

**Oral History Interview of  
John R. “Rich” Anderson**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
September 21, 2016  
Gail, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*Agriculture Interviews***

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Rich Anderson as he describes his life and his ranching knowledge. In this interview, Anderson details his ranching style and the lessons he has learned from previous ranchers in his family. Anderson also describes his involvement with the National Ranching Heritage Association.

**Length of Interview:** 02:16:41

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### Keywords

Ranching, Cattle, Ranching Heritage Center, Ranching Heritage Association, Texas Tech University

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

That was a good story. I hated missing that. Boy, that's the truth. So, you got a doctor in Big Spring and one in Midland?

**John "Rich" Anderson (RA):**

And one in Lubbock.

AW:

And one in Lubbock. My goodness. That's a lot of travel.

RA:

My urologist is in Big Spring, I've gone to for years. I went to him yesterday and all we do is talk politics. He said—about all he said was, "Rich, your pee is pretty and you're able to empty your bladder." [Laughter] Then several years ago I came up with—let's see, what—kind of where your immune system kind of turns against you.

AW:

Oh yeah, like—

RA:

Rheumatica polymyalgia, something like that.

AW:

There's fibromyalgia and they're all kinds of things like that.

RA:

Not fibro, but anyway, I had this other, I went to my doctor in Big Spring and he said, "Rich, I don't know what's the matter with you." He said, "I better send you on to Midland." I went to the doctor over there and they never did find out what is wrong with me. The pediatrician that took care of all of our kids had moved to Austin. He came up to see me in the hospital and he looked at the chart and he said, "I'll call you tonight. I think I know what's the matter with you." Polymyalgia rheumatica's what it was. So, he said prednisone will clear it right up. Hell, they had people down from UNM [**University of New Mexico**], up there, the foreign disease, everybody in the world looking at me. One doctor said, "You know, you're the healthiest sick man I ever saw." [AW laughs] Then he came back the next day and he said, "Do you mind if we test you for HIV [**human immunodeficiency virus**]," and I said, "Of course not." He said, "Well, it makes some people mad." I said, "Ed, you can't make me mad." So he asked me some questions and finally—just the two of us in the room. He looked around like there was somebody listening to him—leaned over and he said, "Have you ever had an outside alliance," and I said, "No, and I if had I wouldn't be here today because Barbara would've killed me." [AW laughs]

But anyway, the doctor diagnosed it and sure enough, got on the prednisone and it cleared right up.

AW:

Now, did you have any reaction to that prednisone. My sister—the reason I’m asking, my sister has fibromyalgia, they put her on prednisone and boy, I’ll tell you, it’s rough on her.

RA:

No. No, I had no—

AW:

That’s good.

RA:

Nothing.

AW:

That’s just real good.

RA:

It cleared up within less than a week’s time.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Yeah.

AW:

And did you have to keep staying on the prednisone?

RA:

Well, what they did was they spread it out over a period of time. I started off with a high dose and then every month I’d lessen it. I was on it about ten months—eight or ten, I can’t remember—lessened it every month until finally I was just taking one milligram or something like that.

AW:

Oh my, that’s great.



RA:

It cleared it right up. No, I had no problem at all.

AW:

Well, that's good. That's really good because as I said, the experience—and I don't take it but my sister took it. She had a devil of a time with it, with the medication.

RA:

No, I never did have problem with it. Anyway, Ed and I—Dr. Talban [?] [00:03:52] was coming through the next day or two and he said, "I'll bring you some." They were on their way up to Denver to visit their daughter and her husband. So, he put me on that prednisone and I said, "Well, what am I going to tell my doctor here in Midland?" He said, "I'll call her." It was a woman doctor. He called her and she said, "Well, we just figured that out and we were going to put him on prednisone so thank you." But it was a woman doctor and I just stayed with her. She's a very thorough internist. So, I just stayed with her. So then, Dr. Brogan in Lubbock was my wife's heart doctor. Years ago, I was out in the pasture looking at the mares and colts and I was staying there by a mare that was real gentle, I was petting her, and there were two mares on the other side of her. All of a sudden the mare on the far side just went whinnied and bit the one next to her, she whirled and hit the mare that I was petting, then she whirled and I flew off over there. I've got two artificial hips and two artificial knees. So, I was walking—I used to walk a lot—and this right leg was just killing me. I thought, You know, I landed on that hip. I guess maybe I've done something to that hip so I went up to see Dr. Burke at Tech there but he was the football team doctor. He took a picture of it and he said, "No, my work is good." He said, "Drop your pants," and I did, and he took one look at my leg and he said, "I want you to go over to the heart doctor right now, just right now." So, I went over there and it was Dr. Brogan. I had a blood clot from about my knee to my groin. [Laughs]

AW:

Oh my goodness. Did they dissolve it chemically?

RA:

Yes. He put one of those umbrellas in my aorta [?] [0:05:59] here. When he got through, "Mr. Anderson," he said, "You know, if that thing had broken loose while I was doing that I couldn't have done anything to save your life." I said, "Well, win some, lose some." I never did have to go back but my wife developed heart problems and we went to him. Then when I got this problem, I went back to him, just went to him Monday, and he said, "Well, you're doing good. Come back in a year unless you have some problems."

AW:

That's good.

RA:

Yeah.

AW:

That's good. Well, that is good. Well, you kind of know the routine about doing these interviews, do you not? If you don't, I'll—

RA:

Yeah, I've been interviewed before. Whatever you want to know, just ask me.

AW:

Well, I just want to get for our archive just you talking a little bit about growing up and getting into the ranching business.

RA:

Well, my mother's family was reared in Midland.

AW:

Well, let's start off with—tell me what's your birthdate.

RA:

March 9, 1929.

AW:

So, were you born in Midland, too?

RA:

Yeah, over at lock Thomas [?] [0:07:19]. They didn't even have a hospital then. [Laughter] He had some rooms up in his office there and that's where I was born.

AW:

You say your mother's family—

RA:

Grew up in Midland.

AW:

And what's her name?



RA:

Their names were Lee.

AW:

L-double-e?

RA:

Yeah. Her name was Brookie.

AW:

Brookie?

RA:

Brookie, B-r-double-o-k-i-e. Brookie L-double-e. Her father's name was Dick, or Richard Lee. He, in 1925, he moved to New Mexico. He and Clarence Scarborough were partners on a ranch out there. So, my mother was teaching school in Sierra Blanca when she married my father. He was an engineer with Pasotex Pipe Line. He died when I was about two years old.

AW:

Oh really? Where was his family from?

RA:

Well, they were from—his mother had a ranch there at Hot Springs. There used to be a place—I've never been there. The train went through there. Presidents had stopped there and taken those treatments, taken that, but I never have been there. But he was raised there and they met there in Sierra Blanca. After he died, mother moved to Lovington and moved in with her mother and father. Of course, he—Papa's [what] we called him—was in the ranching business with Clarence Scarborough out there. Then she met my stepfather, Bill Anderson, who had homesteaded a place out northwest of Lovington when he was seventeen years old. He raised—he paid it out and added to it. He raised registered cattle and registered Rambouillet sheep. I was about—I think they married in 1936 so that would've made me about seven years old. We moved out to the ranch and I was raised on his ranch. Then I went off to college to University of Oklahoma. I was going to be a lawyer, that's what all my teachers said I ought to be. All my tests showed I'd be a—so I went up there but in the meantime, sometime during those years, about '48 and '49, I met Barbara at Lovington. Her father was raised on the ranch where we live now. That ranch is a hundred years old.

AW:

Really? And what's her maiden name?

RA:  
Clayton.

AW:  
Clayton?

RA:  
And she was—she was born in Lubbock. I think her mother had a little trouble having her first sister in Lordsburg, New Mexico so she went back to her old doctor in Lubbock for Barbara's birth. They lived for a while on the Mimbres River out there. He had worked—let me regress a little bit.

AW:  
Sure.

RA:  
Mr. Dub D. Johnson, he was originally from Kansas but he lived in Rotan. He and Barbara's grandfather, Rube Clayton, were partners in the cattle business. Her daddy had six brothers. Mr. Clayton would buy the cattle and his brothers would go and they'd lease the pasture from Mr. Post, C.W. Post, who started Post, Texas. So, in the meantime Mr. Johnson before that had bought a ranch up at Muleshoe. He branded the Muleshoe. He gave the town section to Muleshoe where it is now. In fact, the museum director called me a while back and there were a bunch of kids from college out there looking for artifacts. They found an old Muleshoe brand. The handle—they used to have wooden handles and of course, it rotted out—but they found that old Muleshoe brand out there. But then he sold out to a man by the name of Warren, who made his fortune making corsets, putting turkey satay's in corsets up in Chicago. But he bought that ranch from Mr. Johnson and Barbara's—one of her uncles—ran that ranch for him. But later on he bought a ranch in the boot heel of New Mexico, out around Hachita, then one over at Old Mexico. At that time, her daddy had gotten out of college. I don't know how much college he had or anything, and lived down here. He hired him to be wagon boss on the New Mexico ranch that Mr. Warren owned. So, in 19—sometime in the early twenties—there were a bunch of—what are all the outlaw Mexicans and general?

AW:  
Pancho Villa.

RA:  
Pancho Villa, he came through and he would take the cattle from Mr. Warren but he would give him warrants, paid for them. Of course, he never expected to get it but in 1925, '26, '27,

sometime along in there, he presented those warrants to the government of Mexico and the paid him.

AW:  
Really?

RA:  
But in the meantime, Barbara's uncle, Tom Clayton—the Mexicans stole some horses from Mr. Warren. Of course, Tom got after them with the help of his own dad. They caught up with them and hung them. In about two or three months, Mr. Warren said, "Tom, you're going to have to move. They've got your name. They're going to kill you. They've already decided that." He bought a ranch up in Lordsburg but Barbara's daddy continued to stay there on that Hachita ranch. He and Barbara's mother got married. She was raised in Lubbock. Mr. Dickinson, her father, built the first cotton gin in Lubbock County.

AW:  
Really?

RA:  
Yeah. W.D. Dickinson. So, in 1925, I believe, they got married. They cut him in sometime in the late twenties. They cut him in on a herd of cattle and gave him a five-thousand dollar bonus. He bought a place on the Mimbres River and moved out there. They lived there for a few years until—and Barbara and Jere, her sister, were homeschooled. So, each Christmas wanted that ranch so he bought it from Barbara's dad. In the deal, Barbara's dad got a year's lease on Hornado's, which is north of Las Cruces. They moved out there and finally moved on into Roswell.

