

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #239 - Sides A & B

Subject: Denny Presley Interviews for Kiwanis Days on KZZR

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DENNY PRESLEY: We're here at the hospital with Dr. White, and we're going to talk to him about buffalo. Now Doc you had what, the first buffalo here in town?

DR. FRANK WHITE: Well, I had the first buffalo here in Harney County. But it was about 1956; I went to Billings, Montana and bought two cows and a bull. Showed them the refuge up there, and then of course the bull was a leppy, he had to graze in behind the headquarters in --- at the buffalo range and they'd made a pet out of him. And he wasn't a bit fearful of anybody. In fact he ran with an antelope and a deer.

DENNY: That's ...

FRANK: In Montana, he didn't know the difference whether he was an antelope or deer when I took him home.

DENNY: How old was he when you got him?

FRANK: He was a yearling.

DENNY: And which is what ...

FRANK: He was a good-sized yearling at the time.

DENNY: What possessed you to go buy a buffalo?

FRANK: Well, I bought this little place up here in Silvies Valley from Howard Patton about 1956. And then I tried to figure out something I could run on that 640 acres of it, and have to feed in the wintertime. And so I decided I would try some buffalo, and just let them, and run them up there year 'round. And they could forage on the ground up there, and see if they could make it. So they didn't do too bad the first year. I had put up a little hay and they, between the two horses and the three buffalo; they made it pretty good that winter. Then the next year, I wrote to the refuge up there, and bought five cows. So I had a herd there for a while of eight buffalos. But then the two older ones, they had calves the next year. So my herd got a little bigger, until they started getting out. And the --- then the Forest Service trespassed me, and there was about ---

DENNY: I didn't think they would trespass a buffalo.

FRANK: Oh, they trespassed --- First experience I had with being out was that --- O'Toole had sheep up on Calamity Mountain. And of course this bull wasn't much afraid of anybody. He'd been around a lot of people, and so he wasn't fearful at all. He was quite tame. And the first experience I had there was he --- well in the herd of seven cows and a bull, they got out and they went up on O'Toole's sheep allotment. And in the middle of the night the shepherd in the tent --- and the old bull just walked right

into the tent, and this Irishman had never seen a buffalo before in his life. He'd figured he'd died and the devil had come to get him.

DENNY: (Laughter)

FRANK: But his dog stood with the buffalo. And the last I heard of him when I was up there, he said, "If he comes back tonight he was going to shoot him." So that evening, Buck Weil and I went up there with a pickup with a big rope, and bucket of grain, and we found him clear up there in the forest. And we coaxed him to eat some of the grain, and then we tied him up with a rope and towed him back to the ranch. And he stayed there for a while then. That was probably the first experience we had with him. And the biggest problem I had was the --- was one old cow she just tore the fences up, just as fast as I could fix them. And the next thing I knew was --- it was around Christmas time, and they all got out again up around Seneca, where Steve Miller lives up there. I ... below his place and this truck driver come by and he saw these buffalo on the highway, and he thought he had a few too many drinks, and went off the highway. And the state highway department called me and told me there was some buffalo up there, and especially this bull, he kept getting out. So we went up there with a bucket of grain, and that horse trailer, and just coaxed him in the trailer and took him back again.

And it was about the next year or so that we had this black

rock fire, and they had a bunch of guys up there. And this --- the old cows stayed back, but the bull came right up and, and they told me --- Well they had these weather people from Portland with a station wagon, they had a little power plant sitting out there. And Diana put a brass ring in the old bulls nose, and then he wasn't --- he liked motors and engines, so he went up there and sniffed on the spark plugs and really got a jolt. And spun him around, and then he started licking on the windshield of this station wagon, and I guess these guys from Portland sort of panicked a little bit. And I think Clint Purdy was in on that fire. It was a --- the buffalo, the rest of them were down there at his dad's place. Well they sort of headquartered for this fire-fighting outfit. And they were feeding the bull cigarette butts; I guess he liked cigarette butts. But, and Clinton moved him around a little bit, because he knew more about him than anybody. But they had a little problem with it, on that. Then every once in awhile Hines would call me, and he'd tree a faller once in awhile, because he liked these motors, these chain saws.

DENNY: Would he actually tree them, or were they just afraid of him?

FRANK: Well I think they were afraid of him. They climbed the tree until he left. Then Hines would call me up and tell me to get ... out of the forest. Then the Forest Service got on me for, you know, trespassing. And so then I got a hold of a Wayne

Morris. And one winter before I got rid of them, he got me a permit to run them down on the refuge that winter. So I had eight of them down there. Well I don't think I quite had eight, I lost three of them in the process. The elk hunters got three of them. Killed ---

DENNY: Oh, really.

FRANK: Yeah. They had a calf every year, and then the ---

DENNY: They didn't know a buffalo from an elk?

FRANK: No, they didn't know a buffalo from a deer either, because one lady went --- look, we saw the biggest deer you ever saw.

DENNY: Well especially if you ...

FRANK: Well she didn't know whether it was a --- know a deer from a buffalo. But I eventually had to get rid of them. I couldn't keep them in. So I sold them to Harry Pon. And the biggest --- Doris and I rounded them up one day, and just like a herd of horses, and drove them over to Harry Pon's place, and he took them with the rest of his. Of course in between there --- one year or two, I didn't know what to do with the bull. So I had him over in Boise for a couple years. Then I brought him back. Then when Harry Pon got him, well one of the other bulls killed him, because he didn't have any horns.

DENNY: Oh, you dehorned him.

FRANK: I dehorned him, yeah. Well then, one rodeo time, I had him down here at the rodeo, and Mike Morgan rode him. But he

smelled so bad, I dehorned him and put --- then the flies blew in. And then I put KRS on the horn spots. And he smelled pretty ripe then.

