. He said when you get it fill in a resume for a job in the Flint
123 Hills. I said, "yeah." He said, "Well you wait awhile, I got a foreman job at this ranch
124 that's going to become available. [Garold Slabaugh] wanted to semi-retire. So we waited
125 for an interview; and then, in the first part of January in 1983, we came here as foreman
126 of the ranch.

127

128 **Louise:** And it was Z-Bar at that time, it wasn't Murrill-Davis-Knowle? [Spelling may be
129 incorrect]

130

131 **Don:** No, it was Z-Bar Cattle Company. Davis had established the operating company.
132 After his death, in trust - that's the way the ranch continued.

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

133

134 **Louise:** So what were some of the duties you did here at the ranch as foreman? What
135 were your responsibilities?

136

137 **Don:** To keep a work schedule for the ranch hands.

138

139 **Louise:** How many ranch hands were there?

140

141 **Don:** At that time, we had three, and then Gerold [Slabaugh] was part-time. He and
142 Gladys would go on winter mornings and feed the cake to the cows...

143

144 **Louise:** Gladys was his wife? [Peg nods her head.]

145

146 **Don:** And then another ranch-hand, and Peg and I, would feed the hay to the cows.

147

148 **Louise:** And what was the size of the Z-Bar Ranch at that time?

149

150 **Don:** Fourteen thousand acres including some land that was leased. And all of that was to
151 be east, over here [holding some papers]. So of that eleven thousand about three thousand
152 was leased.

153

154 **Louise:** How many head of cattle did you run?

155

156 **Don:** Oh, as I recall about fifteen-hundred head of yearling cattle – of which part of them
157 were raised and part of them were purchased.

158

159 **Louise:** Where would you purchase the yearlings from?

160

161 **Don:** Normally we would line those up and some of them would come from the
162 Southeast. I remember one group that came all the way from Mexico.

163

164 **Louise:** Would he ever buy any from stockyards?

165

166 **Don:** No, it's mainly private treaties off of ranches.

167

168 **Louise:** What type of cattle were they?

169

170 **Don:** Well, they're primarily mixed breeds.

171

172 **Track 56**

173

174 **Don:** The cows that we had at the time were primarily Herefords. Hereford angus
175 crosses.

176

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

177 **Louise:** So how long did you stock, what were your stocking practices?
178

179 **Don:** Well, we'd run the cows year round on native pastures; they'd stay on that
180 particular pasture year round. And then, the yearling cattle would run in the bottom land
181 fields, and feedlots along Fox Creek. We'd feed them silage and hay, and some grain.
182 They were primarily back grounded for grazing.
183

184 **Louise:** In the bottom land pasture, when was it made into a brome field verses prairie?
185 Do you recall? Was it brome, when you were here?
186

187 **Peg:** Yeah.
188

189 **Don:** Parts of it were brome. We had fields that were put into corn and some alfalfa that
190 was harvested for silage and feed. Some of the growing fields have been crop land prior
191 to our coming here. I suspect probably a third of it was in brome at that time. And, after
192 we left, they seeded the rest of it to brome grass.
193

194 **Louise:** So the northern part, was that your crops? Or was it kind of mixed?
195

196 **Don:** Well, it extended all the way down to the Strong City fields. And I recall probably,
197 maybe a dozen separate fields... along Fox Creek.
198

199 **Peg:** Now this brome just right across the highway... was brome at that time. Now
200 was there row crop between this brome and the creek?
201

202 **Don:** Yes.
203

204 **Peg:** That brome was there.
205

206 **Louise:** Okay, okay. Pastures. Pastures burning. Prescribed burning. Did you burn every
207 year or was it rotational?
208

209 **Don:** I tried burn everything every year. I didn't always accomplish the whole thing. We
210 burned everything, even hay meadows.
211

212 **Louise:** Okay.
213

214 **Don:** Anything we could burn.
215

216 **Louise:** So, you said you didn't always accomplish it... for what reasons?
217

218 **Don:** Well, weather conditions would sometimes affect...
219

220 **Louise:** Like this year with the snow. [Laughter]

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

221

222 **Don:** Yeah, well, yeah. And maybe dry weather would make us hold off, also.

223

224 **Louise:** Do you see the burning practices changing from when you were ranching to
225 today? Or in the future do you see changes?

