

Flint Hills Ranching Impact Oral History Project, Phase I  
Partially funded by the Kansas Humanities Council  
Seeley Interview, June 2007, Final

1 **Interview conducted by Bill Smith; Recorded on Marantz Digital Recorder;**  
2 **Transcribed by Bill Smith**

3  
4 [Bill Smith opening comments: I talked with Paul Seeley at this ranch in Greenwood  
5 County, Kansas, a few miles northeast of Eureka. When I arrived, Paul and his son-in-law  
6 were workings some cattle (cows and calves) in the pens outside in the yard – separating  
7 some calves to be taken for vaccination. By the time they got done, he hadn't eaten lunch  
8 yet, so we were just talking, when I realized our conversation should be part of the  
9 interview. I turned on the recorder, as he continued to eat.]

10  
11 **Track 2**

12  
13 **Bill:** Ok, we were talking about where the cows came from... where the steers and  
14 heifers came from...

15  
16 **Paul:** Fellow by the name of David Noonan, lives in Burlington, Kansas. He buys these  
17 cattle, locally, from sale barns and from local farmers, ranchers... and winters them and  
18 brings them to us on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April. We'll graze them until the 15<sup>th</sup> of July. He'll sell  
19 'em or feed 'em, ...

20  
21 **Bill:** Do whatever... He takes them to the next step.

22  
23 **Paul:** Yes. Then, the other cattle... they probably have a greater range of where they  
24 came from. They belong to the Spealmans. [the dog jumped on his lap, Paul got him  
25 down] We started grazing their cattle, I don't know, ten years ago, maybe,... and, first  
26 starting out I didn't know they had anything but down at Dalhart. But, they brought us a  
27 lot of cattle out of Dalhart. Those cattle had quite a history. They... A lot of those cattle  
28 originated in Mississippi, Georgia...and they take them out to Dalhart, and but them on  
29 wheat pasture... out there... they bring 'em to us, and put another 200 pound on them;  
30 sell them. Or feed them. And then, I found out later this guy had several brothers. One of  
31 them and his father lived up at Horton, north of Topeka. This is the first year that we have  
32 not had some from the boy from Dalhart's cattle. This year, the people from Horton sent  
33 us all their cattle. They're a little better quality cattle then the boy for Texas sends, 'cause  
34 he was buying southeast cattle.

35  
36 **Bill:** That's interesting. Are they mixed breeds or...?

37  
38 **Paul:** Oh, ya! Everything.

39  
40 **Bill:** I noticed the herds coming out here...just...

41  
42 **Paul:** All colors!

43  
44 **Bill:** All colors, shapes and sizes, and... really strange! But they are mixes of steers and  
45 heifers? ...all end up in the packing plant, mostly?

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46

47 **Paul:** Ya, all of them.

48

49 **Bill:** All of them, eventually...

50

51 **Paul:** The Spealmans – they just brought us steers. The boy from Burlington, he brought  
52 us a package of steers, and the rest of the heifers. He brought 200, roughly, 250 heifers  
53 and 50 steers. And then Spealmans brought us 360...

54

55 **Bill:** You get paid by the head?

56

57 **Paul:** By the head.

58

59 **Bill:** Doesn't matter which... steers or heifers?

60

61 **Paul:** No.

62

63 **Bill:** Do they gain at different weights... different rates?

64

65 **Paul:** Yes. Heifers won't gain quite as much as steers. Then... the cattle...it depends on  
66 how they were handled prior to when we get them... as to how much they gain. The  
67 fleshier they are, the less they gain.

68

69 **Bill:** ... the less they gain. [chuckles] How do they decide where to go? Is it personal  
70 relationships? Are there differences, even in different parts of the prairie land? It is one  
71 the things this project is supposed to help determine...to talk about is... differences  
72 between grazing here in the Flint Hills, or in different parts of the Flint Hills? What's the  
73 difference between here and NOT in the Flint Hills? Why to people up in Horton bring  
74 people down here? ... or from Dalhart up here?

75

76 **Paul:** I think... the availability of pastures...

77

78 **Bill:** Availability has a lot to do with it.

79

80 **Paul:** Ya. Horton, for instance, that's farmin' country. They don't have as much grass.  
81 And Dalhart... Dalhart, it's the same story... just

82

83 **Track 3**

84

85 **Paul:** west of here...they've got a lot grass, but it's different. And then, it depends a lot  
86 on ownership of the pastures. Here, this area was famous for absentee owners. Still is. So,  
87 they rented. Right across the road here, is 320 acres that I rent from a lady lives down in  
88 Corpus Christi, Texas. I've got another 80, up on the north end; the lady is a school  
89 teacher, in Kansas City.