DENNY: I know they had several episodes of buffalo rides there at the rodeo. Were they your buffalo there?

FRANK: Yeah, that one bull.

DENNY: It's the one that, I remember Delmer Clemens and Red Wolverton rode two bulls at the same time, two buffalos at the same time. Red's bucked him off, and Delmer's run over him. (Laughter)

FRANK: Well then I had ---

DENNY: Run over Red.

FRANK: Yes, you see the one I had down at the refuge, I had a younger bull, and I put horn weights on him, and one horn went straight out, and the other curled all around. I sold him to the Elks, and they kept him down at Pete Clemens' place. And then one night about oh, one or two o'clock in the morning the Burns Police called me and said, "Do you have buffalo?" And I said, "Yeah." Well they said, "There is one under the blinker light, down there by Copeland's." And I said, "It ain't mine. That belongs to the Elks." ... right into town, walking up and down the street. He did that two nights in a row.

DENNY: Nobody did it; he did that himself, huh?

FRANK: Yeah. He did it on his own. ... brought him back to Pete

Clemens. Then they ended up butchering him, and had a big buffalo barbecue.

DENNY: Well there's been more than one buffalo feed, isn't there? Or just that one?

FRANK: Well that's the only one I ---

DENNY: The one I remember, I think everyone remembers that buffalo feed. Do you remember anything about Harry Pon's buffalo ... he had. Because they run adjacent to you up there, didn't they?

FRANK: Yeah. Well actually I sold all mine --- I think I had six at the time I sold them to him. And he, the most problems he had, he had one bull that got clear to Drewsey. And then they couldn't get it back, so they shot it.

DENNY: That's the one the Drewsey boys shot, wasn't it?

FRANK: Yeah. And the trouble he had, he had brucellosis in the --- and the federal government sold him a bunch of bulls, buffalo with brucellosis, and he got stuck with them. And they, and they had them run through a chute in the process --- they had a real brittle windpipe. And these guys would rope them, and of course the windpipe would break, or fracture, and they just killed a bunch of them that way. But he a, he had to get rid of a good share of his herd because he had to test them all for brucellosis. And then he had to sell them for slaughter. And so he, eventually he just, what he didn't slaughter he eventually got rid of before

he left here. I only paid for mine, from the refuge up at Montana; the most I paid was a hundred and twenty-five dollars a head. But the antes gone up quite a bit since then. Because there are other people raising buffalo now.

DENNY: At one time though Pon had what, he had ---

FRANK: He had five thousand head. He had the largest private herd in the United States.

DENNY: That's a lot of ... quite a time managing them then.

FRANK: Well I think the larger the numbers, you had less trouble managing.

DENNY: Oh really.

FRANK: He had a lot of --- see he run them up Silvies Valley there. And that Shetkey place, and the Bridge Creek Ranch, or the --- you know the Shetkey place --- the Sheckels place. So between the three, he had a lot of pasture. They just pastured year around, at one time.

DENNY: They were a little harder to handle than a ---

FRANK: They were less hard to handle than the longhorns.

DENNY: Than longhorns, yeah. They had a lot of trouble with longhorns. Pon, he had a romance with animals or something, didn't he?

FRANK: Well he had down by our place, he had a zebra, and he had llamas, and --- well I know the zebra kicked old Steve Miller in the leg, and broke his leg. And the llamas, I remember, the kids

would go down and look at them and they'd spit on them.

DENNY: (Laughter) They tried to break the zebra and ride him. I guess they couldn't ---

FRANK: Well he bred the zebra, they had one stud zebra, and they bred him to a bunch of ponies and stuff, and they wound up with Zonies.

DENNY: Zonies.

FRANK: And they had stripes and spots, and stuff like that. But I don't think anybody ever rode any of them. Somewhere, Harry probably got rid of them ...

DENNY: They were, Thad Geer was telling me a story this morning that some of Pon's buckaroos decided they were going to break that. FRANK: That zebra?

DENNY: The zebra.

FRANK? He wasn't very big though.

DENNY: No, but they said they couldn't ride him. He said they was the only animal they ever saw that could bite and kick at the same time.

FRANK: Well I'm ... they do now, all right.

DENNY: (Laughter)

FRANK: Probably Steve Miller could tell you more stories about ... than I could.

DENNY: Yeah I was going to get a tape with Steve Miller but he had a horse accident up there, and he's ...

FRANK: I have a Volkswagen, and he can just pick that thing right off the ground, you know.

DENNY: You're talking about your buffalo?

FRANK: The original bull.

DENNY: Is that the one you sawed the horns off of?

FRANK: Yeah. I tipped them the first time. And that didn't slow him down, so then I, what I did was I just all by myself, I get a whole bunch of samples of tranquilizers, you know, all kinds you could get ... Two coffee cans, I had a one pound coffee can with tranquilizers ... oats in it.

DENNY: Let him eat.

FRANK: And had this ... and he'd eat it. Then after he ate the ... he'd be just as docile as you could think of. And so then I just sawed his horns right off close to his head.

DENNY: You originally said you'd --- he'd turn your Volkswagen clear over if he wanted to.

FRANK: No, well he would just lift it up in the air.

DENNY: Take his horn under it and lift it up.

FRANK: By the bumper, and lift it up, yeah.

DENNY: Why'd he do that, just for the heck of it?

FRANK: Just for --- Well another experience I had, a funny one, I had a little spotted mare I got from Urizars. She was a pretty good-sized old horse, and I had to cross --- I went across the creek. And I had this old spotted mare from Urizars, and this

other one. This old buffalo, he liked grain, so I, one day I just dump off some grain, I was going to catch this old mare. Well the buffalo got to the grain before the mare, see. And she had shoes on, and she just whirled around and gave him both hind feet in the ... He walked off and left her. But she got the grain. I'll tell you, talk about buffalo, you know your buffalo ... And then on this haystack, the horses ate first. When they were through the buffalo ate.