226

227 **Peg:** I see changes coming because of people building homes in the Flint Hills. They
228 don't want that smoke. For their safety they don't want you burning next to their house
229 even though these hills have been burnt for many, many years. There's becoming a
230 problem because of... I'll call it urban sprawl. But now down here it's not a problem. But
231 it some places it is.

232

233 **Louise:** But in the Northern part where... right.

234

235 **Peg:** In this area I don't think it is...

236

237 **Louise:** Not so much in Chase County but in Wabaunsee County and where there is the
238 building on the fringes.

239

240 **Peg:** That's going to be a problem. It is.

241

242 **Louise:** Where did you ranch after you were here at the Z-Bar?

243

244 **Don:** I went to manage a ranch; the headquarters were southeast Butler County near a
245 town called Latham.

246

247 **Louise:** The headquarters of...

248

249 **Don and Peg:** Smith Stock Company.

250

251 **Don:** It was owned by Dick Smith who had a small independent oil operation.

252

253 **Peg:** In Wichita.

254

255 **Don:** He was out of Wichita.

256

257 **Louise:** How large was that ranch?

258

259 **Don:** Well, when we went down there, it was about

260

261 **Track 57**

262

263 **Don:** six or seven thousand acres through purchases and some leasing. We were up to
264 twenty-two thousand acres at one point.

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

265

266 **Louise:** And what year did you go to that ranch?

267

268 **Don:** It was eighty-seven.

269

270 **Louise:** Eighty-seven, huh-huh. What was the reason for you leaving the Z-Bar Ranch?

271

272 **Don:** Because they liquidated the Z-Bar Cattle Company which operated the entity of the
273 ranching operation. And then the bank... at that time... which is, there have been several
274 changes. They took ownership... the trust department took ownership of the land. And
275 under that scenario they couldn't operate, they had to lease it out to someone. And so,
276 that is the reason, we went a different direction.

277

278 **Louise:** Ok, so the ranch in, you said that was in Latham?

279

280 **Don, Peg:** Latham.

281

282 **Louise:** Latham. And the county... what counties?

283

284 **Peg:** Butler.

285

286 **Louise:** In Butler? It was all in Butler?

287

288 **Don:** No, it was in Cowley, and Elk County.

289

290 **Peg:** And Butler County.

291

292 **Louise:** Ok, and how was that operation different from this operation?

293

294 **Don:** Not too much when we first went there. It was cow herd and we backgrounded the
295 calves from the cow herd, and also purchased calves from ...

296

297 **Louise:** When you say backgrounded the cattle from the cow herds, can you explain that?

298

299 **Don:** Well, we weaned the calves and then winter them and then go to grass.

300

301 **Louise:** At what age were the calves when you weaned them from the cattle?

302

303 **Don:** Oh, they would have been not quite six months. We wean them in October, in the
304 fall.

305

306 **Louise:** And where do you take them, the calves?

307

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

308 **Don:** They would... generally we would wean them; we would bring them in close and
309 feed them hay. To winter them, we would take them out into native grass and brome
310 grass in the pastures in the wintertime.

311

312 **Louise:** And then when they're a year old, is when you sell them? Or that's...

313

314 **Don:** Well, we would graze them..., sometimes we'd sell them. One time we sent them
315 to the feed yards in western Kansas; they'd feed them out, and sell them from there.

316

317 **Louise:** The same type of cattle?

318

319 **Don:** Yeah, yeah.

320

321 **Peg:** Hereford, Angus, Black Baldings.

322

323 **Don:** With cross to Gelbvieh, terminal-cross.

324

325 **Louise:** And how long were you on that ranch?

326

327 **Don:** A little over nine years. We retired to a ranch that we bought in Morris County. It
328 was purchased just for that particular eventuality.

329

330 **Louise:** So how many acres to have now?

331

332 **Don:** Three-hundred and twenty is what we own. And then we lease another nine-
333 hundred acres.

334

335 **Louise:** Huh-huh. And all ranching or do you do some farming?

336

337 **Don:** It's all ranching.

338

339 **Louise:** All ranching. And the same type of ranching you've done in other areas the Flint
340 Hills?

341

342 **Don:** Yeah. Cattle, primarily. And then we sublease some of this leased land to other
343 cattle operations. And take care of... look after those cattle when they're on the grass.