AW:  
Is that on the river north of Las Cruces?

RA:  
I don't know. They called it the Hornado's. Something about the death—or something. It's god forsaken country.

AW:  
Hornado's, that's not Horn, is it? Maybe Horn.

RA:  
I don't know. But anyway, they moved into Roswell. Mary had been homeschooling Barbara and Jere and they moved into Roswell in order to go to school. Jere leased a ranch out by—what's in

there west of Dora and west of Portales, the name of that town? Around Elida, in that area there. Until he bought—Jake McClure was a world-champion calf roper from Lovington. Jake got—his appendix erupted and he got—what's that disease you get with that?

AW:

Gangrene.

RA:

Gangrene. But they saved him.

AW:

Wow. That's pretty rare.

RA:

But he was back out there ranching and the doctor told him, said, "Don't be roping. Don't be doing anything." Well, he couldn't stand it so sure enough, he went out and roped something, his horse fell and killed him. So, that happened to be—they were good friends to my mother and dad but Barbara's dad bought that place and moved there in 1945. So, in the ensuing years, that's where I met Barbara. It was kind of a funny thing because the Dickinson's from Lubbock had bought ranches out around Tatum, where all the Anderson's had settled, so my dad knew all the Dickinson's and knew Barbara's mother and dad a long time before Barbara and I ever knew one another. So anyway, I went to OU [University of Oklahoma]. I enrolled in law school and was accepted except I spent so much time—I hate to tell you this—I spent so much time in Dallas courting Barbara, I lost a semester.

AW:

I think that's permissible to lose a semester.

RA:

Mom and dad didn't think it was too hot. But anyway, we both graduated in January.

AW:

Of what year?

RA:

Of 1951.

AW:

You say you were courting her in Dallas—

RA:

She went to SMU [**Southern Methodist University**].

AW:

I was going to ask that.

RA:

Yeah. She attended two years of Penn—it was a junior college back in Pennsylvania. She attended two years back there. Her older sister had gone to Goucher's to attend—in Maryland—attend school back east. So, they decided to send Barbara back to Penn Hall. It was a two-year school so when she graduated, her mother had gone to SMU so she enrolled in SMU. In the meantime, they used to spend the summers there at Lovington and that's where we got acquainted. So, we decided to get married the summer of 1950. We still both had a semester to finish, in which we did. So, in the meantime, I'd been called up because the Korean War was going on. So, I took my physical—I used to have asthma as a kid and the doctor there in Lovington told my mother, said, "I won't ever let him get on the bus." I heard about it so I took my physical in Oklahoma City with about twenty-five hundred other people. I didn't hear—at the time I'd torn up the knee and I had had it operated on. I had the cartilage taken out. The doctor told me, "When they release you we'll"—the military told me, "When the doctor releases you let us know." So, he released me, wrote them a letter, and I never did hear from them. So, Barbara and I planned to get married in March and we didn't hear—so finally I went up there, "Mr. Anderson, we can't find your records," and they never did. Hell, I'd taken two years of ROTC [**Reserve Officers' Training Corps**] at OU. I'd have been a lieutenant and sent right straight to Korea, I guess, but I never did have to serve. But they never did find my records. Dad had a ranch out west of—besides the main ranch where I was raised—he had a ranch out by Maljamar, west of Lovington. Barbara and I moved out there and stayed a year. I never did like the registered business. I didn't like showing those things, curling them.

AW:

What breed?

RA:

Anxiety 4th Hereford and Rambouillet sheep, grazing Rambouillet sheep.

AW:

But Hereford cattle and—

RA:

Hereford cattle and—yeah. Of course, everybody had Hereford cattle then. You hardly ever saw a black cattle. Anyway, in January of 1952, I showed—at Amarillo, at the stock show up there—



I showed the grand champion bull and the top-selling bull in the sale. Coming home—it always snowed up there, miserable—anyway, I said, “I’ve had all that I wanted.” I liked that but I didn’t know what I was going to do. I was working for my daddy. Well, Barbara evidently told her daddy that I was dissatisfied where I was. Dad and I got along good, don’t get me wrong. It wasn’t a family deal. It was just I didn’t like registered cattle and I wanted to do more in cattle business. I knew that he was set in his ways and we were going to clash at some time. So anyway, her daddy offered me a job down here. So, in June of 1952, we moved down here. We’ve been here ever since. In 1956, on Thanksgiving, we were over in Midland for Thanksgiving with her sister, Mr. and Mrs. Buzz Hubbard and our house burned. So, I told her, I said, “Well, I’m kind of dissatisfied here because”—my brother, my step-brother lived in Greeley, Colorado and was in the feeding business and the real estate business. He said, “Why don’t you come up here and we’ll buy you a farm and you can get in the feedlot business with me.” So, I told Barbara’s dad that we were thinking about moving and he threw a goddamn fit. So, he said, “I’ll just sell out to you.” So, he sold out to Barbara and her sister, to us.

AW:

This is 1956?

RA:

No, no. This was 19—the winter of 1957-8. I was, let’s see, twenty-eight, twenty-nine years—twenty-eight years old, I guess. Somebody said, “Isn’t he awful young to be doing that?” Julius said, “Yeah, but he won’t listen to me.” It wasn’t that I didn’t want to listen. I just had my own ideas in the ranching business. I’d studied it. I didn’t study agriculture in school or anything. But I knew cattle, genetics, because I learned them from my stepfather who was very good at that. So anyway, we took over and built—we decided to build down there. I’ll take you to the house after a while. We thought about moving to town to educate the kids. That conversation lasted about ten minutes.

AW:

When you say “town”, you’re talking about Gail?

RA:

Big Spring. Neither one of us wanted to live in town. She was—she hadn’t been particularly raised on a ranch, but I mean, she’d been raised in the ranching industry. She was more than happy when we lived out forty-five miles from everywhere. We were both just happy as we could be—had no idea of ever moving to town and we didn’t. I’ve never lived in town, as a matter of fact, except when I was really young and my mother taught school there at Lovington, moved in with her parents. Anyway, we built and raised all of our kids—all four kids went through Gail here. Sally—I had a problem with Texas. During the war, World War II, the only paper we got was the Fort Worth Star Telegram. According to the Fort Worth Star Telegram,



nobody was winning the war but Texas, people from Texas. Of course, I was being raised in New Mexico. It really pissed me off. I didn't like it. Toward the end of the war, the National Guard from Carlsbad got over there in the Philippines just in time to get in that Death March in the Philippines. So, I wasn't too happy with Texas. I had a football scholarship from Texas Tech.

AW:  
Really?

RA:  
Yeah. One from the University of New Mexico, one from the School of Mines, and what is now—it wasn't the School of Mines, it was Western New Mexico—and UTEP [**University of Texas at El Paso**]. I don't think they called it UTEP then. But anyway, I'd had a cousin to go to OU and I'd been up there and visited there. I had a couple that I'd gone plum through school with and they got married. He was going to OU to be a petroleum engineer and he said, "Why don't you go with us," so I just threw a suitcase—and went to OU with him.

AW:  
Did you play football there?

RA:  
Well, I went out for football. The first semester—the first year, freshman couldn't play varsity ball. They had a hundred, maybe a hundred and fifty people out for football. People had come back from the Army. Jim Tatum was the coach and he brought back his military team. So, they didn't even know I was on there that fall. But that spring, we were practicing and they still didn't know I was on there. There was a fellow that came by that used to play for the St. Louis Cardinals. I want to say Frankie Frisch but I'm not sure that was his name. He was a base-stealing demon for the old gas—the old Cardinals, the Gashouse Gang. So, he challenged the football team to the race. He was forty-five, six, years old, something like that. He took his shoes off and outran everybody. Of course, we had our suits on and everything. One of the coaches got mad and they made us run sprints and I won a bunch of them. That's the only way they knew I was there. They promised me a scholarship if I made the team. I made team all right but then I hurt my shoulder. Back then they didn't have MRI's [**magnetic resonance imaging**] and I couldn't pass the ball anymore.

AW:  
So you were going to be a—

RA:  
Quarterback. I always thought they was kind of short-sided that they couldn't use a one-armed quarterback. [Andy laughs] That's the only thing I wanted to play. And it was bothering me—the

trainers said, "You're going to ruin that shoulder if you keep on playing." He'd have to tape it up. So, I quit football then but I stayed there at OU. Barbara was at SMU. Anyway, then we came down here and been here ever since. All four kids went to school here. We have three daughters: Sally, Mary, and Martha, and then John. You know John?

AW:

Um-hm.

RA:

He runs the ranch.

AW:

I say I know him. I met him through the—

RA:

RHA [**Ranching Heritage Association**].

AW:

Yeah. Right.

RA:

Well, he runs the ranch, does a good job. I turned it over to him, I don't know, several years ago. I had seen too many old men hold on with the power of not wanting to turn loose of anything. I've seen younger men—I've seen eighty-year-old men telling sixty-year-old men what to do. Barbara had an uncle that had two sons. One of them became an alcoholic and the other one lived on the ranch up here and hated every minute of it. I knew some other—I had some other neighbors like that. I swore I wouldn't so when I walked off, I walked off and he took over. Of course, I was always available for consulting if he wanted to but I never called him up and said, "You ought to do this," or, "You ought to do that."

AW:

It seems logical when you raise a child—

RA:

From a time—he just followed me around since he could walk.

AW:

They're going to know everything you know. [Laughs]

RA:

Sure. I told him so. I said, "If he doesn't know how to do it, it's my fault."

AW:

My kids are a lot smarter than I am. [Laughs] And I'm glad of it.

RA:

Well, yeah. So, that's it. I've been active in the Texas and Texas Southwest Cattle Raisers.

AW:

When did you get started with them?

