

Karen: This is Karen Chapman. I'm interviewing Dr. Wendell Hutchinson at his home in Chaffee County on the Hutchinson Ranch. The date is November 11, 2004. The purpose of the interview today is to talk about Hutch's life as a rancher in Chaffee County, and to also talk about the house that is called the White House on his property. Dr. Hutchinson, tell me about your father and your mother as you remember it.

Wendell: My father was born here in Chaffee County. I always thought he was born here on the ranch, but according to a friend of ours,
[00:01:00] Lloyd Jones, said my dad's mother, Grace was over on Swazinsky Creek in the San Luis Valley when he was born, happen to be there, but he was born on March the 16th 1898. Then he grew up here on the ranch after that pretty much continually, and he for
[00:02:00] many years owned just a few cows, that he ran with my great uncles, Bailey and Arthur Hutchinson. My grandfather, Harold, by then, had moved away to Pueblo and was a switch man working in the Pueblo switch yard on the railroad station down there. I think it was the Rio Grande, but it could have been another, it could have been the Santa Fe also.

Karen: Yeah, why did he move to Pueblo and take up another job?

Wendell: Job there.

Karen: Cows weren't paying enough?

Wendell: That's a story, it's not too good a story to tell, but I'll tell it.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: Why did Harold Hutchinson go there?

Karen: Yes.

Wendell: He and a friend of his switched in the yards here at Salida, and then they go home. Often they would be out there all night, and
[00:03:00] they'd come in. His friend said, "My wife is a good cook. Why don't you come in and have breakfast with us?" He got having breakfast there, and then the gal or his wife got a crush on him or something. Grace, my grandmother, who was Grace Greene before she married him, she saw him walking down the street, down on Wood Avenue in Salida, and they were kind of arm in
[00:04:00] arm going down the street. She followed them, and then they went into a bar there, and what she saw, I'm not sure, but I got some guesses. Anyway, she let it go until the next morning, then Grace went over to the neighbor lady and she rapped on the door, and then took out her little 44 and shot her and killed her.

Karen: Oh.

Wendell: Ethel Purdom, who was a sister to Steve Frazee who was another famous author here and from an old family, as Ethel Purdom remembers it, she was just a girl, she said she remembers the old horse-drawn ambulance coming to pick up, her name was Mrs. Bode, picked up Mrs. Bode and took her to the hospital, but she died there before they could do anything really for her. Harold then was kind of looked down upon by the community. He went over to my wife's ... My wife was a Swallow, and Lou Swallow was an old friend of his, they were both born about the same time. They were both born about 1874, and he went over there and said, "Lou, I'm really in trouble," he said. He said, "My wife shot my neighbor lady, and I think if the community gets me, and they'll probably string me up." Lou Swallow ... He said, "You wouldn't have a couple of horses, would you?" Lou said, "Yeah, out in the barn." The Swallow place was right where Salida Motors is now. He said, "Yeah, I got a couple of horses." He saddled the horses and he went down to Cleora, where the Cleora stockyards are, and where the sale barn is today, went there and caught a freight train and rode out of town. Lou brought his own horse, the one that Harold was riding, back to the barn. Harold went to Pueblo then.

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When he did come back for the trial, when Grace was tried ... Actually Grace then came back and lived with my 2 great uncles and my great grandmother, Annabelle McPherson-Hutchinson, lived there at the old house while she was awaiting trial.

Karen: At the White House?

Wendell: No, at the old ranch.

Karen: Oh, the old ranch house.

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Wendell: Ranch house. Then when the attorney said ... They picked some ranchers and railroad men. I think it was half and half. She was handsomely attired, they said. She got off and said she had the right to defend her own and her honor. She got off. She was acquitted. Harold was at the trial, and he got up in the courtroom, And said "Great Scott" or "Thank God," or something, that she got off. Then they tried to live together a little bit. They went up to the old Jackson Hotel, stayed up there about 1 year. Old Mills was up there then, and then he'd been, that was about 1905 or 6 when that shooting took place. After Grace and Harold didn't get along, and Grace left and went to Victor. She became the superintendent

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of the nurses at the hospital over at Victor, that's when Cripple Creek was in its boom time.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: That's probably enough of that. That's why he went to Pueblo.