DENNY: Oh really. I thought the buffalo would run the horses off.

FRANK: No, this old mare she about ready --- she scared them ... She gave him both hind feet at once, right in the head.

DENNY: That's all he wanted, huh?

FRANK: That's all he wanted of her. There were a lot of old things ...

DENNY: You said your bull weighed over two thousand pounds.

FRANK: Oh, he weighed over a ton. He was ---

DENNY: ... buffalo killed him.

FRANK: Yeah. Well this is --- I had another one that somehow got ... And the rest of them will pick on a sick bull, or something ... get them down.

DENNY: That's what I heard.

FRANK: They got this one down and killed him.

DENNY: Well you just ...

FRANK: And same thing with bulls, well since he didn't have any horns and so ---

DENNY: There was something wrong with him and ---

FRANK: And they just picked on him until they killed him.

DENNY: That Jack Drinkwater ---

FRANK: I should have left him over at the zoo.

DENNY: Yeah. And Jack Drinkwater told me that something happens to one of them, the rest of them will kill them.

FRANK: Yeah. Well that's characteristic of wild animals.

DENNY: Keeping the species strong.

FRANK: Yeah. And of course the other thing, you know, two or three hundred years ago they had a million, or they claimed they had five million head of buffalo on the prairies. And of course the sickly ones and the old bulls and the old animals ... They fall back from the herd, and ---

DENNY: But you wouldn't think their own kind would kill them.

FRANK: Well, they do. You'll see that in livestock, if you get one that is sort of sick or puny, the rest will pick on him. Not as bad as the wild animals, but ---

DENNY PRESLEY: We're at the Clint Purdy residence, and talking to Clint Purdy. And we're going to talk about some of the exotic

animals that Harry Pon had. Now Clint you're, what time are we talking? When did Harry Pon bring those animals in here? That area, anyway.

CLINTON PURDY: Yeah, well I'd have to think about it a little bit Denny, to come up with a definite date. But it had to have been along in oh --- '60 and '51 I would think.

DENNY: What possessed him to get in the buffalo business.

CLINT: I cannot imagine.

DENNY: Well the Tom Tom in Bend sold buffalo meat. Did they get them from Harry?

CLINT: I can't really tell you that either. He didn't get too awful many sold, commercially like that. He got brucellosis in the herd before he got much accomplished. Brucellosis is a kind of a venereal disease.

DENNY: Oh.

CLINT: But it's --- causes abortions mainly. And it's quite contagious.

DENNY: When it would get into the cattle.

CLINT: Gets into domestic cattle and deer, elk, and everything. It goes into --- gets into pretty near every mammal.

DENNY: ... ranch with.

CLINT: Well, no, no not that. Not really. No, you want to be pretty well a horseback before you start fooling with them buffalo.

DENNY: Well what would your horse think when you come up --- it was a different animal. Did the horse treat it differently?

CLINT: No, they didn't seem to, they didn't seem to treat them any different than a cow.

DENNY: I heard some people say that a horse get one smell of a buffalo, and that was it. They couldn't keep them back. It was ---

CLINT: No, they was a little bit, they was a little bit --- oh, uneasy when they would get to grunting, you know.

DENNY: The horse was?

CLINT: Yeah, the horse would get a little uneasy, until he got used to it.

DENNY: And the buffalo, they weren't used to horses were they?

CLINT: Well ---

DENNY: They didn't bother them either.

CLINT: They, they surely weren't domesticated animals. I don't think you could ever domesticate them. They just weren't, or how you say, I don't think you could ever domesticate them completely.

DENNY: Well how did buffalo and fences get along?

CLINT: They --- if ---

DENNY: They didn't know about them, or ---

CLINT: If they wanted to go someplace, why they went. They were pretty good jumpers. Or they ---

DENNY: They'd jump a fence or just go through it?

CLINT: Or they would just turn and run through it too. But they would jump an ordinary fence. So they had to lift most of the fences where they ran them.

DENNY: Why ---

CLINT: Well they made a quarantine field, then --- and it would just be a matter of a week, and they would be a bunch of them mix back up with the other herd. You couldn't keep them quarantined, in other words. And so this was why it wasn't very successful. Consequently the state took care of most of these.

DENNY: ...

CLINT: I've ate them all ages, because pretty near every time we run them through up there, why we would kill two or three. And of course that was what he had to do with them. You just, to salvage them, why you just slaughtered them right there.

DENNY: Why would you kill --- you mean they just ---

CLINT: They killed --- they was just hard on themselves. Run into a fence and break his neck, or get them in close quarters, and fear. They would just horn one another to death. I've seen them stick a horn in the other ones belly, and just rip him wide open.

DENNY: Bulls mainly, you mean?

CLINT: Well, yeah. Cows too, they're just as treacherous. You bet.

DENNY: They were --- now were the bulls, they were hard to

handle? I mean ---

CLINT: All of them were hard to handle.

DENNY: Were they hard on a horse? Or would they stick a horse?

CLINT: Oh yeah, anyone of them, you had to respect them. Use a fast horse too. If one of them wanted you, he had you. And they are a weird animal. They could be running just about as fast as a saddle horse, in one direction. And they had a way of --- they just kind of stop on their front feet, and their hind end just come around them, like that.

DENNY: And they were facing you then.

CLINT: And they was facing you going the other way. (Laughter)
They was just pretty hard to cope with, you know. (Laughter)

DENNY: Would the whole herd do that?

CLINT: And they are a herd animal. If one, what one done, well the whole outfit done.

DENNY: Did they have a specific lead animal, or did they just ---

CLINT: No, no, just whatever one happened to break, that was the lead animal.