RA:

Well, about 19—I think I first joined them about 1960, then I believe it was 1968 that I became a director. So, I've been director, now I'm a past director. I'm not on the regular board. Then I became real interested in the National Cattlemen's Association and worked with them. I worked my way up with them. I was a chairman of the Environmental Committee. My staff person was Cathleen White. She was a girl raised in Kansas on a ranch. She said, "Rich, I just got to get out of Washington." She's the smartest girl I've ever known. So, I said, "We don't have a director. We'd have to fire Patrick Murphy as director there at the RHA." I said, "Why don't you come there this summer and run that for us." Well, she did and then first thing I knew, she'd gone to law school down there and made the—what is it you make—some honor that you make—I can't—anyway. She kept saying, "Why don't you find me a cowboy." I had several friends in the cattle business so we kind of got together and sure enough, we found her one, Beau White, at the Bright Ranch down at Valentine and both of them down in there. First thing I knew, she and Beau got married. I didn't think she'd stay out there at that ranch because she's too mentally active. So, she called me and said, "We've got—I want to get on some committee down in Austin." At that time, Rick Perry was down there, become governor. So, a bunch of called Rick, told him and he put her on this committee, TSQ, whatever that's called. Anyway, first thing I know, she's chairman of it. Now she's with that group down in Austin. She and Beau live in Rosanky, down there out of Austin. I just talked to her yesterday. She's one of the smartest women I've ever run into. We had an environmental meeting in Austin one time doing debate with some of the environmentalists. She was going to debate this one fellow. I'll tell you what, she cut him up so bad. It was pathetic. Finally, one of the moderators looked over at me and I said—I just went across my throat like this and I said, "You better cut this off. She's going to ruin him." Anyway, she went on and stayed down there. They live there in Rosanky. Anyway, I got involved with the National Cattlemen's Association. In 1992 I won that stewardship award that they give. But I've quit—I've just kind of quit all those things now. I don't much like to travel. When we won that, Barbara and I traveled all over the country making speeches for the environment. I ran into some of the most ignorant goddamn people I've ever seen in my life.

They knew nothing about producing, but they were hot in this environmental business. One women—I know we met with some restaurateurs, the National Restaurant Society out in California. This women and I got into a pretty heated argument. I said, “You eat meat?”, “Sure.” I said, “Well, you want us to quit raising beef on this country out here. Where would go if you were going to get?”—“I’d go down to the grocery store.” I said, “Where do you think they get it?” But people were just ignorant about production and what you did to get it there. Back in Washington one day, we had a meeting and invited all of the environmental organizations to show up. All of them. I was going to debate the whole room full of them. One showed up. Then they said, “Well, we’ve got this fellow that—” Wright said, “An environmentalist from *Time Magazine*. We’ll see if we can’t get you a meeting with him.” So he says, “Well, I’ll give you fifteen minutes.” So, we met with him. An hour and fifteen minutes later I said, “You know sir, I’m sorry, but I’ve got to go.” He just didn’t know. It’s amazing what people don’t know. They think they’re environmentalist but hell, we’re the environmentalists. Hell, it’s my business to grow grass. Hell, that’s my—you know. I’m a grass farmer.

AW:

That’s right.

RA:

That animal’s just my machine to get it. That’s the only that—besides sheep and goats of course, but they’re mostly wheat eaters. That’s the only thing that I know of that can convert that cellulose out there to meat for people to eat.

AW:

And if you think about it, it’s converting sunlight.

RA:

Sunlight. Of course. Sure.

AW:

That’s really where it starts.

RA:

But anyway, I’ve been active in—not active now in the environmental movement, but Cathleen is. She just wrote a book about our energy problem, how they’re bad-mouthing oil, gas and coal. She’s proven that—and I had a fellow out here at Tumbleweed Smith—I don’t know if—Bob was out here with a man who wanted to take some pictures the other day. We had passed some of those—I got some of those power lines. We don’t have any of those windmills. They put those power lines across. I couldn’t stop it.

AW:

Yeah, transmission lines.

RA:

Yeah. They were going to go eminent domain if we didn't allow them to go across us. So anyway, well I was telling them—and Bob is a lot more liberal than I am—anyway, I made the statement. I said, “Solar and wind produce about 4 percent of the power in the United States.” “Oh, Rich, you’ve got to be mistaken.” I said, “No. I can prove it to you.” But that’s all they produce, about 4 percent of the power that we use. The rest of it is produced by coal and oil. They’re doing everything in the world they can to get rid of the coal. Every time we shut one down over here, China builds ten over there and India builds some more. They want us to, you know, clean our climate up over here while they’re dirtying it up over there. Obama didn’t get very far with his climate change at this last meeting they had in China. They kind of had—it was out of his hand over there. He didn’t get very far with China or Russia or any of those—the Philippines, they told Obama, “We’ll take care of our own business. You get your military out of here.” So anyway, things are changing but I just—if Hillary gets elected, it’s going to be a national disaster. She’ll be worse than Obama. I just don’t know what we’ll do. Anyway, well, that’s—I first started crossbreeding.

AW:

Yeah. I’d like to hear about that. When did you start that?

RA:

Well, about in the mid—oh, sometime in between ’65 and ’70.

AW:

And what did you—what moved you into that.

RA:

Well, I just needed to make more money. I need more weight. I got up my Hereford cattle. They were weighing five-hundred pounds when I weaned them. I needed more. I’d read about crossbreeding and incidentally—I’ll tell you this little story. A bunch of us were down at a cattle meeting one time. Wat [Watkins] Matthews was sitting in on the bunch. Somebody said, “Wat, you been in the business a long time. What do you think is the best crossbred?”, “Boys, I’ll tell you. The best crossbred is the best Hereford cow you can buy and a Pump Jack. [Laughter]

AW:

Did you ever happen to know a guy—my father worked for Anderson Clayton Company, which is why I was born in Lubbock, because the—actually, I was born in Slaton but we moved to Lubbock when the oil mill moved. He had a fellow that he worked with in Pecos, Texas, named



Bob Bickley. And Bob, every time he'd be driving through the country and he'd see a Pump Jack, he'd—it was just like he couldn't stop himself—he would say, "Now, there's a rancher that understands cash flow."

RA:

That's true. It saves a lot of ranches, I'll tell you, including this one. But anyway—

AW:

So, what did you begin crossbreeding with?

RA:

Well, Charolais. I'll tell you what, I had a friend who was vice president or something of an oil company in Dallas. He had started out in Big Spring at the Causlin [?] [0:42:17] Oil Company there. So, they were going to Colorado Springs for a meeting. He said, "Why don't we fly by and pick you and Barbara up and take you up there?" So, "Fine." Well, when I got on the plane, there sat Bunker Hunt, had the biggest Charolais herd in the country. We got to visiting and it wasn't very long before I started receiving Charolais catalog and Charolais banner through the mail. So, I began to—I first bought two Charbray bulls

AW:

What's a Charbray?

RA:

It's a cross between Brahman and a Charolais. It was about a three-quarter Charolais and a quarter Brahman, which is fine except there were awfully damn big. So, I decided that maybe the Charolais were best. So, I went down to Terrell, Texas and went by to see Bunker. He took me out to the ranch and showed me around. He had a man that ran his operation there, Richard Hass. Richard said, "Well, let's go out and look at these bulls." So, we went out there and he said, "Now, you pick out what you like." Of course, I picked out the biggest-muscled bulls I could find. He said, "Well, you just did away with your cow herd." He said, "Let me pick your bulls if you really want to do this." So, he picked my bulls. Mostly come out of one breed of Charolais but they weren't the muscled up kind. They were big but they—and so, I started breeding them.

AW:

Now, why—for the recording—why would the big muscled-up bulls—

RA:

Oh, the cows—the Hereford cows couldn't—she couldn't have that calf. It's just too much—



AW:

Too big.

RA:

Too big. And I never did have any problems. Oh, every once and while but you'd have this any breed, you'd have one going backwards, a big birth. But anyway, I increased my weaning weight by seventy-five pounds just like that. Then I started getting in the Hereford business. The Hereford let their cattle get to small so they began, with their genetics and everything, to improve the size, doability and everything with the Hereford cattle. And I had a Hereford herd so I'd buy the best bulls I could buy from those people and improve my Hereford herd. Then I'd take my heifers and breed them to Jerseys, Longhorns or something. Then the second time I'd breed them to the Charolais so I was improving on both ends.

AW:

When you bred them to the Jerseys or the Longhorns, that was to improve their birthing too, right?

RA:

Birthing weight, yeah.

AW:

And don't the Jerseys and the Longhorns create a cow that will drop a calf easier, too. Did I understand that right?

RA:

Oh yeah. Yeah. I got onto a deal one time I read in the *Livestock Weekly* about a fellow up at Pueblo, Colorado, had some Scottish Highlander Cattle crossed with Longhorns. And Scottish Highlanders are small but they're good meat producers. So, I went up there and ended up buying a whole truckload of those bulls and brought them down here.

AW:

What did they look like?

RA:

Well, they looked kind of a cross between a longhorn—

AW:

[Laughs] I'm trying to imagine that.

RA:

They all have the hair and big horns.

AW:

What color were they? Were they speckled?

RA:

No. Most of them were kind of a dung-brown color.

AW:

But they had the horns and the shaggy face.

RA:

Oh yeah. We roped them for two or three years then I was going to buy some more. The fellow had gotten so popular that he doubled the price so I didn't buy anymore. Anyway, we bred those for a while. Those little ole calves, they'd just hit the ground, jump up and start nursing. They was the damndest cattle I ever saw. And they went ahead and made pretty good in the feedlot, too. They weren't—the Hereford, about all—I mean with the Jersey—about all you can make out of them is roping calf. Out of the longhorn, you can sell them but they don't do good in the feedlot. The longhorn doesn't do good in the feedlot. So anyway, these did. Anyway, I started breeding the Charolais. I increased my weaning rates, I think—it wasn't anything to have six-hundred and fifty pound calves.

AW:

How do Charolais do in this country?

RA:

Oh, great. This is about the same as it is over in France. The reason they—

AW:

I would think we're hotter.

RA:

No. That's the reason—Lubbock is about on a—

AW:

Same line.

RA:

—same line with France where they raise grapes. So, no, the Charolais do good out here.

AW:

And what are they like handling?

RA:

Well, everyone once in a while you'll find one that's a little mean but, no, they didn't handle any different to anything else. It's the way you handle the cattle that makes them mean or wild. Our cattle were gentle so they had no reason—fact of the matter, the Hereford bulls that I had, they were the darnedest things. When they got through, they would—I'd find them back in the bull pasture. They'd leave the pasture, break the fence down or something and get back in the bull pasture where I kept them all the time. Or you'd turn them out and those ole bulls that'd go to the tank where you picked them up the year before. But our cattle were gentle. That's the way we handled them and we didn't have any problem. But one time we had a drought in the—[phone rings 00:48:42] that's somebody wanting money, I imagine. I don't want to answer it. [phone continues ringing] That's not for me anyway. My son uses this office. They keep the books here and everything. Most of the calls are for them. I don't know that person.