Karen: Okay. Your great uncles, then, you just had 2 great uncles that helped here at the ranch?

Wendell: Yes. Yeah. Bailey and Arthur.

Karen: Okay.

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Wendell: John Arthur was the oldest one. He was born November the 16th, 1870, and he was born up in the McPherson cabin up on Poncha Springs. Then Bailey Hutchinson was born at his dad's cow camp. His dad's cow camp was at the mouth of the Little Cochetopa River, and that property today belongs to a friend. Bailey was born in that cabin. Uncle Art was born here at Poncha, but then Harold was the first one born in that old house. Then we had another brother. There was 4 brothers. Joseph Mills, the youngest, he was born in 1877, and he later ... He was switch man at Minturn, an engineer on the railroad there at Minturn. Made a lot of trips over Tennessee Pass back to Salida. He got tired of that, he came back here and tried ranching up on our place, that didn't make him any kind of living, so he gave that up and got a job. He ran for sheriff in about 1918.

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Karen: In Chaffee County?

Wendell: In Chaffee County, ran for sheriff and won. I think he held that position until about 1928 when he was defeated by a man by the name of Hollenbeck. Then he, after that, just got a job working at Alma, Colorado. He was coming home one night, and this old car he had was his son's car, and it conked out on him up on Poncha Pass. He walked clear in, I'd say it's about 20 miles down there, cold night, to get, I think, maybe gasoline, and pack it back up, and he got pneumonia and died in 1934. He died in 1934, Harold, I mean Joseph Mills, died in 1934.

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Karen: How did your family ... Your dad was ranching before he went to Pueblo?

Wendell: Harold, yeah. That was, yeah, Harold. The one who went to Pueblo, that was Harold, my grandfather. He just worked here on the ranch, pretty much. He was kind of bronc rider and a bronc

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buster, in a way. They say he used to buck horses down in Salida under the old gaslight down there at F Street, 1st and F, back in the early days when it was still probably just dirt. I suppose after, they might have had a few rounds of drinks at the Vic or somewhere.

Karen: Was the Vic around then?

Wendell: Yes, I think, yeah, I think it was.

Karen: For your father, and his brothers ... He had brothers, right?

Wendell: My father only had one brother.

Karen: One brother.

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Wendell: That was Harold Jr., and he was born 1913. Mills was born in 1998, was his half brother, and was born in 1913 and lived in Pueblo, was born in Pueblo. He finally ... I think he went to college at Colorado College. He finally, too, got beyond that point and went to Utah, and he met a Mormon girl there, and he became a Mormon, and he died there, Harold, young Harold, they called him.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: He was 13, let's see, almost 15 years younger than my father.

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Karen: Okay.

Wendell: Now, go ahead.

Karen: Go ahead, and then I'll ask the question.

Wendell: Then my mother came out here. She came out in about 1923 from Harvard, Illinois. Not many people know where Harvard, Illinois is. It's got the northwestern railroad. It's about 60 miles out of Chicago, and her father, first he was buggy, made buggies, and he sold harness and buggies in his shop. His name was Jacob C.

[00:15:00] Burkhart. That was my grandfather on my mother's side. He came out here to visit an uncle, Jacob Burkhart had a brother who was a conductor on the railroad here. She came out to see him. He met my father, I think, at the Poncha Springs School House, at a dance. That was 1923. They got married the 17th day of December, the 17th day of December, 1923.

Karen: What was your mother's name?

Wendell: Myrtle Burkhart.

Karen: B-R-O-O-K-H-A-R-T.

Wendell: B-U-R-K, Burk.

Karen: Oh, German.

Wendell: B-U-R-K-H-A-R-T, very much German.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: Her father was Jacob Burkhart, and she had a brother, Charles Burkhart. Charles Burkhart was born in 1900, even, and my mother was born in 1903.

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Karen: Your father learned ranching from your great uncles.

Wendell: Yeah, he did. He learned ranching from them.

