

The Life Of John Crow

My father, Dave Crow, was working for Dave Shirk at Home Creek when he met and married Martha Alice Young. She was teaching the Borax Works school at Field Station. Her home was in Cedarville, California. Dad and Mother continued working for Shirks after Rankin was born and until I came along July 27, 1902 in Cedarville, California. They then made our home in Cedarville for about two years. Dad worked in and around Cedarville during this time.

When I was nearly two years old my Mother passed away and Dad had to have help with us kids. He boarded us with Mrs. Perry in Cedarville. She was a wonderful person and kept us during the school months. Dad took a job with the 7th Outfit as Buckaroo Boss. The 7th was at Plush, Oregon. When school was out, Dad came and took us with him for the summer. For about five more years Mrs. Perry kept us. Then Dad got a place in Clover Swale, a part of Catlow Valley, and we were able to be together most of the time.

By the time Dad had the Clover Swale homestead we were a bit older and some help in the summers. We gathered together a small band of sheep by picking up strays left by the big bands then being herded on the open range. There were cattle and horses to be looked after too. Besides our own, Dad had the Dunn family horses leased on shares. He got half the colts for pasture. Rankin and I had the job of herding these mares with stallions for about six weeks in the Spring. There were no fences on the range so we herded during breeding season. At night we corraled them. Later in the summer they roamed until gathering time in the Spring.

Winters it was back to school in a number of places in Clover Swale and Catlow Valley. Our first school was at the ^[O'Malley] Omallie Homestead in Clover Swale. Miss Gussie Nelson was the teacher. She later became the wife of Jess Bradeen and the mother of Bill Bradeen. There were eight children in this school. Rankin and I went to school with a horse and buggy, this year.

The next year Allie Hurlburt was the teacher at the Mace Place. Toward Spring of this year school was moved to a tent halfway between the Mace Place and the ^[Tucker] Lucky Homestead. We went horseback until the school was moved to the tent. Then we were close enough that we walked. Rankin finished this year.

The third year in Clover Swale a new school was built where we had used the tent the year before. Mrs. Smith from Sageview was teacher. She and her husband had the store and post office there. For a short time Mrs. Smith and Ione ^[Tucke] Tuckey batched at the school. It was very lonesome for them and because Ione and I were the only students, Mrs. Smith got permission to move us to her home in Sageview. We boarded with the Smiths. After school hours I helped in the store. I kept a horse in a field close by and on Friday afternoons took the mail to the settlers in Clover Swale. On Monday mornings I would gallop the eighteen miles back to Sageview. Still later this year the Ragtown teacher became ill and Mrs. Smith moved us to Ragtown. Here I boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Byram. This was a larger school with Mrs. Smith teaching grades one through five and Bill Newton grades six through eight. I now had Bill Newton as my teacher. At the end of the week we returned to Sageview and I returned to the Swale.

I finished my schooling at the Narrows. This move was because we had to buy hay for the cattle. At this time we did not haul hay to cattle, we moved them to the hay. I went to school one full year to Bill Newton who had taken a job at Narrows. This was my eighth year and I should have graduated but for one reason or another County tests were not given. With the promise of tests at Christmas of the next year I again went to Bill Newton. Christmas came and still no tests, so I just quit school.

I was now sixteen and had a Model T Ford. I loaded my bed, some clothes and my saddle and took off for Cedarville. Here I took a job with the Double H Outfit. Smokie Mc Cane was boss. We had cattle to look after at Lake City, and Eagleville. We stabled our horses in Cedarville and boarded at the Golden Hotel. After four or so months I went home. I left the Ford with Dad and took my horse to the 7T ^[Hart] over Heart Mountain at Plush. I rode for Chico who was 7T cow boss. When winter came I went home and lived with Dad. During the winter I had a trap line catching bob cats and coyotes.

Around July 1, 1919 Dad and I gathered the work horses and went to Adel to work in haying for Leland Crump. He had a haying contract with the M C Ranch. After haying Dad drove our horses home and I stayed and worked

In the Spring I came back to Catlow Valley where I visited with Rankin and his wife Gladys. They were working on Rock Creek Ranch for the FG. It was soon haying time again and I stayed and worked on the FG haying crew run by Hank Osborn. We hayed RockCreek and Roaring Springs ranches.

Remembering back a bit I went to work in the fall of 1922 at the P-Ranch, Augustine Gilbert was buckaroo boss at the time. The buckeroos had the job of gathering hogs out of the swamp. We got lots of roping practice before we got through. We caught 2000 head . Judd Wise and two men followed us with a four horse team and high sideboarded wagon to haul them in to the head-quarters. There they were penned until Charlie Beckley and his Model T truck gave them a ride to the railroad in Crane. Ralph Mulkey also hauled with an eight horse team and two big freight wagons. Crane was the end of the rail road then.

Ever since I can remember I have worked on ranches, cattle drives and horse drives. Guess I'd better tell of one or two. One of the first cowdrives I recall was during a Christmas Vacation from Narrows School. Jack Debouy bought steers around Burns. He had Bill Harris and me gather them together and take them to the Narrows. We were going to the Debouy ranch at Lakeview by way of Catlow Valley and Heart Mountain. There were too many steers for two riders so Bill got ^[Hart] Lestle Cawfield to go with us. Lestle was a good pal of mine from way back. For a couple of kids nine days on a snowy trail got rather boring. We found a five gallon coal oil can beside the road. on the last day. The steers were getting sore footed and slow. We decided to speed things up a bit. I took my macarte and tied it to the bail of the can, made two half hitches in the other end and carefully slipped it on the tail of an unwarey steer. When the rope came tight the steer took off through the bunch and we had plenty to do for a time. We had to rope the steer and ditch the can. and get things settled down a bit. That evening Bill wanted to know what in heck we did back there. He always took the lead so couldn't see what went on but could tell by the results that we were busy. He was a fine fellow and never said very much.