AW:

That's alright. It'll quit in a minute. So, the drought was—

RA:

The drought, it was '73, I believe. It was dry. I had a neighbor come by and he said, "Rich, you want to sell some cattle," and I said, "Well, I hadn't thought about it but I would." He said, "I have a Mormon that's got a ranch up by Billings, Montana. He wants a herd of Hereford cattle. I told him about yours and he's really interested." Well, I thought about it and I thought about it and I said, "Hell, I'll just sell them." So, we made a deal. The calves—they started calving in January, February, March so every time I got a hundred—about two or three truckloads of cattle, I'd send them up there until I'd finally ship my whole herd up there with the calves. So, that summer, I took the kids and we went to Yellowstone National Park. I went around by Billings and that fellow had a big ranch there. We spent a couple of nights with him out there. That's probably the biggest bunch of calves that was ever sold in Montana. Because, see they were born in January. Well, they don't get calves up there, oh, April or May. Then these were crossbreds. It rained all summer. That was the biggest bunch of calves you ever saw in your life. So, when I started back, I started buying calves. I had a remnant of cows left but I just kept my cow numbers down to about twelve to the section. Then if in the fall if I had a lot of grass, I'd keep my calves and buy some more to go with them and run them to the next year. In the meantime, Barbara's dad had bought a ranch in 1954 up north of Fort Sumner. So, I leased that ranch in 1972.

AW:

Which ranch? What was the name of that ranch?

RA:

Rimrock we called it. It's in the Quay Valley. Fact of the matter, one side of it on the Caprock, if it hadn't been for the mountain, you could see Tucumcari. It had a divide in it. The water fell on one side and went to the Cimarron River, if it fell on the other side it went to the Pecos. Sure nice ranch.

AW:

So that would've been east of the highway to—

RA:

Yeah. You go to—

AW:

To Santa Rosa.

RA:

Well, it was east of Santa Rose, yeah. You go straight out from Santa Rosa, straight out from Fort Sumner, to get onto the ranch there. So, we operated that until 1979. A ranch came up for sale here in Borden County, the old OB Ranch. So, I found a—I didn't find him—a real estate man, a good friend of mine in Roswell, found an oil man in Midland, John Cox, and showed him that ranch up there and he wanted it.

AW:

The one out by Santa Rosa?

RA:

So, he bought this ranch—yeah—he bought this ranch and we just—

AW:

Swapped.

RA:

—swapped, tax-free. Swapped. So, all of our operation is here in Borden County now. Later on through the years we divided—Barbara had a sister with the family and we divided the ranches but then we keep operating both of them because they're not ranchers at all.

AW:

How does Barbara's sister spell her name? Jere.

RA:

J-e-r-e.

AW:

J-e-r-e.

RA:

Yeah. Hubbard, H-u-b-b-a-r-d. So anyway, we just split it so there wouldn't be any argument in the family once some of us died and none of us had died at that time. But anyway, we wanted to lease it, which we did, so we kept operating it ever since '79. Plus the Muleshoe so it was about a hundred sections is what it is. Before we did that, Jere and Buzz, they didn't understand anything about the ranching business. Well, Andy, this ranch was covered in brush. I mean, just terrible. So, I got the Soil Conservation people out in the—during the fifties—and we began to look at it. So, by 1960 when I took over, we worked in a plan, a ten-year plan. They told then, said—later on they told me—said, "Rich, we thought this is one of the sorriest ranches in Borden County." Said, "We'll tell you right now, you've made it one of the best." We had a ten-year plan. I bought a D7 Cat to start with and it wasn't quite big enough to suite me so after about a year or so, I traded it in for a D8, a bigger—we started a plan of root plowing and Mesquite spraying.

AW:

I was going to ask you if you used any chemical. Aerial?

RA:

Yeah. And burning. Fact of the matter, I've got a spot up there where there's a thirteen-hundred and twenty acre cotton patch that was covered in Mesquite. I mean, I've seen cowboys getting lost in there on a cloudy day, get lost. But anyway, I sprayed that with 2,4,5-T. We sprayed twenty-five hundred acres one morning and it was cool. That afternoon a little shower came along and what that 2,4,5-T causes the Mesquite to do is to grow itself to death. It uses up all of its plant sugar. So, we came out into the shower and all that stuff went to the roots. Got a hell of a kill. In fact of the matter, those Mesquite spurs wouldn't show it to anybody so we never have gotten a kill like this. So, I hired an ole boy by the name of Glen Hubbard from down below Abilene. I didn't have a Cat then but he had two with a great, big anchor chained between them. So, we cleared all of that. Then I got the idea that after going through the fifties drought, I had some hills back up in there that I thought, Well, I'll just grow feed and put a silo in there. I mean, just put that on the ground and save it for the drought. Before I did that, a cotton farmer by the name of Jack Wolf—played football at Baylor—they farmed down there by the lake—he said, "I can make you more money growing cotton if you'll let me." So, I let him. Sure enough, he did



until the drought and cotton things got bad. We've got a hell of a cotton crop on it this year and a hell of a cotton crop last year. Anyway, we cleared that. Of course, what it did—we used to work all this country. There's three ranches here. Barbara has a cousin that has a ranch north of us and he has a brother that has a ranch north of him. The Claytons, Mr. Clayton, Arthur Clayton, Mr. WD Johnson was partners in this ranch with Mr. Clayton and the Muleshoe ranch. He bought one. They used to have two-hundred and fifty thousand acres here that they operated as one unit.

AW:

That's a lot.

RA:

And Barbara's uncle ran it. Then when I came down here in '52, the way we worked was with—one of the cousins, Joe Clayton, flew an airplane. The brush was so bad that we had to fly an airplane to gather these cattle. Well, when I went to clearing that brush—and finally it got to where my labor problem wasn't near as bad. I didn't need all the cowboys. I didn't need that airplane. But anyway, that's the way we did it. We still use an airplane at times.

AW:

For gathering?

RA:

Yeah, for gathering. Years ago I wondered and I wrote the fellow that's—he's head of some committee in the Texas and Southwest Raisers. What's his name? Rooster? No. Anyway, I wrote him and I said, "Why couldn't we use those drones?" This is before they ever got popular. They just came out with them and I read about them in some magazine. I said, "Why can't we use those drones?" Now I think some people do use their drones in they're farming and in their ranching operations.

AW:

I know they use them in farming but mainly for getting a look at things and photographing their—so, are they—do they make enough noise? Because that's what—isn't that how you gather cattle with an airplane?

RA:

No, no, no. You just fly around in an airplane. I used to fly—I've flown around—and you'll find some cattle and you'll just dive on them, go on off. You're in front of the drive so you dive on the cattle and then they come up and get them.

AW:

Right, but that's got to be enough to—



RA:

Oh yeah, that'll start them.

AW:

So, is the drone big enough to do that, I guess is my question.

RA:

Well, you'll just have to—the fellow sitting there operating sees—he sees with the camera where the cattle are and he can tell you. Joe had a loud speaker on his—

AW:

Even if he doesn't move them, you at least know where they are.

RA:

That's right.

AW:

Got it, okay. That makes sense.

RA:

We never have used a drone on the ranch here but I know that some people do. We have used a helicopter but—

AW:

Isn't that expensive?

RA:

Oh hell yes. Fact of the matter, we used—you know the Slaughter Ranch up here—Jeff Lott flies the helicopter and they use it all the time in their business. He and John are good friends. If John has something difficult to gather he'll call Jeff and he'll come down to get them with that helicopter, which is—it's really nice but it's awfully expensive. So, we don't do it anymore.

Recently, there's a fellow that got a little plane, it's a two-seater all right, but it's got two push propellers. The motors are mounted on the wings backwards. It's a real light airplane. He lives down at Junction. Places where we've got a lot of brush like it's getting on the OB because they don't—we haven't done a lot of work over there. He'd get him to come down and he'd operate with very little gasoline. It was real handy to find the cattle and everything. So, we still use an airplane but we don't have—that's the biggest one and he loves to do it. He flies up there and he loves to do it.

AW:

And he's from Junction?

RA:

Yeah. We have places—he'd spend the night up here with us. I have extra rooms over there at the house. He'll spend whatever time it takes up there, stay there.

AW:

I know a fellow in Junction, Neiman, that runs a seed company, Native American seed, and he flies a small plane. I don't think it's a push but he—

RA:

I don't think that's that fellow's name.

AW:

I'm pretty sure he's not, but I was real interested that he identifies fields of different grasses, I think, from the air so he has to have a small, light plane so it can fly pretty low. Then he'll find the owner and arrange to harvest the seed. They clean and package that seed and sell it all over, which is real interesting.

RA:

We have a neighbor—not a neighbor, he's friend, Joel Dennis—his daddy flew an airplane. They had sheep on their property. When we—he used to always—they had a lot of coyotes over west of me on Frank Beavers and Joe Canon. One day he flew over and I was riding a bronc. He flew over going to Beavers and he wagged his wings. I waved at him and when I did, that bronc broke in two. At that time, I smoked cigars. I had three cigars in my pocket. Those began to fly out and I began to try to grab them. [AW laughs] Next time I saw him he said, "What were you doing," and I said, "I was trying to grab my cigars." But that bronc pitched in a straight line. When I finally got him pulled up I turned around, went back and found all of my cigars. [Laughter]

AW:

That's a great story. I've heard a lot of horse explosion stories but I've never heard one that involved losing your cigars.

RA:

I'll tell you, I had Joe Clayton fly an airplane and he had a loud speaker. We working a ten-section pasture up here and I was riding a bronc. So, he found a herd of antelope and he knew that horse I was riding was a bronc so he brought that herd of antelope right in front of me and that damn bronc took off with them. [Laughter] And he'd come over and go [imitates sound] to

try and help me along. Finally one of the fellows that worked for me saw what was going on and he rode over and headed me off of those antelope. That was—that loud speaker came in pretty handy. He'd come over and say, "Well, there's not anything in the corner over there, you can cut across to such-and-such's place and pick up some cattle there." So, we did that all the time. But then I started buying calves. I was buying—and I had a fellow that bought a lot of calves for me. I would winter them here then those that weren't big enough I'd take them up to that ranch in New Mexico. In the meantime, both my parents died and so I bought the ranch up there in Lovington from my brothers and sisters—sister, just had one sister and two brothers. So I'd take them up there and graze them. One year I was buying calves and I had a call from a friend of mine in Colorado and he said, "Rich, I know you're buying calves." But he said, "We got a hell of a drought going on up there. I can buy you bread cows for what you're paying for those fat calves." I said, "Start sending them." So, I got back in the cow business pretty quick. But the main thing I was interested—of course, genetics you want an animal that will convert food the best. Some animals do better and some—than others. Back in the seventies there, we had a terrible time. We had high inflation and low cattle prices. Barbara's sister and her husband was just giving me hell. I developed an ulcer and I said, I just told Barbara, "I can't take this much longer now. They don't know what's going on and they don't know anything about the operation." So, we were at a cattle convention in Albuquerque and I've known—did you ever know Dub Walser [?] [1:07:27]? I'm sure you did.