Karen: How many cattle were there when you were growing up?

Wendell: When I was growing up, they had, they a permit on Marshall's pass for about 155, rather, 365 head, as they ran on Marshall pass and down on the western slope down to the far valley, almost as far as Chester. The railroad went over the top of Marshall pass, but we had all that country in there, and then it ran over the hill of the San Luis Valley, almost as far as Moffat. They ran all 350 head at least, and probably sometimes almost 400 cows.

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Karen: You moved them around to those different areas?

Wendell: Yeah, they did. Back in those early times, there were no fences, much, so they just moved them wherever there was grass.

Karen: Did all of the area ranchers get together to help round up each other's cows?

Wendell: Yes. Every fall, in the fall, they had what they called a full roundup. It always took place right this time of the year, the middle of November. They always said it was cold. They started at Moffat, as they picked up the cows, they'd drop them off at different ranches. For example, Barston Miller would, they're not too far from Villa Grove, they'd drop off Parson Miller's cows, his ways. They had about 1,000 head, Parson Miller did. Then they would go

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to Earl Wilson's place, and Earl Wilson had about 400 head, and he dropped them off there. Then there was the Stoddard family, they ran a couple 100 head, and they dropped them off there, then there was the Tuttle ranch, and they dropped them off there.

[00:19:00] One time, I have a second cousin, Art, who my son is an Arthur Hutchinson too, it's hard to keep track of all the Art Hutchinsons. John Arthur, that was the old uncle, great uncle, and then Uncle Joe had a son Art. He was on one roundup in Moffat, he said, "We fought the cold and wind all day and got the cattle as far as Tuttle's, and Tuttle came out and said, 'Come in boys, and put the cows in the corral out there.' Tuttle had a good corral. 'Put the cows in the corral,' he said, 'You can go down and make Salida in the morning.' And Sterling Jones was kind of a tough old bird and said, 'No, by God, we're going to Salida. We're going to Salida tonight.'" My cousin Art, 2nd cousin Art said, "I could've shot the old ..." He said he was thinking of that steaming pot of good food and the warm bed out in his bunkhouse to stay that night, and then they had to make Salida. He said, they got here, and hell, it was midnight, and they still had to sort Jones's cattle out from our cattle and some of the other cattle that was mixed, the O'Hara's, and some of the Italians had cows mixed in there too. They still had to sort cows, so they didn't gain a thing.

Karen: Right. Right. How old were you when you first went on cattle drives and those kinds of things? What's your first memory of that?

[00:21:00] Wendell: My very first memory of going ... One of my first times was going to Marshall Pass with my father to distribute salt up there. We had several salt licks, and back in those days, they didn't have any nice pretty cubes of salt that we got today. Iodized salt, white salt, they just had these old chunks of salt. They would put them on the railroad and kick off those old, big chunks, and what they'd do is kind of break them up with an axe or a pick or something and put them in bags on the sides of the horse and then haul them out and then put salt at the different licks. They had different licks that they had for the cattle to lick at. That's my first experience was going up there, and he would show me all the, Mt. Ouray right to the back. He'd talk about the poison pasture where they had larkspur and they had to fence it out.

[00:22:00] I remember going over there, and my father always liked, his name was Mills. Mills Hutchinson. He liked to fish, in his hat he always had a fly or two. A Royal Coachman and a Gray Hackle. He said if he couldn't catch it with them, they couldn't be caught. Just used a willow stick for a pole could catch some nice cutthroat trout for dinner. I remember him fixing us some that night up

there, at the old cabin at Marshall Pass.

Karen: How long were you usually out when you did something like that?

Wendell: About 3 or 4 days. One time a while later, I'd been up there a week, I'd heard a man, Jim Randall, and I stayed up there with him 3 weeks. I stayed there 3 weeks.

Karen: How old were you when you did that?

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Wendell: When I did that, I was about 15, 14, 15. I stayed up there that long.

Karen: Okay. Did you still ... while you were at that age, did you still have the 300 to 400 cattle?

Wendell: Yes. They still had about that many head of cattle.