344

345 **Louise:** Ok. Um, [pause] What are some memories, that you have very fond memories,
346 both, Peg, you and Don. As children, ...or together, ...of ranching.

347

348 **Peg:** Being here.

349

350 **Louise:** Or raising your... being here?

351

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

352 **Peg:** Being on Z-Bar

353

354 **Louise:** Being here is a fond memory? Now your children weren't raised here, they were
355 raised in uhh...

356

357 **Peg:** Our son Shane was.

358

359 **Louise:** Your son was?

360

361 **Track 58**

362

363 **Peg:** He was nine when he came to this ranch.

364

365 **Louise:** Did he have specific chores to do at the ranch?

366

367 **Peg:** Welllll...., no, not really. He was in 4-H so he had a 4-H steer... his first 4-H steer.
368 So that was his responsibility to take care of that.

369

370 **Louise:** Did he ever participate in burning the pastures?

371

372 **Peg:** [laughs] Yeah, he's a pyromaniac. [Laughter] When we were burning he would,
373 when he would get home from school, I would have to come, stop what I was doing,
374 come get him, and then go back so he could help, 'cause he wanted to be a part of that.
375 And he just loved it.

376

377 **Louise:** So how have the practices changed in the pasture burning?

378

379 **Don:** Well, I think that essentially pasture burning pretty much remained the same.
380 Seems that there's more earlier burning now than we did at that time.

381

382 **Louise:** When did you burn?

383

384 **Peg:** When the blue-eyed Prairie grass was in bloom that was the time to burn. That's
385 what Gerold Slabaugh told me.

386

387 **Louise:** When the blue-eyed grass was in bloom?

388

389 **Peg:** [Nodding her head] When the blue-eyed Prairie grass was blooming that was the
390 perfect time because that meant the soil temperature was warm enough that you burn the
391 dry grass off and within just a few days it turns green. And I've watched over the years
392 and its right.

393

394 **Don:** Is there some blue-eyed Prairie grass blooming right now? There was before this
395 cold weather hit.

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

396

397 **Peg:** Is that right? I haven't seen it yet.

398

399 **Don:** Was a little earlier this year.

400

401 **Louise:** Sonny Howard had mentioned that he recalled burning as a young child they
402 would sit on the back of the truck and his mother would give him boxes, big boxes of
403 kitchen matches and they would strike and throw them out. Today that practice is not
404 used.

405

406 **Peg:** [Pointing at Don] He's done that horseback.

407

408 **Don:** Yeah, one vivid memory is that when our oldest grandson, or my oldest grandson
409 [speaking to Peg] was three or four years old, maybe?

410

411 **Peg:** [Nodding her head] Three or four.

412

413 **Don:** His parents were making a move so he stayed with us for a couple weeks and I put
414 him on horse back with me and we went out in the pastures to the west and spent all day
415 throwing matches, and...

416

417 **Peg:** Spot burning.

418 **Don:** We were spot burning. It was after most of the grass had burned. And there were
419 spots that didn't get covered so we had to go back and throw matches at those spots that
420 didn't burn. I don't know whether he remembers it yet or not. Just recently he's old
421 enough to father a child

422

423 **Louise:** Huh-huh. Wow. Do you remember any bad incidences with burning or with
424 your neighbors, or not necessarily here at the Z-Bar but other ranches you were on?

425

426 **Don:** We had fires get away, we had...

427

428 **Louise:** The weather would change.

429

430 **Peg:** Oh yeah.

431

432 **Don:** One very vivid memory was for some reason we thought we had to burn some
433 brush piles to get something done down in, it was in Cowley County. And we had a fire
434 sprayer and everything there and made sure everything was put out and so I sent the
435 ranch-hand over to another pile with the tractor with loader that we'd been using to pile
436 some dry brush and while I kind of watched the embers go down in this brush pile, we
437 had a pretty good wind, he went across a rough place with this tractor; there happened to
438 be some live embers in that bucket, that started a fire. That's the worst that we had. It
439 didn't go very far but we had to call the Atlanta

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

440

441

Track 59

442

443 **Don:** fire department to put it out. That's the most vivid, saddest wild fire.

444

445 **Louise:** Well, in your burning practices, did you collaborate with your neighbors, when
446 you burned?

447

448 **Don:** Well, especially here we burn with Fox Creek and sometimes Division. I remember
449 one burning season that Mashed O was involved in it too. When we went south, wasn't
450 that much neighborly collaboration.