AW:

Um-hm.

RA:

Dub and I were good friends. So, we had that ranch up there in New Mexico. I said, "Dub, will you be interested in leasing that ranch up in New Mexico?" And he said, "Sure would." Because they had a ranch in Tucumcari. It wasn't two weeks later until I called him. I said, "Would you be interested in leasing that ranch in Borden County?", "Sure would." So, we got together and rigged up a deal that I sold him—cattle hadn't been that high—I sold him the herd, all the cattle I had for a thousand dollars a pair. Hell, there hadn't been anything bringing money like that. Anyway, I turned around and I said, "I'll take care of it for you." So, then when John got out of A&M—I forgot what year that was, it was some time in the seventies—I said, "We'll turn this over to you but not until I figure you're ready for it." So, after about five or six years, Dub and I drew up a lease—I don't know whatever happened to it, never saw it again—we just operated on a handshake and never had a bad word, never quarreled about anything. So, I talked to Dub one time—it was up in the eighties some time, I don't know—I said, "Dub, do you think that you and John can run this outfit?" He said, "I believe we can," said, "I sure do like the way John operates." I said, "You got it. I quit." [Laughter] So, I more or less retired. He and John ran it for a while then when Dub died, unfortunately, they hired Jim McAdams. Jim was a good fellow. He and John had gone to A&M together. I really liked Jim, his family, his mother and daddy. But he

wanted to micromanage and it was about to drive John crazy. I said, "John, let's forget about this lease with the Spades." I said, "Pasture their cattle if you want to stay hooked up with them but let's don't lease anymore land to anybody. So, as soon as we could—we didn't break the lease, we just said, "We'd rather pasture your cattle," and it was suitable to them. He and John got along fine but Jim just—he just thought he ought to micromanage every damn thing. Well hell, you can't do that on a ranch.

AW:

No you can't.

RA:

Particularly when you know how to operate one, lived on one and know how to do it. Anyway, Jim retired—quit—he didn't retire. He married Molly and they bought a place down in San Antonio and she was some kind of a meat buyer for Furr's; Molly was. Had a hell of a job. He moved down there and finally she quit that job and he bought a ranch down by Huntsville, down there where he was raised. They live down in there now. I just love ole Jim but I just—he was about to drive John crazy and I could see it, too, because I wouldn't have taken it five minutes. So anyway, I turned it over to John. Now John's leased it from the ranch from his sisters and everybody. We've been giving it to him through the years. I think I still own maybe 30 percent of it and they own 70 percent of it or maybe a little more, I don't know. John leases it and runs it. I don't have anything to do with it. He will ask me every once in a while but I never interject myself into it. When he got out of college I had quite a band of horses. I had the biggest band of Joe Moore and Chicaro Bill bred mares of anybody in the country.

AW:

What were you doing with your horses?

RA:

Well, I really wasn't—I was selling them. I've just kind of—like my cattle—I just sold colts.

AW:

These were for pleasure horses, working horses?

RA:

No. Roping and barrel—because they had a lot of speed, always had a lot of speed in my horses. So, I had a man in St. Louis, Missouri and every year when we'd wean our colts and gentle them down, he'd come down and buy them. I just made those colts bring a time and a half again of what my steers would bringing so I could afford to stay in the horse business. I really didn't show or anything. And of course, we kept some that we rode. I sold some for roping horses and

one horse we had won the national pole bending one year. There's several that were made barrel horses.

AW:

So they were fast.

RA:

Yeah. But I got tired of it so I called up a friend of mine in Edmond, Oklahoma. He had owned a horse called Top Moon who had won the All-American Futurity and told him what I had, this big band of Joe Moore and Chicaro Bill. Chicaro Bill and \_\_\_\_\_ [1:13:15], they could outrun anybody. So anyway, he came down and he said, "What are you feeding these horses?" I said, "What you see out there. That's what I feed them." [AW laughs] So, he said, "Let's go into partners," and I said, "No. I want out, not in." So, I sold him a whole truckload of mares. A lot of those mares—back then—it was before they did numbers—double A, and triple A, and one A—a lot of those mares produce triple A running horses out of Top Moon. But John wanted to get back in when he got out of school so I bought a stud from the King Ranch, a Peppy horse—cutting. So, John has just taken that and ridden with it. Fact of the matter, two years ago the American Quarter Horse Association gives an award for the top remuda and John won that.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Yeah.

AW:

You know, I didn't know that. I didn't know that side about your operation.

RA:

We've always had good horses. And John has done a good job going on with them. I think ole Peppy's still alive. He's twenty-seven years old. I don't think he can get a colt but they keep him and feed him as long as he's living. They'll put him with some mares to see if he can breed one but I don't think he does. But yeah, John, he sold one down in Fort Worth last winter for thirty-thousand dollars. So, he's done well with his horse but mainly he'll sell them for five or six-thousand dollars.

AW:

Let me get this straight, you still—you don't feed—they live off the—



RA:  
Grass.

AW:  
Grass.

RA:  
Well now, he may supplement during the winter. It's according to what the grass situation is but ordinarily no, they just live off the land.

AW:  
It sounds to me like this place you've got has got some really good grass.

RA:  
It does.

AW:  
Is that due to that management plan you started back there with the SCS [**Soil Conservation Service**]?  
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RA:  
Oh yes. Well, we just—I had a cowboy one time. I'd ride along and I'd comment on the grass, "We need to get these \_\_\_\_\_ [1:15:50] out of here," and he'd say, "I don't know why you don't sell all these damn cattle. All you do is ride around looking at this damn grass." [AW laughs] But that's what I was raising. Back when I started, the Soil Conservation people from Snyder came out here and they spent the whole couple of months looking around. They found seventy-five different grasses and herbs that cattle would eat and had samples of them on a big board. I hadn't did that big board in a long time.

AW:  
So this is—you really are in a kind of a special place in terms of having that variety of—that's a great variety.

RA:  
A bunch of seed had been abused. When this was open country—of course the buffalo grazed in here but a lot of these people, they'd just move on to a place and when the grass is gone they'd move someplace else. Then when they started fencing it in, they stopped the same way, what did they need out they tromped out. So that's why this ranch was in such terrible shape and the grasses they found were in protected places where the cattle hadn't been able to get back there to it. So, in our root plan, we planted grasses. We sprayed top land usually and root-plowed the



bottom land. So, I planted a world of seeds: sideoats grama, King Ranch Bluestem. I don't know what all I've got, don't do it anymore. We've got green sprangletop. We've got a lot of—there's a native green sprangletop. We have blue grama.

AW:

You say there's a native green sprangle?

RA:

Uh-huh. We have blue grama, black grama, sideoats grama, Arizona cottontop. We have buffalo grass, which is our basic grass. And, you know, the seeds itself, it'll—when things are good it puts out—

AW:

Rhizomes.

RA:

Runners, yeah. And every break, it'll root down and come again. Then Mesquite grass, which is not a very good grass—but we have a lot of varieties of grasses. They even found some Indian grass, which was back in a protected spot, which this country used to have Indian grass in it. I still don't see much but I'm sure there's some around that—I don't ride horseback anymore so I don't really know exactly going on.

AW:

Yeah, hard to get out and look at. Do you remember the name of the—or any of the names—of the folks with SCS you worked with, just out of curiosity?

RA:

One of them was Jerry Connors. He was the main one. He lived in Snyder. He, later on—he, later on, moved—I ran into him one time—he moved to Odessa. But he was the main one that I dealt with for about thirty years till he retired over there.

AW:

The reason I was asking, Rich, is that I've been doing interviews like this with retired SCS people. They're a really interesting bunch. I thought I'd—is he still alive? Do you know?

RA:

Hell, I have no idea.

AW:

Well, I'll just keep a lookout.

RA:

He was about—he could be. He was about my age. But he lived in Odessa. I'll tell you, you could probably—I can't think of the name of the fella right now that John deals with over there—but I bet you, you could look at their records and find out.

AW:

I'm meeting with a bunch of them over—have been for the last year and so I'll just ask about him when I do.

RA:

In 1986, I ran for Congress. I ran for state representative. I was out at Pecos and I ran into a retired Conservation person out there. We were visiting, and he was several years older than me. We were talking about how that country had disintegrated. I know that when Mr. Johnson had a general store out there, people just could pay once a year and sometimes they couldn't pay. He took minerals and land, and ended up with a lot of oil and land out there. But anyway, I asked this fellow, I said, "Well, what have they done here?" He said, "Well," he said, "I talked to an old man years ago that was in the ranching business." He moved out here around Balmorhea. I asked him, I said, "Well, why didn't you stay up in the mountains up there where there's water?" He said, "Because down here is where the grass was. There wasn't any grass up there. The grass was down here." So, they used to ship out two-hundred and fifty or so carloads of cattle out of Pecos every year. Well, they just—that's fragile land and they just ruined it. There's some in Arizona like that. There's a—Haley wrote a book, *A Good man—Jeff Milton: A Good Man with a Gun*. You ever read that?

AW:

Um-hm.

RA:

Well, he talks about patrolling that border down there and he'd just stop and camp at a place where there's a spring, turn his horse loose and let him graze. There's lots of grass down there. Well, when they found out there's—began to find out there's a lot of grass in that area down there, they came and just ruined it. They just ate it all up. Because I had a granddaughter that had a scholarship to a school there at South Arizona—anyway, the mountains were on the north. This place where a fellow had root-plowed strips in that—and hell, it was grass galore where he had root-plowed that and the water had come down out of those mountains and watered. So, people just—they just ruin country by overgrazing, stomping out.