Karen: How long was it before you had to pull the cattle out of those areas? When did fencing come in?

Wendell: Fencing came in about 1935, they started fencing those parts off, and you had to put them in specific places. They had fences so that you couldn't go put them on their grass. They just recently made them do that again to keep them off the top of the pastures up there. Then we lost the Western Slope. It was given to the Means family, up there, on the top. Western Slope. They got that. Means doesn't own that anymore either. We lost that whole Western Slope. Then we had to cut our cattle herds down. By the time my father passed away, and he passed away in 1949, same year my wife and I got married, we ... Let's see, I lost my train of thought. He died in April of 1949, April 13th, I think, of 1949, and my wife and I were married in August of 1949. My father never got to see us married.

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Then, of course, when he died, my mother, I had my mother and 2 brothers wanted to stay with the ranch for a little bit. My mother and brother Jake, he was born 2 years after I was born, he was born July the 6th, 1926, I was born '26. I have another brother, Joe, Joseph Mills, to confuse it more, he had the same name that my great uncle had. Joseph Mills, now, he's in Texas, and he's a teacher at Texas A&M. No interest in retiring. He's just 10 years younger than I am, and I just turned 80, and he just turned 70.

Karen: Okay. How was ... Did the Depression affect the cattle ranching here in Chaffee County?

Wendell: Yes, it did. The Depression did. That's when they started cutting the herds down some too because they said we were over-grazing. The drought, it was pretty droughty here, that's when the Dust Bowl came in about that same time out on the Plains. It never was that bad up here, but I remember we lost quite a lot of our agricultural land back here. Mind it, we used to irrigate it all pinon patches and the likes, and the sand patches, we called them, we always had to perpetually irrigate them, but the drought got so bad that the ditches didn't run water either. The Depression did affect us. It was more the drought in that period too, same reason the Dust Bowl occurred, about the same time.

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Karen: What were cattle prices like during the Depression?

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Wendell: They were very poor. I would say the total cow would make \$14 to \$19, maybe. The prices were not good in contrast to today where they're probably the best they've ever been, price wise. Also, I think it's more expensive to try and raise cattle today. Like in my case, because I'm older, I have to hire to have most of it done, it's going to cost a lot more to run than it did.

Karen: What are some of the changes that you can talk about between when you first were ranching, taking over the ranch, and today?

Wendell: Let's see, when I took over, my first ... When I graduated from college, I went to Gunnison, and I bought a practice out there from Dr. Merle Riemenschneider, M.N. Riemenschneider. He was from Marshalltown, Iowa, but he graduated from Ames and he practiced in Gunnison. I bought his practice. My wife and I were going to make a go of that over there, and my brother Jake came to me one day and said, "I'm tired of trying to irrigate and keep the ranch going. Would you and Sue want to come over and take over?" I said, "I think we would." My wife especially wanted to do that because she was a native here too. She wanted to come back.

Karen: What year was that?

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Wendell: That was about 1950. My great uncle died, both of them died in 1960, so we had taken over the ranch by then. My brother had come over, and he didn't want to do it anymore. The other brother, Joe, he never had much interest in ranching. He was kind of an artsy type, and he had made his career teaching art in school. He did some in California. He taught in Sterling, Colorado, and taught at Hayes, Kansas, finally, he got a job with Texas A&M, which he's held onto that for I think almost 30 years. That's where he is today. He said he was going to retire, but he didn't. He thinks

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he will next year. Always next year.

Karen: Yeah.

Wendell: The thing, when I was a boy growing up, things were a lot different on the farm everything was horse drawn, we didn't have tractors. The mowing machines were McCormick Deering or John Deere coal machines that you had a tongue in them and put 2 horses on them and pull it. Cut a field pretty much by gravity, and the wheels made all the gearing work and could make the sickle bar move back and forth and cut the grass. I remember my first experience as a little boy with that was going out in the field and seeing my dad or one of his hired men get on the machine, let me sit in his lap while he drove the mowing machine around the field. Then after they cut the hay, then we raked it with a dump rake. We tried to dump it into wind rolls, what we called wind rolls, just lines of hay in a row. Then after they did that, men went along physically with a pitchfork and shocked it, because you needed it shocked.