451

452 **Louise:** Right, because of the highway and so forth. [Pause] Where did you take the
453 cattle to market? Where were they shipped out of, or to?

454

455 **Don:** Here on the Z-Bar?

456

457 **Louise:** Right.

458

459 **Don:** Oh, sometimes, they would go to feed yards.

460

461 **Louise:** In western Kansas or...?

462

463 **Don:** Yeah. Oh, sometimes Orville would market them direct. He had a lot of contacts
464 in Kansas City. That was kind of his expertise, marketing and procurement.

465

466 **Louise:** On the ranch in Butler County where were those cattle shipped to?

467

468 **Don:** Well, a lot of them were shipped to feedlots early on in the operation down there.
469 Later on, an order buyer would come out and purchase the cattle off the grass. And that's
470 the way it was when we left down there.

471

472 **Louise:** An order buyer, can you elaborate on that?

473

474 **Don:** That's a buyer that goes out in the country and he'll have orders for a certain type
475 of cattle and if you're cattle meet what his order specifies well then you can deal with
476 him.

477

478 **Louise:** Would he represent several ranches or his own?

479

480 **Don:** Well he would represent maybe a feed yard or so. Farmers that want to feed the
481 cattle. He would line up a like group of cattle that meet the specifications that this
482 particular buyer would want.

483

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

484 **Louise:** And they would be shipped by truck? [Peg nodding her head]

485

486 **Don:** Yeah, yes, all of it. I don't have any memory of rail shipping.

487

488 **Louise:** Are there any different challenges that you are experiencing now in ranching
489 verses twenty years ago, or forty years ago?

490

491 **Don:** Oh, for us I don't think it's a whole lot different than it has been since... my
492 memory I guess is stuck in a rut. [Laughter] Cow herd, back grounding, and grazing, all
493 is pretty much the same. Different operations, but all pretty much the same type of
494 operation.

495

496 **Louise:** Can you elaborate a little bit on when you say different types of operation?
497 What are some of the different types? You have the cow-calf operation...

498

499 **Don:** Now you get a lot of, well, there's always been a lot of custom grazing in the Flint
500 Hills but now so much of it is cattle shipped directly to the pasture and maybe they
501 intensively graze and then gone.

502

503 **Louise:** Intensively grazed, like, double stocking?

504

505 **Don:** Yeah.

506

507 **Peg:** And sometimes triple.

508

509 **Louise:** Triple stocking?

510

511 **Peg:** We've known people who've tripled. And these are steers and heifers, yearlings.

512

513 **Louise:** Ok, when you triple stock, can you elaborate on

514

515 **Track 60**

516

517 **Louise:** that?

518

519 **Don:** Well, what I've done in the past is basically what I've done in Butler County; on
520 that ranch is allow an acre and seven-tens and put them on as soon as the grass is
521 adequate in late April. And then religiously take them off the first of July.

522

523 **Louise:** Ok.

524

525 **Don:** And next year we didn't go back with that heavy a stocking rate on the same
526 pasture. Might full season that pasture. Now it's mainly double stocking which is
527 basically two acres for a five hundred pound steer. The problem has been that they should

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

528 come off the middle of July, but so often they carry them over into August sometimes,
529 and that's not been good for the grass.

530

531 **Louise:** Ok, you say it's not been good for the grass, what do you mean by not being
532 good?

533

534 **Don:** Well, it's overgrazing it, basically what it is. It changes the composition of the
535 prairie.

536

537 **Peg:** It gets weedy.

538

539 **Louise:** Ok. So if the next year the stocking were less, would the prairie....

540

541 **Don & Peg:** It would start to recover.

542

543 **Don:** If that hadn't been the case, then they... We noticed the pastures as coming down
544 [highway] one seventy-seven over the last, oh fifteen years. The amount of weeds and
545 ability to see rocks in the late summer, ...

546

547 **Peg:** We've seen the white grass...

548

549 **Don:** ...and early fall is more prevalent than it was when we were on the ranch.

550

551 **Louise:** And you can see that from the...

552

553 **Don:** Just driving down the highway.

554

555 **Louise:** Ok. Ok. So you can see some changes in the last fifteen years.

556

557 **Peg:** Right.

558

559 **Don:** Yeah.

560

561 **Louise:** Ok.