AW:

Did you enter into, on your own, any particular rotational system for keeping—

RA:

Oh yeah. I had a—in this ten-year plan, for instance, I would do all my conservation work in one pasture then I wouldn't do it in the spring, let it rest during summer and fall, and then wouldn't go back into it till the winter. Then the next pasture I'd do the same thing. I'd root plow or spray or do something—build tanks. I built over on these ranches that I've leased. I've built over a hundred tanks. I used to fly around in a Cessna 180 and flew around up there and planned my conservation work. But yes, I had a plan. Once I got through with that ten-year plan, I started it again. Then I did without the Conservation people. I didn't need them anymore. I knew what to do and how to do it. So, I did that—well, I did it for almost thirty years. But then in '79 when we traded for the OB, it hadn't had anything done to it so I started working over there and doing stuff. About fifteen years later, I was riding around the Muleshoe. I told John, I said, "Hell, I spent fifteen years clearing it over there and now this is all growing back." [Andy laughs] So yes, I had a rotation system. And John, he follows the rotation system too.

AW:

So, the tanks in this country, that's how your able to do your rotation because you still have water.

RA:

Yes. I tried to build a tank where a cow didn't have to walk any further than a half a mile to get water because we don't have—all of our underground water is salty. We don't have any windmills. Everything's a stock tank. So, I tried to build where they would not have to walk over a half a mile for water. I know in one pasture I leased to Munger Ranch, which is thirty-thousand acres. There was one pasture that was twenty-five thousand acres and didn't have any—

AW:

That's a big pasture.

RA:

Well, yeah. Then when we gathered, the cattle were all on one side—one end of the pasture where the water was. So, I began build tanks back on the other side then I went through there and divided that pasture into four pastures and just changed that pasture completely, grass-wise and everything. So, you know, you got to have water.

AW:

You bet. Which brings up another question I've got: how do you go about—you and John—how have you gone about planning for the drought—we always got one coming or just getting out of one, it seems like. Do you wait for it? Do you anticipate it?

RA:

Yes. We don't overstock. John, he has his own rotation system. Then, you know, I subscribe to a weather report that—she speaks to the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers every year. She's pretty good.

AW:

Really? What's her name?

RA:

Browning. Browning Garrett. Her father started this back several years ago. Fact of the matter, when we get to the house today, I'll show you a book that he wrote many years ago that I read. Another book I read was by an oil man by the name of Pettit, lived in Fort Worth. He bought a ranch down in Stephenville. It was a worn out piece of property, creek dry running through it, brush and one thing, another. He began to do his conservation work and clear that brush and one thing and another. After several years he had that creek running again through that ranch. So, that caught my attention. Then he was the fresh it after a bad sandstorm or something [?] [1:27:30], he'd sweep up the dirt on the porch and have it analyzed.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Yeah. So, really, we get all the good top soil that comes these farmers up here. You know, I've had the ranch—some of my pens that have been there a long time, they've collected four or five inches of dirt in the period of time I've been here just from sandstorms. Back during the fifties, we had them. Oh my god, we had them. But yes, you can just prepare so much. We don't try to feed our way out of a drought. I've sold two complete herds of cattle. Just I didn't want to ruin the ranch. I was looking at the weather reports and I knew it wasn't going to rain. That is, I felt like it wasn't going to rain. You never know anything. Like when I sold those in '73, I think we got twelve or thirteen inches the whole year, which our annual rainfall's eighteen and a half. John's wife told me the other day that they'd recorded twenty-nine and a half this year.

AW:

Boy, I'll tell you, I was driving south out of Post today. It was—I mean, there's standing water. It's the wettest I've—

RA:

It really is. Well, the other day we went to—they gave their youngest daughter a reception up at that winery. We had to go around by Post because the road was closed between Tahoka and Lubbock. We couldn't get up to 1585 or we would've crossed there. It was closed between

Lamesa and Brownfield, too, for a while. And closed between Lamesa and Seminole. That always closes there, there's always—

AW:

Right, yeah, because that—

RA:

--Bunch of water there.

AW:

Yeah. You know, something else that strikes me listening to you talk this morning is a different—I talked to, and I've heard people who talk who got married to their genetics and wouldn't sell. It seems to me like that has not driven you. You rebuild when you need to but sell when you need to.

RA:

See, I went to school on my dad. He had registered cattle. He'd make money and then he'd go broke in a drought feeding those damn things. I went to school on him. Then I went to school on Barbara's dad. During the drought of the fifties he moved a bunch of cattle to pasture, which was a disaster. So, I went to school on that. So, anytime a truck is backed up to my chute, they belong to somebody else. I'm just not going to do that. It's worked for me. John, he moved some of his cattle to New Mexico, some to even Colorado. It happened that they both got rain at those two places and he moved them back. It didn't break him, but it bit him pretty good to do that. I just never did do it. I saw people—I had some friends in Big Spring, the Patterson, Malcolm and son, and their dad was an old rancher. During that drought of the fifties, they moved some cattle up to Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Mr. Powell was dying of throat cancer. He motioned one of his sons over. He got down and he said, "Don't go. Don't go." Son told me later on, "That's the best advice we had, but we didn't take it. Lost everything we had up there." [Laughter] So, you know, you can't—back during the '17-'18 drought, a lot of people in this country moved cattle up around Fort Sumner and got by with it. It didn't drought up there. As a matter of fact, during the fifties when we had this drought here, Barbara's dad had bought that ranch up there in Quay Valley in '54. I ended up finally shipping all of my cattle up there because he got enough rain to get by.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Yeah. The drought didn't really bother that ranch up there. But it can get dry up there, I'll tell you.



AW:

Yeah, I was going to say. I've known some folks around Tucumcari and they had like ten years' worth of it in one stretch.

RA:

Yeah, it's been bad up there. There's a ranch after you go to Santa Rosa, go down the road and turn north to Las Vegas. That ranch hasn't had any—it looks pretty good now, but god, I've been going up there and it didn't have any cattle. It was so bare you could see the rocks.

AW:

Exactly. I drive up through there in Las Vegas and Santa Fe pretty often. We have a lot of things we're doing with the university up there. The last—pretty much the last year's the first time I've seen cows from the road in a long time.

RA:

You said you were born in Slaton, it reminded me. Barbara had an aunt that lived in Slaton and she was married to—I think he was a cotton buyer and had farms. I know he had money. I can't think of his name. But anyway—

AW:

Was it a German name?

RA:

No, I don't think so.

AW:

A lot of German cotton farmers.

RA:

I don't know why it escapes—but anyway, when Barbara and I came back, got married and we moved out there to that ranch, I'd always—I began to have a little back trouble. The old mattress that we had out there at that ranch was sorry. I just had to have a new mattress. So, hell, I wasn't making much money. That mattress was going to cost a hundred dollars. So, we debated quite a while. So, Lovington didn't have a furniture store so we went down to Hobbs; drove down there in the old pickup. We were sitting there still debating whether we were going to spend that hundred dollars for that mattress or not. Well—what the hell was his name—he walks by and just as we'd gotten out to start in the store he walks by. Boy, he was glad to see us. We visited there. We started to leave. “Oh by the way,” he said, “You know, I never did give y'all anything for your wedding.” He ran his hand down his pocket and handed us a hundred dollar bill.

[Laughter]

AW:

I'm sure glad you told that story this morning because I was going to have to ask you. You told me this the other night at the Golden Spur.

RA:

I did, didn't I?

AW:

Yeah. I said, "We got to make sure we get that down." I'll tell you, that is a great story.

RA:

The reason I couldn't think of his name because he—Vallie was his wife's name and they lived there forever. He raised a family there.

AW:

In Hobbes?

RA:

No.

AW:

In Slaton?

RA:

In Slaton. Another story I want to tell you. I'm sure you've heard the story of Milt Good and—what was that fellow's name—Culp. Anyway, they had been—grand jury had [indicted] him for stealing cattle. They were going to have a trial there in Seminole. This fellow and Good burst in there and shot the sheriff and shot the judge but it hit something but didn't kill him. I don't know what—anyway, there was a lady in Big Spring that was an interior decorator. They were both fighting over the new word. Anyway, he used to be a salesman and he was raised in Lubbock. He told two stories. He said he finally—he asked Barbara, said, "Was your mother raised in Lubbock?", "Yes. His name was Dickinson—he said, "She's the prettiest girl I ever saw. I went up to ask the family if I could date her and they wouldn't let me date her because I was a drummer." Barbara says, "Bull, I never knew you played in a band." [AW laughs] Anyway, he was on his way from Lubbock to Lovington and he stopped in there at Seminole. The sheriff, the judge and a lot of people were there in the lobby of that hotel. He went on to Lovington and then by the time he got to the Lovington the bar got there that Milt Good and this fellow had burst in there and shot these people.

AW:

Oh man.

RA:

They finally caught Milt Good. This fellow Culp went to Montana and he was running a ranch up there, foreman of a ranch. He got in crossways with somebody and shot them at that ranch. They were going to come get him and he killed himself there at that ranch in Montana. Oh Bull. She said, "Bull, I never knew you played in a band." [AW laughs]

AW:

That's great.

RA:

My mother, raised there in Midland, she knew the Clayton boys. They used to come to dances in Big Spring. You see, Big Spring was much larger than Midland. So, they would have dances over there and kids from Midland would come over there to those dances and she knew Barbara's daddy and some of his brothers way back when they were just kids going to Big Spring. So, they—quite a bit of tie in to people. I know the Cowden's. I read a book written by one of their family called *Riding for the Brand*. They talked about how they got out to Midland in that area. Of course, finally got oil and made them all wealthy. Mother went with one of those Cowden's and people thought they were going to get married but they didn't. Later on, he had a—he went over to Africa to kill an elephant and he had those tusks and some stuff medaling in his front yard. I chastised mother, I said, "Mother, now, see if you had married him I could've been over there big game hunting." She said, "Son, if I had married him you wouldn't be here because he never did have any children." [AW laughs] He and his wife adopted a girl by the name of Barbara same day I was born.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Yeah. She died here a while back over there. Our ties have been pretty close to Midland and this whole area, anyway.

AW:

When did you get involved in the Ranching Heritage Association?

RA:

Probably about '70—sometime between '72 and '74.

AW:

So, pretty early on.

RA:

Yeah.

AW:

Was it still the Ranch Headquarters Association?

RA:

Yeah. Dub Waltrip and Jim Humphries. You know Jim.

AW:

Oh yeah.

RA:

They asked me if I wanted to serve on that board so I said, "Well, I guess so. What do you do?" All said, "Nothing." [AW laughs] So, I went on that board. The more I got involved the more I got involved.

AW:

It was a lot more than nothing, wasn't it?