Later on Rankin, Chester Baker, Elmer Baker and I took cattle to Cold

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Springs for Seth Dixon. We made two trips to Cold Springs with cattle he bought in this area. At Cold Springs we worked out a thousand steers and drove to the rail road at Bend. There we shipped by rail to Fort Klamath. Elmer and I drove the horses home to Burns. Seth and Chester brought the beds.

Now I'll tell about a long distance horse drive. A Mr. Dodge came into Harney County from Requa, California to buy horses. He bought horses from the Riddle Brothers on Steens Mountain and from Tom Bailey. He also bought from many others in the area. Mr. Dodge, a fellow we called "Dad" and myself took the horses. We were a month on the road. All along the way Dodge traded horses where we stopped. After all this distance and time Dodge hadn't paid me all my wages. When I asked for my last \$50 he hedged and said "I'll meet you in Crescent City at the livery stable tomorrow!" Crescent City is about twenty miles North of Requa. Dodge had a pair of white wooly chaps that were worth the price and then some. I put them on and took off for Crescent City knowing full well that my wages were secure. He did meet me and paid off. He even got me a job on a dairy farm at Smith River. Here I broke work horses until I finished the Spring farming, sold my horse, bought a car and returned to Harney County.

Another horse drive was from the Island Ranch to Winnemucca, Nevada. Allen Jones, Elmer Baker, and a fellow called Bob and I took 236 head of horses. Some were mares with little colts too small to travel so far. Grover Jamison the ranch boss gave the colts away. The old mares sure hated to leave home and colts so we were a busy bunch for a day or two. We were twelve days on this trip. We laid over at White Horse Ranch to shoe saddle horses. Another time we laid over to shoe some unbroke horses. This was at the Arch Myers Ranch near McDermitt. These horses got too tender footed to travel. We came into Winnemucca on July 4th. After the celebration I went back to the Myers Ranch where I worked that haying season. After haying I came home and worked around here for several years.

About now I decided I needed a place of my own to hang my hat. It was September 6, 1903 when I filed for a homestead in the meadows close to

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Buena Vista. During the years of residency I built a cabin and fenced the land. Then I worked near the homestead so I could maintain residency and still make a living. Springtimes were spent riding at P-Ranch, Roaring Springs and Three Mile.

Another time I had a post contract with the government when the Refuge was first being fenced. Dan Retherford and Lynn Knute cut posts. Mrs. Retherford cooked for all and I hauled the posts with a truck. The posts were Juniper cut on Jack Mountain. Two thousand posts were cut. 1050 were hauled to Sod House and the same number to Buena Vista. Part of the winters I fed cattle for ranchers who had hay and pasture close to the homestead, so that I could stay at home. Sometimes I trapped.

When the Civilian Conservation Corp. came into being I hired out as a carpenter's helper at Buena Vista. That job finished and the homestead legally mine, I went to work at Refuge Headquarters riding fence and counting cattle as they were turned into Government Pasture.

It was at this time that I met the Voltage School teacher, Georgia Creswell. She was boarding with the Culver Marshalls who lived just over the fence from my batch camp at the George Benson Cabin on Malheur Lake. We were married March 26, 1937 in Burns. Georgia finished the school term and then we started working toward my dream of a ranch of my own.

Soon after our marriage we took the Crane to Blitzen Stage Line. It was a steady job. One night in Crane and the next in Blitzen. Week ends were in Blitzen and every now and then I had a chance to help with a branding or some other ranch chore for a change of pace. The stage line contract closed out July first and I had a job all lined up with the Squaw Butte Experiment Station.

We lived at Squaw Butte during the summer. In the Fall we drove the cattle to Buena Vista for the winter. Vern Bossuot and I drove the cattle. Georgia took the camp and fed us along the way. Winter was spent at the homestead cabin. Elmer Ash was my helper with the feeding and experiments during the winter. Spring came and we drove the cattle back to Squaw Butte.

This trip took a little longer and more help because of the calves. John

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Baugh hauled beds and did the cooking, Verne Bossuot and John Kirk helped me with the cattle. We turned in our resignation from this job to be effective July first.

Now my ranching dream was beginning! We leased the Ted Dunn ranch on Malheur Lake in the Sod house area. The lease was for three years with cattle included on shares. To make ends meet we took in cattle and horses for pasture. Most of the cattle were from local ranches but at one time we had some Brahma bulls and horses from Don Mille's and Roland Hide's rodeo stock. I also went back to my old job of counting stock for the Reuge. After the three years we were able to buy the ranch. At this time the homestead was sure worth a lot to us. I sold it to George Hamilton for enough cows to give us a start. For years we continued to rent pasture if we had any extra. Also we bought little bunches of cattle from some of our neighbors. Buyers didn't like to bother with a dozen or so. This way we kept the best and sold enough to make ranching worth while.

Due to a back injury I found I must retire. At first we tried leasing but that wasn't successful. We then put the ranch up for sale. My Uncle Bill Crow who lived in Fort Bidwell, California, passed away at this time. As I made trips through Lakeview to Bidwell settling the estate I had the good fortune of meeting Fred Briggs, a Lakeview logger looking for a cattle ranch. As it turned out ours was just what he wanted. We traded. For many of the years Fred was paying for the ranch we looked after it and the cattle for him. He got it paid out a number of years before the present high water.

I'm now, I guess, fully retired. I live in Burns and for a hobby to pass the time I like cleaning up old saddles and making slight repairs. I also like to fish a little and go back to the desert to prowl and remember old times.