DENNY: They'd all just more or less take ---

CLINT: And everything just went with him. And if he decided to make a turn, everything made that turn. Or reverse, they all reversed and went the other direction.

DENNY: Did you ever have any mishaps, anybody have any mishaps?

CLINT: Nobody ever got hurt. They've had them run back over us

lots of times. ... horse. (Laughter) But ---

DENNY: Special fences out here? Why did they have special fences? They were higher, and they boarded, and solid, or ---

CLINT: Well yeah, they had them fairly tight, you know.

DENNY: ... wire fences.

CLINT: ... stays, and what have you. Probably a little more than the regular domestic cow fence. And then they were, they had about three extra wires on all of them. ... mostly. What they done, they just went down the old fence, and run in some taller posts, and stretched the three extra wires on them taller posts.

DENNY: Did Harry brand the buffalo? He didn't have to, did he? Or did he?

CLINT: He probably wouldn't have, but he did. I think we put a hat on them.

DENNY: Well, what's a hat.

CLINT: Well, that was an iron. If I remember correctly, that was the iron that they put on them. I can't remember where it come from. But, if you've ever been up the upper end of Silvies Valley, and the old red barn that sets up there. Have you ever noticed that hat?

DENNY: Yeah, I have too.

CLINT: It sits cockeyed on the front of that barn.

DENNY: Yeah, I've wondered what that was.

CLINT: That's it. Sets --- It sets ---

DENNY: I thought that whatever it was, was crooked on there.

CLINT: Yeah, it sets cockeyed on there.

DENNY: Oh, that's what that is.

CLINT: That's what that is. And they call it the hat iron.

DENNY: Oh, yeah, I see. Yeah.

CLINT: And that was, that's what they put on them. I think he brands them with a P O N.

DENNY: Pon.

CLINT: Uh huh.

DENNY: His name was Harry Pon. P O N.

CLINT: Uh huh.

DENNY: He was what, out of California?

CLINT: Yes.

DENNY: What did he made his money on? He didn't make it raising buffalos.

CLINT: No, uh huh. I think he made it in real estate originally.

DENNY: Well did he live here?

CLINT: Uh, he came up here and lived off and on anyway. He brought his family with him. He had this place, the old Frank Triska place out here.

DENNY: The one that Ruthie Miller lives in now that Mazzoni lived in for a while.

CLINT: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah. He bought, that was the first place that he owned. And he got the Stewart place, where Warren Raymond

lived, with that. Then he bought the old Hebner place over by Sandhill.

DENNY: Uh huh. Where Toby ... live.

CLINT: Uh huh. He --- where Ric Hoyt's place is now. And they built the feedlot here where Mike Morgan lives.

DENNY: They had buffalo --- I remember buffalo in there.

I heard the story about, and I don't remember who all was involved in it, I heard the names, but --- but they were going to go shoot a buffalo, for buffalo feed. And they went up there and shot one, a buffalo. And they didn't kill it, I mean right off. And they all intermingled, they couldn't --- before they got through, they'd shot ---

CLINT: Several.

DENNY: --- several. (Laughter)

CLINT: I hadn't heard that one.

DENNY: Then Harry, he's what, he had different people, he had other animals besides buffalo. He had elk and ---

CLINT: Yeah, he bought a bunch of elk. And he kept them in an enclosure first, when he first got them. And he must have been ... for a couple years there at the old ... ranch.

DENNY: Did you ever get in on any of the elk?

CLINT: Yeah, oh yeah. I got in on the elk.

DENNY: Did you rope them?

CLINT: Several different episodes of the elk --- one day why the

young bulls got to beating up on an older bull there. And Freddy Miller --- old Leonard Dollarhyde he was one of the ... lived there. And he was afraid they was going to kill him. He probably would have. And so Steve got --- Steve got --- LaVerne and I wound up on the best horses we could find around there, and what happened was in the squabble why the cows from around --- well one of the young ones went out through the wire. And he got out. Well he didn't really want to leave, but yet he was loose. Well we went down there with saddle horses and ... maybe we could ... the corner of the ... you know. And that's the first episode I ever got in on the roping.

DENNY: Did you catch him in the corner?

CLINT: Well, he left. First ... didn't make ... you had to go hunt up a gate. But he didn't want to leave, like I say, real bad. And finally why he did. He took off straight south. Well southwest was the mountain out there, and the ranch. And Steve took in after him with the pickup. And by golly he had his old 30-30 with him.

DENNY: Did he shoot him?

CLINT: If he --- he was going to. If he didn't get ahead of him. And then he got between the house and the chicken house. And LaVerne Starbuck, when he come by him, why he got ... on him. And stretched him out, and we drug him in the --- back in the other field. But then the next day then, why we all went down and

saddled up and we all went down ... elk. And ---

DENNY: Did you rope them?

CLINT: Yes.

DENNY: Were they a little hard to rope?

CLINT: You'd have to have a pretty good-sized loop, that was the only thing.

DENNY: Get over the horn, and you rope them by the ---

CLINT: Yes.

DENNY: Did you have two ropes on them?

CLINT: Yeah, oh yeah. Stretched them out.

DENNY: What did they do when you got a rope on them?

CLINT: Not like you would think.

DENNY: They didn't fight it?

CLINT: Huh uh. No, I thought god, you'd have elk right in your lap. But ---

DENNY: I've heard of them come right back up the rope.

CLINT: They --- they almost didn't. You could stretch them right out. We stretched them out ... normal. It was just that simple.

DENNY: You know they're hardly worth five dollars a pound now.

CLINT: Yeah. But cows --- the bulls wasn't mean about it at all. Of course that's what we was interested in. Them cows and calves in there, you had to keep your eye on them.