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Karen: Were those all hired men, or were they neighbors?

Wendell: Hired men. My great uncle would work right with them and my uncle, my dad too. I'll have to go back to that. He had a hard time supporting the family with just a few cows that the great uncles let him run. He got a job on the narrow gauge railroad here. He worked on the railroad out there too. In later years, when he got a chance to retire, he did, he took it over. Then he had the heart attack and died, so my wife and I then had to do it.

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We had a different way of putting up hay too, stacking it. They put it on wagons. We had 2 wagons. There would be 2 men out in the field with pitchforks, would fill the wagon. The wagon would go in the stack yard, and we would stack the hay on the front of the wagon, then someone in the back of the wagon and someone in the center. We used a harpoon fork, and it was on the end of a cable. We had 2 A-framed poles, about as big as telephone poles and the cable run between, and there was a guy wired off them, keeping them steady, and you'd put the harpoon fork in the hay in the center, take the center bales out first. Then, load up the trips, and that will keep the hay on the fork, the harpoon fork. It was about 3 feet, 3 or 4 feet long, and then about 24 or 5 inches wide and had these little tongs that would keep it from falling. It would drip the hay up, and it dripped when you got to the top of that cable there, and go out over the stack, and then you'd put a rope, and it would pull those levers loose, and then the hay would drop onto the stack. My great uncle, Bailey, was the one who usually stacked the hay.

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Karen: Was that common to use something like that, or were you the only family that did?

Wendell: I never saw anybody else do that. Later, we changed and got, we used buck rakes, and used the buck rake and run in with a teeth. It had forks on it, and it would bring in a load and then put it on an over-shot stacker, and it had teeth too like that. Then you took the horse and had some cables there to pull that up and then dumped it. Then the guy on the stack would go spread it out. They weren't as big as those A-frame poles that we used to have. They made some huge stacks with those.

Karen: How tall do you think those stacks were?

Wendell: 30, 30 feet. 30, maybe even 40 feet tall. They were up to the top of the wire. Made some beautiful stacks and the hay kept very good in them too. The top 2 feet might run, or you lose whatever, but the rest of the stack was good if you put it in good. If you got it too wet, it wasn't any good.

Karen: Right, did you then ...

Wendell: You had to make sure it was dry.

Karen: Did you then pitchfork it onto wagons to feed it to the cattle?

Wendell: Yeah, then feed it to the cattle by forking it onto a hay rack. Then we just put it on, generally speaking. We didn't put it in 3 compartments like we did for the harpoon fork.

Karen: How many hired men did you have usually? Or did it differ with seasons?

Wendell: It kind of differed a bit with seasons. My great uncles always had, number one, they always had a cook because they never got married. They hired a cook. She stayed in the house, cooked, and sometimes she had a family too that moved up there too.

Karen: Which house did they live in?

Wendell: They lived in the old 2-story house.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: The old one down there. That's where they lived. The bottom of that old house, there's a natural bedroom, I guess, and that's where the kids were born, the Hutchinson boys. Well, Harold was

born there and Joseph Mills, like I said, Bailey and the other one were not born in ... We generally would say there was always an extra hired man, one or two, maybe during the haying season, they usually hired about 5 men. They had 2 men pitching it on the wagon, 2 men in the wagon, a man on the stack, and a stacker boy that pulled the loads up. We had one man pull the loads up.

Karen: Were those local men or were they migrant hay ...

Wendell: Usually they were. Usually they were local.

Karen: Okay.

Wendell: They were kids from Salida, maybe. A lot of them would come out.
[00:39:00] They didn't make much, maybe 50 cents a day, sometimes a dollar a day. They weren't paid very well. If you hired 6 or 7 of them, you know. If you hired 5 or 6 men, you'd pay them a dollar a day, it'd cost you 5 or 6 bucks a day.

Karen: During the Depression, that was a lot of money.

Wendell: Yeah, it was a lot of money. It was.

Karen: Okay. Everything was done by horse. When did you get your first tractor or motorized equipment to help you with the ranching?