562

563 **Don:** But the prairie has an amazing ability to recover. The stocking rates were modified.
564 And when we were operating down there and up here too, we didn't heavily stock the
565 pasture year after year.

566

567 **Louise:** So some of the stocking were modified every two or three years, you think that
568 pastures may come back to as they were fifteen years ago? That they're not being
569 modified? They're....

570

571 **Don:** Well, that's my... I'm not a range expert as far as...

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

572

573 **Louise:** No, but you can see that with...

574

575 **Don:** I've been on it long enough to know.

576

577 **Peg:** And of course...

578

579 **Don:** That's the results.

580

581 **Peg:** And of course, women have a lot to do with it too.

582

583 **Louise:** Do we have a change in the weather pattern?

584

585 **Peg:** We sure seemed to have this year. [Laughter]

586

587 **Don:** Well, I think it's the same cycle of drought and moisture so nothing changes a
588 whole lot, maybe global warming is that.

589

590 **Peg:** Who knows...

591

592 **Don:** Not sure. Didn't feel like that the last few days. [We had a couple of inches of
593 snow!]

594

595 **Louise:** No, it hasn't. But forty years ago, can you tell a difference in say global
596 warming, the weather patterns, can you tell any difference there?

597

598 **Peg:** Well, there was one year [looking at Don] what'd we decide it was, nineteen sixty,
599 sixty-one that in Jackson County, I lived about six miles from Circleville, we had snow
600 storm that came in and my sister and I were snowed in on our farm for a week by
601 ourselves, and when snow plows finally came through and school started up again, the
602 drifts on the road were as deep as the school bus was tall.

603

604 **Louise:** Really?

605

606 **Peg:** And that's the biggest snow I can ever remember.

607

608 **Louise:** And that was in sixty-one?

609

610 **Peg:** Sixty, sixty-one maybe.

611

612 **Louise:** Wow.

613

614 **Peg:** So I don't think the winters are near as severe as they

615

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

616 **Track 61**

617

618 **Peg:** were at that time.

619

620 **Don:** I think it was sixty-one, sixty-two.

621

622 **Peg:** Yeah, yeah. We haven't seen anything like that, don't want to.

623

624 **Louise:** So, why are you still ranching in the Flint Hills? [Laughter]

625

626 **Don:** Because I don't know anything else, I guess.

627

628 **Peg:** Don't know what else to do. [Laughter]

629

630 **Don:** That's just in the blood I guess.

631

632 **Peg:** Love for the cattle, and the grass, the lifestyle. Don't want to do anything else.

633

634 **Don:** What else would I do? ...other than maybe go south for the winter. [Laughter]

635

636 **Don:** I can't even imagine that scenario. I can't think. Yeah, it'd be nice, it'd be warm,
637 but what do you do?

638

639 **Louise:** They don't have the seasons like we have, we have the four seasons.

640

641 **Don & Peg:** Yeah.

642

643 **Louise:** They have two. Although some people say we only have two also. [Laughter]

644

645 **Don:** Hot and cold.

646

647 **Louise:** Right. Right. Are there any memories from your childhood, with your siblings?

648 You had a brother, and a sister? There were three?

649

650 **Don:** Oh, all I remember, when we were on the place south of Havensville, the three of
651 us going down to the creek and just playing around. Coming up with this huge snapping
652 turtle, it looked huge at that time, I'm sure. Called her Myrtle the turtle. [Laughter] And
653 the older brother, he had her by the tail and my sister and I had to make sure we had this
654 stick in the snapping turtle's mouth to keep from having any bad incidence with grabbing
655 somebody. So we carried the thing to the house and put it in the stock tank for some
656 reason, I'm not sure of. That was after my father died so we wasn't anybody to take card
657 of dressing the turtle and cooking it. So, eventually, I think we turned it loose.

658

659 **Louise:** How old were you when your father died?

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

660

661 **Don:** I would have been six.

662

663 **Louise:** Six. So you and your brother, were you, did you have responsibilities?

664

665 **Don:** I've always had responsibilities as far as chores.

666

667 **Louise:** Ranching and chores?

668

669 **Don:** We neither were old enough to really take it over. My uncle had helped us with
670 farming at that time. My mother had livestock, hogs, sheep, and cattle. It kind of helped
671 sustain us.

672

673 **Louise:** And everyone had their chores as far as feeding and...