DENNY: What was he going to do with the elk?

CLINT: I guess he was just going to sell them for people to

shoot. Come out, and you wanted an elk, sell them to them. Go shoot one.

DENNY: Brings me back to another story. Now maybe you've heard it. They had some guy come out, had a lot more money than good sense, and he let people shoot the buffalo. What they got the whole buffalo when they shot it?

CLINT: Uh huh. They got head, horns, meat and all.

DENNY: Well the one fellow that --- maybe you remember the incident. He was going to --- he wanted to ride a horse bareback and shoot him with an arrow. Shoot him with a bow.

CLINT: I didn't --- I heard about that. But I never did, I didn't see that.

DENNY: They wouldn't let him do it, because they couldn't --- the insurance wasn't that good. (Laughter)

CLINT: Yeah, I don't know if he would have got it done. He might have had quite a little run before he got an arrow into one of them out there. (Laughter)

DENNY: About like those guys trying to shoot the buffalo for the ...

CLINT: Yeah. But you know it would take more than one guy to get that accomplished, I think. The way the Indians used to do it, why you'd get you a whole bunch of them. And they would kind of get up on a bunch, and when they spooked and ran, why then they would just run right in with the ---

DENNY: Intermingle with them.

CLINT: Yeah, intermingle with the animal. And one man alone would --- might have a hell of a time getting into them, I would think. It might be pretty hard to get right into a bunch.

DENNY: I imagine they knew what they were doing too. A horse just about had to know what they were doing.

CLINT: Yeah, I would think so.

DENNY: They would have to get right up against one probably.

CLINT: He'd have to get a hold --- I don't think there would be any problem getting in close enough, you know. A guy would have to be pretty much about himself to get it done. Especially bareback. I can see maybe a pretty good cowboy might get in where he could get a shot with a bow and arrow. Maybe not ---

DENNY: Well Jack Drinkwater was telling a story one day about well he just got his horse used to buffalo, and then all of a sudden he tried to get used to the elk. And the horse didn't like the smell of the elk at all.

CLINT: (Laughter) He ---

DENNY: He had other animals, he had what? He had a Barbary, had one Barbary ram up there. Did you know that?

CLINT: Oh yeah. He had several Barbary. He had ...

DENNY: ... flathorn.

CLINT: It might have been a ... I think they were.

DENNY: Yeah. Or small deer.

CLINT: Yeah, small white deer.

DENNY: Uh huh.

CLINT: Then he had, then he had several different kinds of goats.

DENNY: He had some Texas longhorns too, didn't he?

CLINT: Oh god he had a bunch of longhorns.

DENNY: ... romance with these animals more than anything else.

CLINT: Yeah, he was kind of a dreamer.

DENNY: He had Scottish Highlanders too.

CLINT: Oh yeah. And he was a cross breeding a lot of these animals too.

DENNY: Did he cross any of the buffalo with the cattle?

CLINT: Yeah, he tried. I don't know how much success he ever had there. And he also had some cattalo that he bought, that was already crossed.

DENNY: But they're a hybrid, they won't breed.

CLINT: They won't breed, I'm for sure.

DENNY: Did he have any moose?

CLINT: Yep. He had two I think to begin with, and one of them died.

DENNY: Were they cows, or ---

CLINT: I --- what I remember they was cows. I've got a picture someplace feeding a banana to one.

DENNY: And Dorothy was saying something like they raised one of them that was a leppy.

CLINT: Yeah, he was kind of a pet. I guess somebody seen an albino, I guess an albino. That's the way I understood it anyway, elk. Out here on Pine Dome or someplace.

DENNY: We shot one, one year.

CLINT: Did you?

DENNY: Yeah. And we saw two in the herd. And my brother saw him. And Howard Maw shot that one.

CLINT: Oh yeah.

DENNY: And they traded the hide off to Emery Ferguson there in Burns.

CLINT: I'll be damned.

DENNY: For a couple pair of gloves.

SIDE B

DENNY: ... both ...

CLINT: Oh yeah.

DENNY: And then people there in town got some movies of a bunch of elk up around Snow Mountain meadow. And then there is one in that movie. ... snowball ...

CLINT: I'll be darned. Now Dorothy and Kelly and I come back from Silvies one time, and we seen the black elk. He was absolutely the same color as their neck, you know. I wouldn't call it absolutely black, but boy it was pretty dark. It was the same color as his neck, all over. Outside of his butt, white

butt.

DENNY: The elk that we killed up there in the Howard field wasn't absolutely white either, the rump hair was just snow white. And around the eyes and everything else was snow white. And the only other color it had on it was silver gray.

CLINT: I'll be darned.

DENNY: You know, no pigment of any kind anywhere.

CLINT: Huh. I've seen white deer.

DENNY: Yeah.

CLINT: We had two or three pintos here that was ... Now see a white fawn, I thought sure as the world there was a cougar or something chasing this doe. (Laughter)

DENNY: Yeah, you would.

CLINT: ... one time. Here was this old doe a ripping across there, and there was this white thing just hard on its heels. Now it was about to get it, it looked like it, you know. (Laughter) And the more I looked at it, the more I looked at it I could see it was a fawn following this little fellow. And it was just snow white.

DENNY: There was a black fawn there in Crane several years back. And the next year it was a little buck, and Ralph Opie's wife shot it.

CLINT: Oh yeah.

DENNY: Then there is one hanging up here in the museum that one

of the Fines killed; it was a four point, black. They sure look different.

CLINT: Well that's the way with the elk. Now I didn't think anything about it, I suppose there are all kinds of oddities. Yeah, I'm sure that must be what you seen. That buffalo field is back off of Flat Creek there, where you don't hardly ---

DENNY: Which is more north?

CLINT: Yeah, it's further; you remember where the buffalo corrals were?