Wendell: Got the first tractor, it was a John Deere model B tractor, and we bought it in 1941. 1941, and I remember it was hand cranked, John Deere, and if you did get everything just right, it started easy. If you didn't get things right, you had to cuss and cuss until it would start.

Karen: Okay.

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Wendell: That was our first tractor. We put a mower on the back of it, the old horse drawn mower that we had before. We had a mower on the back of it, a number 5 John Deere mower. We didn't cut a lot of hay in the day.

Karen: Did you have ... You didn't have as many people helping you then during haying?

Wendell: No, we didn't have as many people then. I remember in 1941, I was old enough to do a lot of work myself, and then there was my father and my 2 great uncles. They got kind of incapacitated. The one great uncle, Uncle Art, never done anything but irrigate. He always irrigated. Bailey was the one that rolled up in the hills after

the cows. My father also helped him.

[00:41:00] My father later had heart trouble and he couldn't go as far as Marshall Pass very well. He got that job on the railroad going over Marshall Pass. He passed out a time or 2 in that old snow shed up there. The snow shed was kind of bad, smoking a thing or 2. It wasn't very well ventilated and his heart was bad. I didn't really realize that, but it finally killed him in 1941. I mean 1949. He was only 51 years of age when he died. When he died, my mother kind of took over, and I bought her and my brothers out after I came back from Gunnison.

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Karen: Did your mother do a lot of the ranch work?

Wendell: Well, not much. She cooked, mostly. She cooked for the hired hand. My mother was not one to be out there much. Some of the things my brother and I had to do. We had to always go up to the wood pile with my great uncle, had great piles of wood for the winter. Everything in the old house was wood stoves and we'd go back in pinon, haul it in and they'd saw blocks of wood off with one of those circular saws on a belt. Before that, they just sawed it with 2 men on a handsaw. Then later, they had an old machine that had a belt, and it would run the belt on the saw. The saw was a big circular saw, and it had a platform you could move and push the log into the saw.

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Karen: How was the saw powered?

Wendell: It's powered by a belt. The belt was probably 30 feet long. Of course, we had to double that. It went from this old, stationary machine and ran this other saw. There was a place on the mantle that had, if you put the belt over it, then it would go out to this old machine. Later we could use a tractor and do the same thing, which we did. In those early times, they didn't have a tractor. It was gasoline-powered engine, you might say, stationary engine.

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Karen: Okay. Okay. What type of cattle have you had? Have you maintained the same type of cattle all through the history of the Hutchinson ranch, or has it been different?

Wendell: It's been different. Some of the very first cattle that was here even before my time, some of them were the Mexican type, longhorn. Then later, the shorthorn breed were rather popular. Finally, about ... during the 1980's or 1880's, about 1887, after that big blizzard in Montana, the Hereford cow kind of came into popularity. Then we ran, and later we had got those cows with the short horn on them, cows with Hereford bulls, and we had

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[00:46:00] Hereford bulls. Even when I was a boy, we didn't change to the crossbreeds that we have now. We crossed gelbvieh and saler and red Angus and some black Angus even. We kind of quit the Herefords. The Herefords began to have too much trouble. They had white faces. They had a lot of cancer eye trouble. They were prone to brisket disease, eye of tooth disease, eye of the tooth heart disease, so we kind of quit the brisket, the Hereford cattle, rather. You know, strangely enough, a lot of the Gunnison ranchers still use Herefords, some of them, they just got better bulls and out-crossed a bit too, but a lot of the Gunnison ranchers still prefer the Hereford cow.

Karen: How did you mix your veterinary work and being a rancher?

Wendell: Well, it was pretty tiring at times. The veterinary work paid the ranching bills too. First I decided, I thought, when I come back from Gunnison, I would just ranch. It didn't take me but a year to find out that wasn't going to work. I went into ... first I just used this back porch out here, had an operating table there, and operated on some cats and dogs, spayed a lot of cats and dogs, both. Castrated and neutered too, gave dogs vaccinations. I mixed that in. Then as I got busier with the vet, I usually had a hired man or so that did the other parts, did the work on the ranch. The hired men did that. Even today, because I can't get out there and do it myself, I got a couple hired men too, tending wood, for one, Jimmy, the second one. They're good hands. They understand the business, do a good job for me.