RA:

Oh yes. Turned out to be a hell of a lot of work because—Dr. Murray had started that.

AW:

Yeah. Grover.

RA:

Grover Murray had started that. He wanted to—he wanted something to be going on there while they were building that museum over there. So, he got together with the Holden's, Dr. Holden.

AW:

John Lott.

RA:

John Lott and the fellow that managed the Pitchforks for so long, Frank Chapel. Another fellow that had a ranch up in New Mexico. Anyway, they started it. But, we got in that and Beau Brown came on the board about the same time I did. We got to looking at the bylaws. Beau and I had

been going over them and we discovered that the Holden's had written those—Francis had written those—Francis was a schemer. I don't know whether you knew her or not.

AW:

Oh yeah. I knew—we used to say when Fran would call you there in Lubbock, she would summon you to court and you would come to her place.

RA:

She had written that to where if they wanted to, they could pick up and leave there. They would take our money and leave. So, Beau and I, Beau mainly, went through there and we changed that and got together with the Tech lawyers to where that wouldn't happen. But Fred Bucy was the chairman of the board and Cavazos was president. We had a meeting down at the ranch. They instructed me to get rid of the Holden's. Anyway, we had a meeting in Fort Worth with the board. They were in a hotel. I went up to their room and told them they were going to have to resign. I had diarrhea for three straight days. God, it upset me so bad—and they did. Things got better. Bucy took a hold of some things and so did Cavazos. We did real good as long as Beau had to report to Cavazos and I had to report to Bucy. I was chairman of the board at that time. We swapped—Beau and I swapped back and forth. We've gotten into some problems. Well, afterwards, we met down here. They told us what they wanted us to do. We got along pretty good but then the Board of Regents decided that that was they needed a bunch of vice-presidents and the vice-presidents were divided amongst all the different divisions in the school there and they would report to Cavazos. Well, we got one. I can't remember his name. We came up at—Lineberry, Tom Lineberry, used to be on that Board of Regents. They'd given Tech a lot of money. They wanted to give them a church that was down at Mentone. So, we went down there and looked it over. We never had the money to move anything. Somebody had to move it for us. The Lineberry's were going to move it up there, set it up, remodel it, one thing and another. We sent Alvin Davis down there. They do a dog and pony show to the historical society and the commissioners, they all approved it. Well, the next thing I know I get a call from a reporter in Odessa, "Are you going to go the Regents meeting tomorrow," and I said, "Why, no, I'm not on their agenda.", "They're having a meeting about that church in Mentone," and I said, "What?" Well, see, what we had to do, we had to approve at the Ranching Heritage center. We had to go over and get it approved at the Museum. Edson was the museum director and I didn't get along with him at all. He and I just—

AW:

Me either.

RA:

I threatened to whip him one time. [laughter] But anyway, then it had to go to this vice-president. So Dr. Cavazos called me and said, "The headlines in the paper is, 'Texas Tech steals the only



church there is in Mentone County—Town of Mentone.” Hell, we had permission and everything. So, I went to see—Cavazos was madder than hell at me. He said, “You did that without our permission,” and I said, “We did not.” We took it to that vice-president and he was supposed to take you the minutes of that meeting.” “Well, I never saw them.” Man, I hated that vice-president. He and I had very heated words. Finally I said, “You don’t like us very much, do you,” and he said, “No, I don’t.” “Why?”, “Because you know too many important people. You go over our heads.” I said, “The reason we have to is because you’re so goddamn sorry.” But anyway—but it’s too late. They’d already done it. They had a group come from Mentone: a bartender and a lady that was deputy sheriff whom I knew—used to work at the ranch—and somebody else. They appeared before the Board of Regents and didn’t give us an opportunity to present our cause. So, we lost that church that we would’ve had up there. Then our relations with the Board of Regents got bad. Alvin Davis didn’t help any. That little bastard. He’d made Dr. Cavazos mad. Fact of the matter, I told him, “You walk down the street and you see him coming, you go to other side. Don’t you even say hello to him.” So, we were going to let him go but we hadn’t. So, they had me to meet General Cavazos, which is Larry’s brother who is a General in the Air Force, I think, or Army. I don’t know. Anyway, I thought I told him in a nice way, “You take care of your business and we’ll take care of ours,” but evidently, generals don’t like to be told, “No.” Anyway, we had hell but we were going to let Alvin go anyway because he’d made everybody mad. We let him go and then John Lott had this boy, Patrick Berkley [phone rings 01:47:48]—excuse me.

AW:

I’ll just pause this a minute. [Pause in Recording]

RA:

I always get those damn calls.

AW:

I know it.

RA:

I get calls from people wanting, “Your computer needs to be repaired.” [Laughs]

AW:

Let’s see, this morning I’ve had—let me see—I’ve had a call from San Diego, a call from Chicago, and a call from Abilene. I don’t know any of those people that called me this morning.

RA:

I get a call from California or Florida. That’s where these people are. So anyway—

AW:

Right. I remember when all of that transpired with Patrick.

RA:

So, we had to get rid of Patrick. That caused a lot of problems. Alvin—we had some wonderful women; Kay Burns, her name was Brown then. Kay Brown. Then—oh, what—they were there at the Golden Spur the other night—Kay—anyway, we called them the “two Kay girls.” By goddamn, they were workers. Alvin just made them so mad they quit. We just finally just, you know, had to let Alvin go. He didn’t have a very high regard for women. Barbara always walked ten yards to the rear when we went anywhere. Anyway, we—and I hated it. There’s some things about—Alvin was a—he was a good promoter.

AW:

He got a lot of things started.

RA:

He got a lot of things started. He really did. But we just finally had to let him go. We didn’t do any good until—

AW:

Jim.

RA:

I know, but before Jim came—not Kent Hance but the other senator from Lubbock.

AW:

John Montford.

RA:

John Montford—when John came. And I’d helped John a lot. Not a whole lot in his elections because he was a democrat. But anyway, we got along good. We talked to him, Beau and I did, and some others. I wasn’t the only one. So, he jumped—they got on that fellow at the museum. They told him to cease and desist. Then we had to—we put out and got Jim. Jim told me later on, he said, “Rich, if I’d known what shape I was in financially, I never would’ve come.

AW:

Jim and I—and Byron Price, the three of us grew up together. We went to junior high and high school and we’ve been friends forever. I have to say, I was one of the ones that talked him into coming. He said the same thing to me after he got there.

RA:

I'll tell you what—

AW:

We said, "We had to have you."

RA:

Who was the fellow that Jim married—the lady—Marsha. Who was her first?

AW:

Augustus and Bill.

RA:

Yeah. Between him and Jim, they really straightened that thing out. Hell, we found out that the government taxes hadn't been paid, and this hadn't been paid, and all of it was in terrible shape. The two of them got that thing straightened out and did a hell of a job. Then, of course, you know, the story after that.

AW:

It's sad.

RA:

Then Georgia May Erickson, she was a—boy, she was a doer. And then—hell, I don't know why I can't remember names—he was interim president for a while. He was a—

AW:

Just recently?

RA:

No, back then before Jim.

AW:

Harrigan?

RA:

Harrigan. Don Harrigan. I called him "Ole Interim."

AW:

Yeah because he was interim chancellor, interim president, interim—he was a—[laughs]

RA:

Tech got chastised for something up at Kansas City and he was—Don was up there—and they had the damnedest picture in the paper of him. He was frowning and I mean just frowning. I sent it to him and told him, I said, “You look just like a damn bulldog.” Oh, he was mad.

AW:

You know, the funny thing is, you hardly ever, in regular life, ever saw a non-frown.

RA:

He was always laughing. Oh, he was mad about this. He was a great help. Don was a great help to us. Then when John Montford came between Harrigan and then Cavazos left. We got along all right with Larry but he wore his damn feelings right out there on his sleeve. You had to be careful dealing with Larry.

AW:

He had a very difficult go at Tech. Because he had the same relationship with pretty much everybody else on campus that he had with Ranching Heritage.

RA:

Well, I know that I was in the episcopal church and they supposedly appointed me Long Range chairman of the committee. I had to rebuild the committee because none of them knew anything about it. I had an engineer from Tech and that vice-president that I had crossed swords with, he said, “You know, we were ready to kill that son of a bitch.” He was out after Larry’s job. Larry got mad at me when I told him. I said, “He’s after your job, I’ll tell you.” Larry didn’t like that. We kind of had an off and on relationship, basically. Then I never did deal with—I dealt with John Montford then with Kent Hance. Of course, I know Bob Duncan. Saw Bob at the Golden Spur. But we got things straightened out with Tech and things have been nice ever since.

AW:

I think we’re—I probably shouldn’t be saying this for the recording but I will anyway—we’ve got a chancellor and we’ve got a really good president, Lawrence Schovanec. He was a big fan of the Ranching Heritage center.

RA:

That’s what I’ve heard.

AW:

That’s a really good thing. And we’ve got a great provost, Mike Galyean, who’s—well, he was a dean of Ag [**Agriculture**]. Big animal science guy. He’s a big fan of Ranching Heritage Center.

RA:

Who was the lady that was head of the Home Ec [**Economics**]?

AW:

Bess Bailey.

RA:

Oh yeah. She was—

AW:

She was there.

RA:

She's a lot help to us, I'll tell you.

AW:

I think right now we have—at the university—we have—we may have the friendliest bunch since Grover Murray. I think, all in one spot. So, I'm real hopeful if they can find a good—

RA:

Kent Hance called me a while back. He belonged to the same fraternity that I did.

AW:

Oh really?

RA:

Yeah.

AW:

And Bob Duncan too.

RA:

Yeah. I was a Delta at OU. So, they called us one time to go up and install a chapter at Oklahoma State. So, we went up there and installed a chapter up there. I have a great-grandson going to school up there. He was kind of interested in joining a fraternity and I said, "I know the Del chapter there." He said, "Yes, I've kind of looked at it and kind of liked it." I said, "Well, you tell them your great-granddaddy started that chapter up there," and they accepted him. [Laughter] But then Kent called me and he wanted me to do something. I said, "Kent, do you know that I helped start that Del chapter at Texas Tech?" "No." I said, "Hell yes, I started that—helped start that chapter at Texas Tech." There were two of us who came from Big Spring: this friend of



mine that was the president of the oil company, Dan Crowser [?] [1:56:33]. He and I went up there along with—there was some other people in Lubbock. I can't remember now. It's been a long time ago. We installed that chapter.

AW:

That's interesting. That's really interesting.