DENNY: Uh huh.

CLINT: In behind them, and it run back in there four or five miles west. Pretty hard to make it out from the highway.

DENNY: Now did ... something to do with Pon?

CLINT: He was, he took care of Pon's, all of Pon's bookwork there for years. In fact, I worked for him up there off an on, and he was the one that wrote the checks. Bill Bradeen is another one.

DENNY: Do you remember the story behind the, the head that he had in his office?

CLINT: No, I remember the story about it, at all, that's where it came from though. Was whether Harry give it to him, or he bought it or ---

DENNY: Them two bulls that got in a fight, tore up a quarter mile of fence. Two buffalo bulls, they ended up shooting them both. That was one of them there. I don't know where the other one

went. They tore a lot of fence out. I imagine they did get in fight; the fence wouldn't stand much of a chance.

CLINT: No they, no a domestic bull, you know ---

DENNY: They'll tear a fence all to pieces.

CLINT: They'll tear up --- The old bull that Doc White used to have up there, he got ...

DENNY: Yeah.

CLINT: ... chop some sagebrush; beat some sagebrush ... That was what he was a doing when the incident took place. The buffalo didn't particularly like the motors for some reason.

DENNY: Noise or ---

CLINT: The noise of the motor irritated them or something. Anyway why, he come over with a tractor. The tractor was running, I suppose he was beating brush or whether he parked it or what, but it was running. Anyway he treed Howard, I think all one afternoon, wouldn't leave. Ralph Hankins, it was near his place, set right in amongst it there, you know. Right in the middle of that buffalo field pretty near. And longhorns would just migrate over there. You couldn't keep them out. LaVerne Starbuck and I'd go over there every day to get this one out. And you couldn't keep him out, ... had anything but kill him, you know. So they had authority to try. And I absolutely wore out a tamarack rope for beating on his horns. Really stretched him out. LaVerne held him down, and I'd beat on his horns until there wasn't nothing

left but posts.

DENNY: What were you trying to do, break the horns off?

CLINT: Just make it --- he didn't want to go nowhere, you know. And we turned him loose; he'd go back in Ralph Hankins cows the next day. He --- and hell they shot them with shotguns, and you just couldn't, you couldn't do anything with them. And really it was a little bit dangerous.

DENNY: Well did they jump the fence, just like ---

CLINT: Oh, yeah. Yeah they just jump over. DENNY: And ... havoc.

CLINT: And if they took a notion, they just run through it too. But far --- they just hop in, you know. No trick to it, they could jump a, they could jump about six or seven foot high, without too much problem.

We was branding longhorns, some longhorn steers up there at Bridge Creek Ranch one time. We couldn't keep them in too well, and had --- what we had a cattle truck or something, in this one corner. And in the other side of the corner, I had some tarp or something hanging up. Just a kind of a blind. So you, where you done your crowding, well you put them into that corner, and when they come out of there, why then you put the loop on him. Otherwise if you crowd him anyplace else, why hell they'd just hop over the fence and they was gone. So anyway, that --- you couldn't fence them all in that way. It wasn't possible to make the whole corral longhorn proof. So every little bit, why one

would escape anyway. Just hop over the corral and be gone. And I overtook one, he went straight, and I had to go around, like ... at the old schoolhouse. When I got him stopped, and held him, somebody finally come and rescued me. There I set in the middle of the flat out there, holding this longhorn down.

DENNY: You forget who had who. (Laughter)

CLINT: Yeah. It was either throw the rope loose, and let him get away with it, or shut the ...

DENNY: Jack Drinkwater was telling a story ... when they first brought the buffalo in here. Now it was something that was told to him or he witnessed. When they first brought them in, they were going to count them out of the truck, and Bill Bradeen was standing up somewhere high where he could count them out. Well they wouldn't come out. They wouldn't come out, and they finally prodded them, and they did finally come out. He said they all came out in a block. Just a block of buffalo. (Laughter) And he couldn't count, they come at once.

CLINT: He hadn't learned to count ten or twelve at a time, huh? (Laughter)

DENNY: Yeah. It wasn't like running cattle by him ... finally he add up all the feet and divide by four! (Laughter)

CLINT: Yeah. Apparently there was these buffalo ...

DENNY: There was one bull that wouldn't come out. And he made several trips in the truck, but they finally got him out of there.

CLINT: Yeah, he just wouldn't come out.

DENNY: Huh uh. Maybe that's where they were going with him, to Long Creek and back.

CLINT: It might have been.

DENNY: They couldn't get him out of the truck ... unload.

CLINT: They had the old ranch truck, is what they hauled them up there in. It wasn't an old truck, it was pretty new truck.

DENNY: They never did tear the truck up or go out of it, or over it?

CLINT: No, but they was, it was well reinforced. Well reinforced. And it had a top over the top of it, you know, well reinforced.

DENNY: They couldn't go out of it, huh?

CLINT: So they couldn't get out --- they would climb right on top of one another, you know, and out over they go.

DENNY: Did you ever rope a buffalo?

CLINT: Yeah, oh yeah.

DENNY: Were they hard to hold?

CLINT: No, they weren't any harder to hold than any other animal I tried.

DENNY: Did you get a rope around their neck?

CLINT: Oh, yeah.

DENNY: The way they are built? They're built different. You know ---

CLINT: Yeah. No, no problem. We used to rope the calves all the time, and brand them.

DENNY: Would the old mother cow come when you brand the calf?

CLINT: We always separated them. Yeah, you didn't dare fool with them calves when the cows --- you had to cut the calves off from them. They generally waited until they was going to wean them. And then they pulled the calves off of them. Elsie had one up there ... she raised on a bottle. Had it around there in her yard there a long time. It was fairly gentle. I know all I can recall is them cows, that had baby calves; they weren't to be fooled with at all. You just let ...