90

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91 **Bill:** And you run some of those same cattle on those pieces?  
92  
93 **Paul:** Yes. Then you develop a relation with your land owner, hopeful, it is good.  
94  
95 **Bill:** Sure! They get some money. You get the use of the land, and some money.  
96  
97 **Paul:** Yes. We all benefit a little from it. They get the most, I think!  
98  
99 **Bill:** The most! (chuckles) Well, the landowner... they have some risk there. They've  
100 either invested a lot of money, or they've got some debt...  
101  
102 **Paul:** But, it's worth a lot of money!  
103  
104 **Bill:** Its worth a lot of money, yes!  
105  
106 **Paul:** Yes. You know what this land is selling for today? It's impossible... It's just...if a  
107 fellow... it's not impossible if the man don't have to borrow any money. But if he has to  
108 borrow money to buy the land, to operate with, it's impossible for him to pay for the land.  
109  
110 **Bill:** And make anything of it. And come out ahead.  
111  
112 **Paul:** Ya. He can't make a living with it. It's kind of sad. One of the reasons, I guess, I  
113 don't know... one of the reasons land is so high... there's so much money among...  
114 everybody... and people wanting SPACE... just wanting space. And then, they want a  
115 place to hunt. They want a place to go on the weekend and look at the pretty scenery.  
116  
117 **Bill:** And there really is enough of that... enough people to buy the land to do that...  
118  
119 **Paul:** YA  
120  
121 **Bill:** ...just to own the land. And then, they look for other things to do with it for the rest  
122 of the year.  
123  
124 **Paul:** Ya  
125  
126 **Bill:** That's incredible.  
127  
128 **Paul:** Now in Texas... there's parts of Texas, right there...[Paul hands Bill a magazine]  
129  
130 **Bill:** Livestock Weekly! [Reading masthead]  
131  
132 **Paul:** It's just full of ads. And one the things they talk about in these ads is... I'm trying  
133 to find it... is hunting! Is hunting available?  
134  
135 **Bill:** ATTENTION HUNTERS!

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136

137 **Paul:** Here's "ranches for sale." You start reading those ads...I'd say over half of them  
138 will mention hunting availability. There's good game... there's turkey... there's  
139 pheasant, there's whatever... deer.

140

141 **Bill:** Deer.

142

143 **Paul:** A lot of deer. But, it's just full of it.

144

145 **Bill:** And they're willing to actually buy the land then just come out and...

146

147 **Paul:** And they'll make more money... some of these guys that own these ranches used  
148 to run cattle on it, have quit running cattle on it, and are just leasing it out to hunters, and  
149 making more money off it.

150

151 **Bill:** Making more money annually.

152

153 **Paul:** ...then they would running cattle on it.

154

155 **Bill:** So they're actually...Then they're...presumably they're doing some wildlife  
156 management, to be sure the hunting is there. Maybe adding a lodge...

157

158 **Paul:** Sure.

159

160 **Bill:** Converting the facilities so people can stay there and hunt.

161

162 **Paul:** Whatever it takes.

163

164 **Bill:** Amazing. [Pause]

165

166 **Paul:** I... running the sale barn, I don't know if you know anything about running sale  
167 barns...

168

169 **Bill:** My dad used to go to them all the time.

170

171 **Track 4**

172

173 **Bill:** I hardly ever went with him. I seemed to have other interests at the time.

174

175 **Paul:** Well, besides dealing with the livestock, the livestock part of it is easy. Dealing  
176 with the people...

177

178 **Bill:** That sounds familiar.

179

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180 **Paul:** The land prices... I know I can get 800 hundred an acre for this. But I could never  
181 pay for it if I had to borrow the money. Could never pay for it. And I think... I'd hate to  
182 price it at a thousand, because I think I could get it.

183  
184 **Bill:** You could get it.

185  
186 **Paul:** I know I could get 800.

187  
188 **Bill:** Ya. How does the easement, the conversation easement we were talking about  
189 earlier, affect the price of land?

190  
191 **Paul:** Well, it would have an affect on it. The closer you get to Eureka, the more effect it  
192 would have. Because it is closer to town; its only four, five miles over to the blacktop  
193 road.

194  
195 **Bill:** Having the easement would reduce what you could get for it?

196  
197 **Paul:** Yes. It could. It depends on your buyer.

198  
199 **Bill:** What their rationale, or motivation is, for buying it?

200  
201 **Paul:** Yes. All the real estate people in town, they're made at me, because...