RA:

But I—ole Kent, he has a picture of me and him when he ran for—first time he ran for office. He said, "This is the only Republican that ever supported me in running office." [AW laughs] I always liked Kent. We got along good.

AW:

What—before we take a break—because I'm going to need to take a break here in a few minutes—

RA:

You need to use the bathroom?

AW:

Yeah.

RA:

It's right there.

AW:

Let me ask you this question though, what do you see for the future of the Ranching Heritage Association and Center?

RA:

Well, I think it's going to become an educational center itself. I was impressed with those books that—*Hank the Cowdog*—

AW:

John Erickson.

RA:

John Erickson. I was impressed with what they were going to do. What I wasn't impressed was that they're waiting on Tech to make them a website. I told that woman, I said, "You've done all the work here. What are you waiting on?", "We're waiting on Texas Tech." I said, "You better

wind up your clock if you're waiting on them. Forget about it. Go ahead and do it then tell them you've done it." I said, "That's the only way you'll ever get it done." Not bad mouthin' Tech. I worked there for years so I know.

AW:

It's a bureaucracy and it's a big one.

RA:

It's a bureaucracy, yeah. Just like dealing with Washington.

AW:

And sometimes you want them to operate a little slow. [Laughs] You want them to be deliberate.

RA:

Jim Clue [?] [1:58:24] did a hell of a job melding things together. Now, you know, they want to have board meetings over at our boardroom there. I think that it's going to become an educational center. The number of people that go through there every year is fantastic. There's nothing like it in the United States.

AW:

Again, you know, your point about education is right on the money. The complaint that I would hear on campus from people was it's just a—it's kind of like an entertainment place where you drop your kids off or you go visit. "What's it doing for students?" And there's some truth to that. Not that it can't be, because it can—there's so much that can be done out there for students in education.

RA:

It's almost just like—Dr. Cavazos said, "I want that to become the front door to Texas Tech." It kind of is. I run across people all the time that have been there.

AW:

We get somebody in town, that's one of the first places we take them. I do need to step around the corner.

RA:

It's just right around the corner on your left.

AW:

I'm going to put a pause—[Pause in Recording]

AW:

Back dating today's interview, this is the twenty-first of September. Andy Wilkinson with Rich Anderson at his office in Gale. [Pause in Recording]

RA:

When we go across the fault line, these things—they'll cross and they won't do anything. See, they're not doing anything.

AW:

Yeah.

RA:

Well, that's interesting.

AW:

It is. What we're—I'm going to say for the tape recorder—what we're doing now is we're on the Muleshoe Ranch. Rich is showing me his dowsing rods. When did you—and how did you—discover that you were able—

RA:

Many years ago, I needed a water well down on the river. There's a stream of water that always follows the river. I got a man out here to drill it and he was looking—he asked me, said, "Can you dowse," and I said, "I don't know. I've never tried." He said, "Well, let me see." He gave me his rods and sure enough, they worked for me. I found a spot where he drilled. He'd already located it. So, that's the first time I knew that I was able to do that. They worked there where he drilled this water well. Other than that—so, I've used that—we had a ranch up in New Mexico that was not well-watered. I think I put in four windmills, finally, where I found water. I put a windmill up for them. They were small wells but if you have one up there that makes a gallon and a half to two gallons a minute—and a day is a twenty-four hour period with that windmill running all the time—it makes quite a bit of water, enough to water cattle. Then on that ranch up there, I found irrigation water. The driller told me, he said he didn't know how much it would make because it was just—he said it was a tremendous amount of water. I drilled a water well there. We had a well there all right but since we sold that to Mr. Cox, he built a big storage tank there and he pipes water all over the ranch from where I found that. Ordinarily, around these streams—this is Tobacco creek—ordinarily, around these streams—Tobacco creek—there will be a small—there will be a small stream of water. When I moved down here, there used to be a windmill right there. [Pause] They across that stream—[inaudible]—cross it.

AW:

Yeah. I just saw them cross.

RA:

She's right there. It wasn't a very wide stream. It's just a small stream but there used to be a windmill, little windmill, right there. During the drought of the fifties, it dried up and we never did try to do anything with it.

AW:

Tobacco Creek runs into—

RA:

It runs into what we call the Colorado River. This creek starts about five miles south of O'Donnell.

AW:

Really?

RA:

Uh-huh. Then the river, which we'll cross between the barns and the house, it starts over next to the—over west—close to the Caprock.

AW:

You got water coming over the road now.

RA:

Uh-huh.

AW:

Look at that.

RA:

It stays there all the time. He has some of these mountains, too.

AW:

Yeah, he does. Blue heron.

RA:

Yeah. But he's not very scary because—he'll fly off a little bit but when we come back by here, he'll be back down there.

AW:

Hérons, to me, seem to be the calmest—you can walk almost right up to one, you know. I don't know whether they're calm or they just have a sense of superiority. [Laughs]

RA:

When I was a kid, we had some dirt tanks up there in Lovington, had windmills, they'd pump into a water trough then they'd overflow would go out into an old dirt tank and we always had some around there. One day, I slipped up there and I just skid. I had on tennis shoes, I'm sure, and I ran and caught one. I spent the next ten minutes trying to get loose from it. That ole head, he was pecking the hell out of me. I couldn't get away from him.

AW:

I've heard the bird people say that a heron will kill just for the fun of it.

RA:

I don't know that. I mean, I know that they'll put a—you'll have a tank that doesn't have any fish in it and about a year later, you'll catch some crayfish or something. They've been around, dropped some eggs that they ate or something. You'll have that tank stop. [Pause] I planted a bunch of King Ranch bluestem and it's scattered all over the ranch. That's what that is right there, that—

AW:

With this headed out [?] [2:06:49]?

RA:

Yeah. It's got a real light seed and the wind just—that fellow was driving along here in his pickup that he carried that seed in and it'd blow out. We've got that all over the ranch. And it's pretty good grass. It's kind of a coarse grass. Cattle gets started on it early before it gets too coarse then they'll eat it down, they'll graze it down. That's not a bad grass but it really—I've got it in my front yard. It just gets everywhere. Can't get rid of it. Now we'll—before long we'll be getting to see a lot of sideoats grama. It always comes out big in the fall if you get rains like we've had.

AW:

There's your power lines.

RA:

Yeah. Well, we didn't particularly want them but they were going to put them there anyway so we hired a lawyer who knew what was going on. He got us a quite a bit of money for those power lines.



AW:

You know, these power companies would've done themselves a service if they'd have had a different way of approaching paying for them. You know, the turbine people don't have much trouble getting turbines because they're paying you. Once these go in in most places, they don't pay anything at all after that.

RA:

We had one put across us a long time ago. It came from Colorado City. It came across the Munger Ranch, which was owned by Barbara's uncle. He was a hard trader. So, I knew that he had traded with them. So, they were offering a certain amount of money which I knew he'd gotten quite a bit more. So, before that fellow had a chance to really make me an offer I said, "I don't care. Just give me the same thing you gave Arthur Clayton." He looked at—[laughter] and I knew him. He said, "Damn you, Rich." I was the only one besides Arthur that got that much money for them. [AW laughs and phone rings 02:09:33] Stayed with us while Barbara was sick. So, after Barbara died, the kids insisted that I keep her. I really don't need her but she's handy. She lives in Snyder with her husband. She keeps pretty close, pretty close tabs on me, I'll tell you. Fact of the matter, the girls, they don't always trust me to tell them—when I go to a doctor, they don't know whether I'll tell them the truth or not. Well, I always do, but they don't believe me. So, I ask Jodie to go into the room where I'm talking to the doctor so she could hear what he says. So, they rely on her more than they rely on me. Well, this is the old—damn, I didn't know they was behind me.

AW:

Yeah.

RA:

This is the old Muleshoe headquarters here. Our house used to be over here on this side.

AW:

Over here?

RA:

Yeah. That Tobacco Creek runs—you can see those stony cliffs back over there. That's where the back of the creek runs and then the river runs right down here. Sometime during the fifties, we'd just get thunderstorms. We didn't have any grass to hold water on or anything. There's been times when we were in here a week without being able to get out; couldn't afford those creeks. So, when our house burned—

AW:

The house that burned was here?

RA:

It was over here. I'll show you where it was. So, we moved over there and built that one. [Pause] I'll take you around there and show you where the house was. [Inaudible] We didn't have any place to live so Barbara moved up to live with her parents there in Lovington. Sally and Mary were both small so I built a cinderblock house right here. We've added onto it and improved it. There used to be a garage right there so I just dug a foundation around that—through that—where the cement was for the garage and put in a cinderblock house so Barbara and I would have a place to live until we decided to do something. We've added to it, and that's where Clayton [?] [2:13:00] lives. When we first came down there, I didn't have a barn. They used to drill oil wells over there by Wells. You know, building rigs was a big business. They built it out of galvanized steel then when they got through drilling the well they'd just leave it because they didn't have any way to pull the well to work on it. In the late forties and early fifties, they developed these rigs that—pullout rigs. They back up and they can pull those—pull all the rods out and look at it. So, they didn't have any more use for them. I bought two of those rigs and the framework for that barn built out of it.

AW:

That's a good looking barn.

RA:

It's been there quite a while now. I think I built it sometime in the early sixties. This house down here, there's some question whether it's the oldest or one of the oldest houses in Borden County but I don't know. I have no way to prove it.

AW:

Are you talking about this—

RA:

This house right here.

AW:

Right here?

RA:

Yeah. A Mexican boy that works over at the house for me lives here. But there used to be a dog run between those houses. When I came down, they'd already filled it in. It's an old, old house but every once in a while we'll remodel it and put the metal on it, one thing or another. We try to protect it—even stucco underneath there. That stucco is hard. God almighty, it's hard.

AW:  
Really?

RA:  
Yeah. Then we had a—when we filled up Lake Thomas, we had water that came up to here. We have an arena down here and it—damn—it washed part of it away. I'd better watch where I'm going here.

AW:  
Had a little runoff here.

RA:  
Well, water came up to here and it washed part of this arena away. We had a round pen down there that we worked the horses in. It washed part of it away. I don't know what John's going to do. I don't know whether he's going to rebuild here or do something else. I haven't—I don't know. I don't rope anymore so I don't—whatever they're going to do, I don't give a damn.

AW:  
[Laughs] There's still some of your pen left.

RA:  
Yeah. It washed out everything on that side. It didn't get everything over yonder but it got a good portion of that round pen there.

*[End of Recording]*