DENNY: Very protective.

CLINT: Very protective. And you'd not only just that one, you fool with the baby, and the old cow would grunt and get after you. Why she had about fifteen or twenty helpers. That's how they operate.

DENNY: Yeah. They were real noisy weren't they?

CLINT: Yeah.

DENNY: Started grunting. They didn't make any other sound other than grunt though, did they? Did they bawl?

CLINT: No.

DENNY: No. The bulls never bellerd, or --- not a sign other than the grunting.

CLINT: Just the grunting, like a bunch of pigs. You could tell

kind of what was going on, they grunted all the time.

DENNY: What they was doing, anything they wanted to.

CLINT: Yeah.

DENNY: Did they tell --- or could ---

CLINT: Could you tell a distinguished different grunt?

DENNY: Could a cow mother up a calf with a grunt?

CLINT: Oh, I couldn't really tell you if she could or not.

DENNY: How did they recognize their little ones?

CLINT: I think they went by smell mostly. I don't think they went by grunts. But it was just a --- I couldn't tell you if they did or not for sure. Any time you was around them, that's all you heard, was a grunt, grunt, grunt, grunt --- just a mass of them, you know. And as far as danger signal, why you watched their tails.

DENNY: The tail went up?

CLINT: What was going on. The grunting was just continual. And you watch that tail, and when that tail started popping up, why something was happening someplace, pretty quick.

DENNY: Were the bulls more protective than the cows? They weren't as bad as the cows.

CLINT: ... We had a, done something with a baby. And we made about a half circle of that field, just about as hard as we could go. She was right behind us, all the way.

DENNY: What did you do with the calf?

CLINT: We didn't have it, she thought we had it. (Laughter)

DENNY: Oh you didn't ---

CLINT: No, we didn't have it.

DENNY: The bulls, they never, did they ever get in fights up there?

CLINT: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DENNY: You didn't mess with them, when they were fighting. Did you break them up?

CLINT: No, you didn't even worry about them.

DENNY: Could you work the buffalo with dogs?

CLINT: I don't think anybody ever tried it. I don't even recall it being tried.

DENNY: Probably wouldn't work. The buffalo would probably turn on the dogs ...

CLINT: Oh, I'm sure, yeah. You probably would ... nail him to the horse. They're pretty caddy with them horses. I didn't tell you about the, I was going through the corner of Doc White's field. The corner of one of our fields up there joins Doc Whites. Instead of going right straight into --- out of one of our fields into the other, why you had to go into Whites and then into ours. And them damn buffalo were there.

DENNY: This was White's buffalo?

CLINT: Yes. This was quite a few years back. And I had plenty of room, I thought, you know. There was nobody got concerned, why

I could get through there. So I was going into White's field. And I got in there all right, and then they decided that they would come and investigate, this old bull did. And of course I was pretty leery of him anyway. I wouldn't argue with ... And I got out through the gate, into the other field, but I couldn't ever get the gate latched. He would undo it faster than I could pull it down. I never could get the guy wire on it. I just set there and let him unhook that son-of-a-gun just slicker than a whistle with his horns, and let her right back at me before I could get her wired. God I worked at that for ten or fifteen minutes.

DENNY: He wasn't mad at you, he was just ---

CLINT: No, he was just playing with me. (Laughter) No if he'd been mad, why he'd have probably just punched a hole through the fence.

DENNY: They're pretty ...

DENNY PRESLEY: We're with Jerry Kimble here at the Castle, and we're going to try to get an account of the buffalo happening up there --- where was this at, Jerry?

JERRY KIMBLE: It was in the flat of Purdy's, up there in Silvies Valley, across from Gold Hill sign that you see. I was up there

on a forest fire, and we were --- had the forest fire fighters camp down there in that flat. And we had the National Guard crew up there cooking for us, and we were there about eight, seven or eight days I guess. And the National Guard was doing the cooking. I was working for Edward Hines at the time, and they took everyone out of the whole lower end of the mill to go up and fight that fire.

DENNY: This fire was where?

JERRY: It was east, and I think a little south of the main Purdy Ranch there. Where ---

DENNY: Did they have a name for the fire, did they?

JERRY: I can't --- yeah, but I can't remember what it was.

DENNY: I heard them talking about the fire in these other accounts. But the thing we want to talk about up there is this bull, this buffalo bull of Doc Whites. Everybody was telling me stories, and you're the first one I ever talked to that was actually there at the time. Can you relate some of the stories about this buffalo bull?

JERRY: Mainly he stayed around the camp the whole time we were there, about the week we were there. And he'd --- the forest service had a communications truck set up out in the middle of the pasture out there. It was probably a ton, or a ton and a half truck with flat bed type truck, with a shack built on the back so they could do all their radio work out of that. And that buffalo

picked the rear bumper of that truck as his favorite scratching post. Every --- seemed like a couple times a day he would go out there and get his horns down under that rear bumper of that truck and just to scratch his top of his head, and he'd lift that truck up in the air. Get the rear tires a couple feet off the ground. Every time that would happen, whoever happened to be in the truck at the time would start bailing out. And you couldn't much blame them, because he could raise that thing up in the air high enough that if it would slip off sideways, it would probably tip the truck over. Then they didn't have too much choice of where to get out either, because they had to come out the rear door, which is where the buffalo was. So you would see them climbing out the back, and hanging on the edge trying to get around the corner before they jumped to try to get away from him. I don't really think he would have hurt anyone. He was just out there scratching his head.

DENNY PRESLEY: This next section we are going to do is with Gary Altnow, and he is going to tell us a story that happened to him, or that he took part in, in Drewsey. When did this happen, Gary?

GARY ALTNOW: Oh, about ten or fifteen years ago.