202  
203 **Bill:** For putting the conservation easement on? It takes the value away?

204  
205 **Paul:** Right.

206  
207 **Bill:** They get a percent of what they sell it for!

208  
209 **Paul:** Yes, and they could sell it to some old boy that could develop it. Cut it up into 40  
210 acres.

211  
212 **Bill:** Yes.

213  
214 **Paul:** 160 acres. We talk about burning... One of the problems with burning, and one of  
215 my favorite stories is about the old boy, he and his wife worked his whole life, and  
216 wanted a place in the country. And, they final found this quarter of section, out in the  
217 hills. They could buy it, and still keep their jobs in Wichita. So, they come out, and build  
218 this modest little home, out here in the hills. Both of them go off to work. Springtime  
219 rolls around. They neighbors burn the pastures. Didn't burn them, maybe, but burned all  
220 around them. She comes home, in the evening, the house is full of smoke. She's calling  
221 the County Commissioners.

222  
223 **Bill:** Oh, absolutely.

224

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225 **Paul:** She wants that stopped.

226

227 **Bill:** Not that the house was burning, but the house was filled with smoke.

228

229 **Paul:** She had left the windows open. It was a nice spring day.

230

231 **Bill:** Oh, my goodness.

232

233 **Paul:** those kinds of people. The other thing those same kinds of people do. They have  
234 this 160 acres; grandpa used to live on the farm and knew all about farming, knew all  
235 about ranching, knew all about it, didn't have to ask anybody about anything. So I've got  
236 five horses, and thirty-five cows and some sheep and goats for the kids... and, pretty  
237 soon, its eat off. It wouldn't burn if you wanted it to burn. Its just eat off. And then the  
238 brush starts. You've got hedge trees, here, and always the brush comes in, the buck brush,  
239 and it's just a mess. And the prairie is gone.

240

241 **Bill:** The prairie is gone. Even though it hasn't been plowed, or anything, because it was  
242 eaten off, too much.

243

244 **Paul:** Right.

245

246 **Bill:** The prairie couldn't be sustained.

247

248 **Paul:** Right. And to get it back. I watched some people try to do that. This road from  
249 Eureka to El Dorado, when you get close to Rosalia and on west there, there's people  
250 doing all kinds of foolish things out there. The cedar trees are growing up.

251

252 **Bill:** Ya, I've wondered on some of those spaces, where there are cedar trees, what can  
253 you do? I know one I drive by, over on highway 75, it looks like they've tried to burn  
254 them, they've tried to do everything. And it hasn't made any effect at all.

255

256 **Paul:** It's tough. You've got to remove them, probably,

257

258 **Tape 5**

259

260 **Paul:** ...mechanically. Then you can burn the trash, maybe. But if the managed it right,  
261 they wouldn't have to do anything. If they'd burn it every other year, or every two or  
262 three years, those little cedar trees are easy to kill. And, a lot of the other bush, the buck  
263 brush, the hedge brush, and that, is easy to kill.

264

265 **Bill:** If you do it every couple of years; it doesn't have to be every year.

266

267 **Paul:** Ya, right. Then, the secret to that... burning is, you've got to have some fuel. You  
268 can't graze it all off...

269

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270 **Bill:** And then expect to burn it. There's got to be grass to burn.

271

272 **Paul:** Ya. [pause] Have you ever been up top the Konza Prairie, up by Manhattan?

273

274 **Bill:** Yes.

275

276 **Paul:** I was on a tour up there, I need to go back, it was real interesting. They've got, I  
277 don't know how big the ranch is, but it is good size. There are sixty some plots, they've  
278 got it divided into.

279

280 **Bill:** Test plots.

281

282 **Paul:** Yes, test plots. One of the comments this old boy made was that these big oak  
283 trees... that big around [gestures] big old thing... around the bottom. We was talking  
284 about the prairie, and he says this used to be prairie and there weren't any trees around  
285 here. And I says, gosh sakes, those trees... He said, yes, we've figured, some of those  
286 trees were about a hundred years old.

287

288 **Bill:** Two, three foot diameter?

289

290 **Paul:** Ya. Ya. He said they weren't here when the Indians had it.

291

292 **Bill:** I've wondered about that.

293

294 **Paul:** Then, I've heard these stories just recently about the buffalo. Old Zebulon Pike, the  
295 guy they named Pike's Peak after...he was up just north of here...

296

297 **Bill:** He came right through, pretty close, didn't he? Is that marked in any way?

298

299 **Paul:** I don't know.

300

301 **Bill:** I was just reading about that, the other day, and wondering if that is another trail we  
302 ought to be looking at.