Karen: How many cattle do you have right now?

Wendell: We've got about 118, roughly, I think. From the time when we had 365 head, we dropped down to about 118. During the drought there, we dropped clear down to about 60 head. We got it built back up again. We had, total just today, sold 92 at the sale. We kept some replacement heifers, 15 of them, so we could have the best of them. We've got about 115, 120 cow.

Karen: Okay. Tell me about the history of the White House.

Wendell: Okay. My father and mother were married in 1923, December ... yeah, they were married December the 17th 1923. I guess they knew ... my mother must have gotten with child which would be me , but fairly soon, my dad decided he needed a better house to live in rather than live in the old ranch house which was really the uncles' house anyway, and they had their hired men up there anyway. There wasn't much room. He had Albert Huffman, the carpenter come down, and he built the first 2 rooms on that house. There was a living room and a kitchen, and off the living

room was a nice, roomy closet for coats. Then off of the kitchen was a nice pantry which my mother later put a refrigerator in. Back in those early times, they didn't have a refrigerator. They just had an icebox out in the ditch that's out there to keep some of the stuff cold.

Karen: Was there an icehouse that provided the ice, here in Salida?

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Wendell: Yeah, there was an icehouse in Salida that had tons of ice and sold it to the people down town. They'd order ice and they'd bring a chunk and put it in those old iceboxes. I don't know at my mother ever had an icebox until she got a refrigerator that worked.

Karen: Okay. You had the start of the house, the 2 rooms.

Wendell: Yeah, they started with 2 rooms, and there was kind of a back porch where she did her laundry. In those days she didn't have a washing machine. You just had a couple tubs up there that you would rub the stuff back on a washboard and then put it in the next one and rinse it. Finally, you'd hang it out on a line and let it dry. Later, we did have, I think, a Maytag washing machine. The first she had.

[00:52:00]

Karen: I'm sure she was happy to have it.

Wendell: She was very happy to have it. Then my father decided she's not just going to have one bedroom, so he built on a couple more bedrooms on the west side. He personally built those on, himself. Albert Huffman did a lot of the earlier carpentry work on the first part of the house, but my dad, I remember, I can even remember him throwing the boards. He did all the carpentry work, and made the 2 bedrooms on the west side of the house.

Karen: Did he have any help when he was doing it, or he did it all by himself?

[00:53:00]

Wendell: I think he did pretty much all of it alone. I was just a boy, I couldn't help him much, or didn't anyway. Then he later, he got a job working for the, as well as the railroad, he got a job working with the Farmer's Home Administration, I believe it was called. He had a few extra dollars, so he built on a couple other rooms on the east side of the house, and then put in a bath, built in a bath and another bedroom, my mother later used as her own bedroom.

[00:54:00]

That's way it is pretty much today. The back porch, though, was kind of added on to and made bigger. She put in a dining table out there. Today, they use it pretty much, Kim is living in it now, and

she uses it mostly for laundry and stuff too, again.

Karen: When did it first get plumbing?

Wendell: We first got plumbing in about 1931. We went up through the field, we dug a ditch. A lot of it was dug by hand, out of a spring that come out of the hillside over here. That spring put in lots of pipe, and took the pipe, pipe it down through the field, through the barnyard, and put one spigot up at the old house which they just used, put it by the ditch, and then carried the water into the old house from there. Before that, they would haul the water up from the spring to come down under Highway 50, and that was up in buckets to the house. I remember as a kid bringing those buckets up through there. It was hard going. First, it was uphill, and it was quite a ways too. It was a good block or so away, to haul it up.

[00:55:00]

Karen: Your mother probably cooked on a wood stove?

Wendell: Yes. She cooked on a wood stove. I remember, we had a wood stove. My brother came in, he was going to make things more modern and add a gas stove, and she still wanted to have that old wood stove back.

Karen: When did he try to do it with the gas stove? What year was that?