674

675 **Don:** Yeah. At that time we were heating with wood. And we'd make sure to keep wood
676 stocked up. There were always things to do. And the other thing was country school. We
677 went to a particular location. We had...

678

679 **Louise:** There was a school you'd walk to, in the Havensville area?

680

681 **Don:** We would, if we cut across the native grass pastures, it'd take a mile and a half. If
682 we rode the horse around, it was two and a quarter. And so, very often, the three of us
683 would get on Old Maud.

684

685 **Louise:** That was your horse?

686

687 **Don:** [Nodding] Two and a half miles and then she'd have to... they'd have a barn, or an
688 open front shed, at the school, to tie your horse in during the day. Riding home, she
689 always went home faster than she went to school. [Laughter]

690

691 **Peg:** Kind of like the kids.

692

693 **Louise:** Sure.

694

695 **Don:** I rented a pasture that was on my cross country route years later and this creek that
696 went through it and

697

698 **Track 62**

699

700 **Don:** for the life of me I can't remember how we crossed that creek, whether we had
701 stepping stones, or how we got across that creek. I'm going to have to ask my brother
702 and sister if they remember. [Laughter] But that's bothered me at the present time.

703 [Laughter] And another different memory of the Flint Hills is a road trip that the family

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

704 made to Rocky Ford, which was the power dam just below Tuttle Creek, where Tuttle
705 Creek is now. That was a good memory, driving through the hills and that dam. I
706 probably would have been four or five at that time. That kind of whet my Flint Hills love
707 at the earliest stages.

708

709 **Louise:** And that was before Tuttle Creek was...

710

711 **Don:** Oh, way before Tuttle Creek. And it was producing electricity with water, hydro
712 power. Pretty primitive, we didn't need as much electricity as we do now.

713

714 **Louise:** Definitely.

715

716 **Don:** That's some childhood memories. I do have vague memories of burning pastures at
717 that time, before we moved out of the Flint Hills. We moved when I was about six to a
718 farm south of Soldier in Jackson County where there was not a particular practice in that
719 part of the country.

720

721 **Louise:** Yeah. What about you Peg? Do you have some fond memories of the Flint Hills
722 as a child?

723

724 **Peg:** Well, actually, where I grew up as a child, there really wasn't the Flint Hills. There
725 may be a native grass pasture here and there but it was not like this.

726

727 **Louise:** Did you notice the difference of living in, you lived in Jackson County, correct?
728 [Peg nodding] And to the west did you notice any difference in the land?

729

730 **Peg:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, as you went west towards Onaga, there was more, bigger Flint
731 Hills pastures.

732

733 **Louise:** Open Space.

734

735 **Peg:** Yeah. And I always wanted to ride a horse to the top of every hill and see what it
736 looked like on the other side. And that's what I've always... they've always drawn me.

737

738 **Louise:** Were there more cattle than where you lived in Jackson County?

739

740 **Peg:** To the west? Oh yeah, oh yeah. Bigger pastures.

741

742 **Louise:** Ranching operations, did we discuss that? How they've changed?

743

744 **Don:** We've talked a little bit about it. Where there is more double stock grazing.

745

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

746 **Louise:** One thing we didn't touch on was social activities. Social activities changed?
747 Do you recall any activities forty years ago? Any dances, or parties, or church events, or
748 that may have been different than they are today, or do you recall any changes?
749

750 **Don:** Oh, I think one big change is with the country school, a more closely knit
751 neighborhood activities through the country school. Oh, it's the last day of school event,
752 is a pretty big thing, bring a potluck, and all the families get together.
753

754 **Louise:** So what months did you go to school?
755

756 **Don:** Well there were eight months schools at that time; from September through April.
757

758 **Louise:** September to April. Ok. What time, how long were you in school? Like eight to
759 three?
760

761 **Don:** Oh, as I remember it was nine to four.
762

763 **Louise:** Nine to four. And you didn't have sports activities, did you?
764

765 **Don:** Well, we, of course,
766

767 **Track 63**
768

769 **Don:** impromptu soft ball games.
770

771 **Peg:** Nothing organized.
772

773 **Don:** No organized.
774

775 **Louise:** Nothing organized.
776

777 **Peg:** Let kids be kids.
778

779 **Louise:** Sure.
780

781 **Don:** We would maybe have a ball game with a neighboring country school. Maybe
782 some farmer in the school district would have a truck and all load in the back of the truck
783 and go seven or eight miles to the another country school and have a ball game. It wasn't
784 anything but other than just fun.
785

786 **Louise:** How many children were in your school?
787

788 **Don:** Probably anywhere from a dozen to twenty.
789

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

790 **Louise:** Grades one through eight?