303

304 **Paul:** I don't know, but the comments he wrote about, he saw these millions of buffalos.  
305 The hills were just covered with buffaloes. We've started to think about how the buffalo  
306 grazed the prairie. They were in huge herds. They'd come through, just trample it, eat it  
307 all... and moved on! They moved on, and maybe didn't come back for several years.  
308 See?

309

310 **Bill:** Hadn't even thought of that. It wasn't every year.

311

312 **Paul:** No. It wasn't every year.

313

314 **Bill:** They'd wander a different place, in different year.

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315

316 **Paul:** Ya. They moved on. As a result of that, the prairie recovered! And then, you think  
317 about a tree, a little oak tree out here. Say it got good luck, and got to be six, eight foot  
318 tall. Ten foot tall. But you had that prairie grass up there, four foot tall. And this wildfire  
319 comes through, not in the spring, but about the first of August, fifteenth of August, it's  
320 hot, and dry, and it burnt that little tree up. But, there's nothing there to graze the grass  
321 again, for maybe several years, and the grass came back. That burning, at an irregular  
322 time... The farmer and rancher said, "We're going to burn in the spring." But, nature  
323 said, we might burn it in December, or July or August, whenever. The prairie was  
324 developed different than what we're used to.

325

326 **Bill:** Even trying to be "natural" in the restoration...

327

328 **Paul:** That's right.

329

330 **Bill:** Interesting. Interesting.

331

332 **Paul:** It's fascinating to dream about what might have been...

333

334 **Bill:** Oh, yes, it always is. "What if" stories are really fascinating. And it all comes out

335

336 **Track 6**

337

338 **Bill:** comes out of your imagination based on your experience. [Pause]

339

340 **Paul:** I'll bet you know him. You know Don Coldsmith?

341

342 **Bill:** Oh, ya. I don't know him personally, but I've read all his books.

343

344 **Paul:** Have ya?

345

346 **Bill:** Yes. Two or three times I've been going to go to one of the seminars where he was  
347 at and really spend some time with him, but it hasn't happened yet. But, I certainly know  
348 about him, as I said, I've read all his books.

349

350 **Paul:** We've read most of them. I enjoy him, because he talks about the Indians  
351 burning... cause the fire attracts the buffalo.

352

353 **Bill:** That was their belief.

354

355 **Paul:** Ya.

356

357 **Bill:** I read it before I knew all this stuff. Maybe I need to go back and look at it again.  
358 [Laughter] [Pause] I was fascinated... I was reading something the other day that put a  
359 different way than I've heard before...that was, in the Flint Hills, almost all ranchers are



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360 also farmers, and farmers are also ranchers. But it has been... at least the ranches I've  
361 been on; always have an area in the bottom land where there actually is farming. Would  
362 you say that's true?

363

364 **Paul:** Ya. I've observed, running the sale barn, there are farmers; there are farmers that  
365 own cattle. There are cattle people that farm; then, there are cattle people who don't farm,  
366 like there are farmers who don't have cattle.

367

368 **Bill:** That fascinates me.

369

370 **Paul:** But there's very, very, very few... very few; I'll bet there's not five percent... that  
371 are successful doing both – farming and ranching.

372

373 **Bill:** Really!?

374 **Paul:** The season, in this part of the country, the seasons require their attention; because  
375 it's this season we have to do things with the cattle. Because it's the season, the same  
376 season, we gotta' farm.

377

378 **Bill:** And they come at the same time...

379

380 **Paul:** They come at the same time. And, there's very few, who can manage...

381

382 **Bill:** That can manage their time and resources...

383

384 **Paul:** Everything.

385

386 **Bill:** Everything, around the weather...

387

388 **Paul:** There just aren't very many... good farmer/ranchers...

389

390 **Bill:** That's interesting. They're either one or the other. [Laughter] And, that probably has  
391 as much to do with their interests; what they really enjoy doing...

392

393 **Paul:** That's true.

394

395 **Bill:** You'd rather be out on the tractor; you'd rather be on the horse... or the 4-wheeler.

396

397 **Paul:** I had a neighbor kid over here that sold his pasture land, and bought machinery...  
398 loved machinery...bought that machinery, and went broke. [Laughter] Not everybody  
399 would do that, but...