DENNY: And you guys what, heard about a buffalo being loose up

there?

GARY: Well we just heard that, we really hadn't heard, we just more or less, we just happened, we heard about it later. ... down the road, coming to the boss. He said, "Boss," he said, "would you believe it ... in the pickup." But he said, "A buffalo is going to come around the bend in the road up there in a minute." "Oh," he said, "you're crazy." Well, he really wasn't crazy, because about ten minutes later that buffalo came around the turn of the road. And of course they unloaded the horses ... and they took after him, but he kept jumping fences in the fields. ... and they couldn't quite catch him. So we found out who he belonged to, and he had gotten loose from ... from Harry Pons, up there in the valley. And he came across the mountain and got in the Drewsey country, and they finally shot him up on top of Stinkingwater. And they barbecued him here in town, at a barbecue later on that year.

DENNY: Were you in on that, or do you know who all was in on that?

GARY: It was Raymond Joyce and his hired man from Juntura. And the one fellow that run him down was Steve Miller, and probably one of his hired men or two of them --- Dick Edmunson, I think was there, and Terry Williams maybe, and three, four, five fellows.

DENNY: They were on a buffalo hunt, huh?

GARY: Right. The one and only in Drewsey ...

DENNY PRESLEY: We're here with Delmer Clemens, and Delmer's going to tell us a little story about him and a buffalo ride. Happened back when, Del?

DELMER CLEMENS: It was 1962, I think it was. And so they had all the businessmen, was going to ride this buffalo. So on this one particular day, why they was four of us. It was Red Wolverton, and Butch Arntz, and myself, and I forget the fourth guy right now. But anyway, we were all in the shoots together, and we were, they were to open the gates at the same time, and let us all out. Well low and behold why they let Red Wolverton's buffalo out just a little ahead of my buffalo. And so Red went out there about three jumps and fell off. And my buffalo cut right in behind his, and as Red was getting up off the ground, my buffalo hit him right in the back. It broke five ribs, and knocked out about six teeth out of Red. And he was kind of a bloody mess. And by golly in the pictures, Bill Bradeen took some pictures of this from the grandstand, and it showed me coming right out behind Red, and it looked like I just steered the buffalo over Red.

DENNY: They probably accused you of it too.

DELMER: And I'm sure Red Wolverton thought I did after he was hit, you know. But anyway, this was, it was a pretty good event,

and the crowd liked it. And then they continued this buffalo ride for about five years after that, different businessmen. I never did ride after that.

DENNY: How did they choose you and ---

DELMER: I figured I about killed one man; I didn't want to kill anymore.

DENNY: How did they choose your names, a lottery system like ... or what?

DELMER: No, they just --- we just, we got this volunteer, it was just strictly volunteer all the way, you know.

DENNY: Did they volunteer you after you had a few drinks, or what?

DELMER: Well you had to have a few drinks before you get on one of them. They're, they're a little treacherous, even in the shoot. They're very quick. They can just reach right up with their hind feet, and you know, and they can --- their hooves are very sharp. And ---

DENNY: Did you ride them bareback, or ---

DELMER: Yeah. You just ride them kind of with a bareback rigging is all we had, you know. We just took a bareback rigging and put on them, you know. And they got such a hump on them, on that back; it's really hard to stay on them. They don't buck, they really don't buck. They just kind of lope out. And Red just never had ridden one, and I don't think he had ridden that much

period. And consequently just fell off.

DENNY: (Laughter) Delmer rides a buffalo here. I don't remember where we were at, we were what --- in the lottery system. No, you were trying to figure out how you were going to --- you were riding buffalo, with a cinch strap. And you were telling about the hump.

DELMER: Oh, yeah.

DENNY: We asked you whether you ever rode a buffalo or not.

MAN: Well he asked whether he rode it, and he said yeah.

DELMER: Oh then --- it fell off --- are we on now?

DENNY: Yeah, we'll just pick up, I'll edit out anything out I don't want. I'll put it on one tape.

DELMER: Yeah, I had a --- I had a little wager with Bob Smith, Dennis, that I would ride the buffalo to a standstill. So I rode that thing around, I swear for five minutes in the arena. And finally he kind of hesitated, so I just jumped off the buffalo. And so when I get back over to the stands, why Bob Smith said to me, he said, "Del, that buffalo was still moving, you didn't ride him to a standstill." And I said, "I still think you owe me the money." So to this day, I don't remember whether he paid me off or not. But I don't think I got paid for the ride.

DENNY: (Laughter) What did they pay you to ride the buffalo?

DELMER: They didn't pay us nothing. It was strictly all ...

DENNY: It was an exhibition thing, huh?

DELMER: It was strictly an exhibition race.

DENNY: Were they cow buffalo?

DELMER: I think most of them were all cow buffalo, yeah. I don't think there was any bulls in there.

DENNY: Were you the only one that rode?

DELMER: Yeah, I think Butch fell off, and then I can't remember the fourth guy. And I'm sure he fell off too. But --- oh I've ridden a few calves and stuff younger, but ---

DENNY: Buffalo calves? Or cow calves?

DELMER: No, just ordinary calves, you know.

DENNY: This your only episode with buffalo?

DELMER: This was my first riding event. And with this buffalo, and --- But it turned out to be a pretty good event for Harney County. And I know Bud Garland and my brother Tom and oh --- a lot of the other businessmen around, rode after I did. And it got to be --- the crowd really liked it. It was really quite an event. And then I guess evidently, they must have just ran out of buffalo, because it --- I think they had it for about five years and then Pon kind of went out of the business. So that ended the buffalo rides.

DENNY: That's interesting. Because I've had a lot of people tell me different things about these buffalo rides. And none of them ever jibed with this story at all.

DELMER: I see.

... (Lloyd Fones on trains, a repeat)

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