791

792 **Don:** Yeah, one through eight.

793

794 **Louise:** What was the name of the school?

795

796 **Don:** Oh, Grandview was the school that was in Pottawattamie County and Rosebud was
797 the one in western Jackson County. At that particular time, why the country schools, was
798 on the wane. For seventh and eighth grade I went to town school in Soldier. Two classes
799 per teacher, so those seventh and eighth grades were under one teacher. And the lower
800 grades were under separate teachers.

801

802 **Louise:** So what town did you travel to purchase supplies or if you did banking?

803

804 **Don:** For me, Soldier was the closest town. Saturday night was the big shopping and
805 social event of the week. Every body would go to town to pick up supplies and take the
806 cream and eggs into the cream station to get a little money and go into the grocery store
807 and buy some groceries. That died with the... schools were pulled out of those towns.

808

809 **Louise:** Is Soldier still in existence today?

810

811 **Don & Peg:** Barely.

812

813 **Louise:** Barely.

814

815 **Don:** Surviving buildings are being torn down.

816

817 **Louise:** Any retail businesses left?

818

819 **Peg:** There's a restaurant. Is there a feed store?

820

821 **Don:** There is a feed store.

822

823 **Don & Peg:** And plumbing.

824

825 **Don:** No filling station now, still has a post office, ...

826

827 **Peg:** A couple churches.

828 **Don:** Still pretty active as far as their community, they help keep a community center,
829 still pretty active.

830

831 **Louise:** Are your brother and sister still living?

832

833 **Don:** Yes. Got a brother in Houston, and a sister in Topeka.

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

834

835 **Louise:** And they left the ranching to you?

836

837 **Don:** Yeah, my brother couldn't wait to get off the ranch.

838

839 **Louise:** Really?

840

841 **Don:** Yeah, he got a naval reserve scholarship to KU. And then a Master's degree in
842 Berkley, I think. And he wasn't gay, but I think that's where he got it. But he, but he.

843 [Laughter]

844

845 **Peg:** What did he say?!

846

847 **Don:** He went to work for, he spent most of his work career at NASA in Houston. He
848 was the intelligent one in the group. [Laughter]

849

850 **Louise:** Well his interests just lied elsewhere. I think you're extremely intelligent.

851

852 **Peg:** Yes.

853

854 **Louise:** Indeed. Um, are there any other questions that you would like to answer?

855

856 **Peg:** I think your number five is an interesting one that should be hit upon.

857

858 **Louise:** Number five, okay.

859

860 **Track 64**

861

862 **Louise:** Tell me about the annual cycle of activity, when did you do these activities with
863 the cattle? Is that the number five you want?

864

865 **Peg:** Yeah. That's it. [Looking over at Don]

866

867 **Don:** You brought it up.

868

869 **Peg:** Well, you know in the winter, you fed in the pastures all winter, burn them in the
870 spring. As soon as you get that done you start processing the yearlings.

871

872 **Louise:** Where, did you have difficulty in the winter, the harsh winters did you have to
873 break the ice to get water to the cattle?

874

875 **Don:** No, most winters there was ice, not every winter was as severe as some of them; a
876 few memorable severe winters. Oh, we was always glad to see the grass come. Another
thing is always the anticipation of the first calf in the spring. And the anguish and waiting

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

877 for the last one to come finally. Then we always set over one hundred first calf heifers
878 both over to Z-Bar Ranch and down in Latham. The first calf heifers took more care.
879

880 **Peg:** And those first calf heifers were in the brome field just across the road here, so they
881 were close and we could drive it at night to check them. And then if we had to get one of
882 them in; one of us would take the horse and the other one would take the truck with the
883 lights and bring them through the underpass and up to the barn where we have a calving
884 thing set up.

885
886 **Louise:** Why would you need to bring them in?

887
888 **Peg:** If she was having difficulty delivering the calf either position wise of the calf or if it
889 was just too big.

890
891 [End of video on the CD – so no more audio, either]