[00:56:00]

Wendell: Yeah. Well. I'd say about 1975, maybe 1980, and she was doing it with a gas stove, I mean the old wood stove, and my brother came and did some remodeling, and that's when it changed. She never did like the change. The oven didn't work like it should, and she didn't like the heat in the other part of the house either. She preferred wood and coal which she used even though she had arthritis real bad. She'd rather go out to the wood pile and got a pile of wood or coal. She used coal more which was handier.

[00:57:00]

Karen: When did the house change from being heated by wood and coal?

Wendell: About the same time, '31, we put in the running water. I'd say about 1940, '45 perhaps. We started using more wood and coal.

[00:58:00]

Karen: When did you get electricity in the house?

Wendell: That's another thing. It happened also in the early 30's, I think. We run a power lin from the top of the house, there was a hill over there, down through the field to the house. That brought electricity into the house. Today, electricity goes down the

[00:59:00] roadway here, and it connected in some way through that line. There is a pole still up on the hill there, they ran it through. A lot of that went underground, also, so that we didn't have to stumble over the wires. We had electricity in the old house even then. You have to see it sometime, they strung it along on top of the ceiling in all the rooms. They just put insulated knobs in there to put the wire through so they didn't come in direct contact with the wood. It's a wonder the old house hasn't caught a fire, but it hasn't.

Karen: Yeah. Where did the lumber come from to build the White House? Was it from the Salida area?

[01:00:00] Wendell: Yes, it was. It is from the Salida area. I think all that lumber came from Salida Lumber Company, they called it. That was, I think up there in Poncha, there was a guy by the name of Davenport, I think he had some lumber too that he sold. Most of that house was built with lumber from Salida. It was called the Salida Lumber Company. Cut No Slack I think owns the place where Salida was. Cut No Slack may have sold some of that property too.

Karen: Okay. Was it all pine lumber that was used?

Wendell: Yeah. Pine lumber. The floors in it, in my mother's house, actually come out of the old Van Kleek house up here.

Karen: Van Kleek?

[01:01:00] Wendell: Van Kleek, Henry Van Kleek, you see, the original land here had 360 acres, actually 2, 260 acre pieces, 320 acres. And then my uncles bought the Van Kleek property, and that added about 800 acres to the place.

Karen: Okay. The Van Kleek, is that V-A-N-K-L?

Wendell: It's spelled K. Van, V-A-N, a separate word, Kleek, K-L-E-E-K, Van Kleek.

Karen: Okay.

[01:02:00] Wendell: Van Kleek place, Henry Van Kleek. We bought that property. The uncles bought that. The ditch back there kind of went with this. It's called Delmonte Ditch, it was kind of built too by ... Van Kleek was kind of a businessman in Denver. He didn't do much of the physical work, but he kind of financed the property with my great uncles and bought that back land there, what we call our sand patches and big field. That's where we got our irrigation sprinkler system now. They owned all that. Lee Dennison has a little bit of that too, that ditch. It had 7 and 2/10 feet of water in 1881. We

still do have the water right, but we have 5 and 2/10 feet, and then Vic Massey ... usually it was originally decreed to the Dennison's, but she bought the rights and she has it to this day.

Karen: Okay.

[01:03:00]

Wendell: Vicky Massey, you may have heard of her. Her husband just ran for a job ...

Karen: Tom Massey?

Wendell: Yeah, Tom Massey. Man with the political job, representative, I guess, Colorado legislature.

Karen: Right.

Wendell: Yeah. That's right.

Karen: Tell me about the inside of the White House. Was there paneling or wallpaper? What did it look like?

Wendell: It was mostly wallpapered, yes. Our bedroom was kind of plastered. I'd say that originally, a lot of the old houses were just plastered. They put on kind of a wire mesh, and then a carpenter would come in and put plaster on the walls and smooth it out. Later we just put some wallpaper on over that.

[01:04:00]

Karen: Do you remember what the wallpaper looked like?

Wendell: Well, my dad and I decided my mom had went back to Harvard, went back to see her relatives, we were going to surprise her by having a wallpaper man put ...