400

401 **Bill:** He might have gone broke going the other way too! [Laughter] Who's to know? I  
402 grew up on what was called a general farm, where we had some livestock, some cattle;  
403 Dad raised mostly hogs, he raised a lot of corn, some beans, some oats. But, most of the  
404 time, he grew the corn, to feed the hogs, to convert to money. That's kind of what I grew

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405 up with. Like you said, he really never had very many cattle. He always had milk cows,  
406 in the early days. And, he had, maybe, 20, 30, 40 Herefords for beef. But, in the end, he  
407 got rid of most of the livestock and went almost entirely to row crops. So, my  
408 involvement with cattle was when I was very young, mostly through high school. So I've  
409 been kind of

410

411

**Track 7**

412

413 **Bill:** fascinated, out here, watching. Tell me the cycle, in a year, with cattle. You said it's  
414 seasonal. Because, I've heard Josh Hoy and his wife ... He's supposed to be the chairman  
415 of this committee, and he can only be there on certain days, because I've got to be out  
416 with the cattle. [Laughter] It's kind of funny. One side of him wants to do this... but if  
417 the cattle need him, he's there... somewhere else. There's a difference between just  
418 grazing cattle and the cow calf operation, like you have here? Are these the only two  
419 alternatives or are there those who do otherwise? I'm asking you three questions...

420

421 **Paul:** In the Flint Hills, those are probably the two alternatives, unless... there are some  
422 farmers that will have some crops... and they will winter some cattle. In other words,  
423 they'll buy cattle, and put them on some cool season grasses, like I have here. They can  
424 buy cattle in the fall, and graze them awhile on the cool season grasses. Or, if they are  
425 farming crops like Milo or corn, they'll have some corn stalks, or something like that,  
426 that they can use with their cows, or cattle.

427

428 **Bill:** Where do the hay bales come in? We see all these big hay bales around. When are  
429 they used, or not used.

430

431 **Paul:** They're generally used in the wintertime.

432

433 **Bill:** To get through the winter...

434

435 **Paul:** Uh-huh. And, to me, it's a very costly... because of the machinery required. I let  
436 the neighbors bale my hay, a little bit of hay here, on a share basis. The reason that I  
437 maintain these is mainly just for cool season grasses. And, in the early spring, for  
438 instance, these heifers, we worked here that had the calves [earlier, before the interview  
439 got started] calved right out here, north of the house, in this brome field. That happened  
440 in March... February, March.

441

442 **Bill:** Is the brome a cool period grass?

443

444 **Paul:** Uh-huh. Then, there is another way to use it; and it's the way I did for several years  
445 is ... I wanted some cattle to graze native grass. But, I didn't want to buy them all at  
446 once. I wanted to spend my time, over at the sale barn, picking up what I thought were  
447 bargains. So, I'd buy a few, and bring them over and put them out on this grass, to get  
448 them started, and then put them out on the prairie. So, it was green grass in March; even  
449 some green in February, March...

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450

451 **Bill:** Where the prairie grass isn't...

452

453 **Paul:** Right. It's beneficial to a cattle operation. It's pretty near like a tonic. You don't  
454 have to fill up on it, but just a little green...

455

456 **Bill:** Just a little bit. [Laughter] Rather than feeding the hay.

457

458 **Paul:** Ya. The hay is utilized mostly by the cow men; the people that have cow herds.

459

460 **Bill:** So someone else... the farmers are growing the hay... and selling the bales to the  
461 cow people... cattle people.

462

463 **Paul:** Unless they put up their own hay... put up prairie hay, you know.

464

465 **Bill:** They do that later in the season, then?

466

467 **Paul:** Well, no, it ought to be...

468

469 **Bill:** In my experience, you did hayin' in May, June and July... first, second, and third  
470 cuttin'...

471

472 **Paul:** Well, that's alfalfa you're talking...

473

474 **Bill:** That's alfalfa! Different land.

475

476 **Paul:** When its brome and fescue we've got here, it's...

477

478 **Track 8**

479

480 **Paul:** Mow it in June, first part of June. Prairie grass, you mow it the first two weeks of  
481 July. The reason for both, really, is, after you get the hay off, is to give the grass a chance  
482 to come back. The physiology, I guess that is the word, of the plant, grass, and a lot trees,  
483 is that it stores in the wintertime. It stores in its roots. In the spring, it explodes. It grows.  
484 About the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, or sometime in that area, it changes. It starts putting the supply  
485 back into the roots. So, if you cut a tree down, in late July or August, you have damaged  
486 it; because it doesn't have the leaf to manufacture the food, to go back into the roots. And  
487 the same way with grass; after you graze that grass off, and you don't give it enough  
488 chance to develop that leaf, after you've grazed it to store energy in the roots, then you've  
489 weakened it.

490

491 **Bill:** So that is why you get the cattle off by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

492

493 **Paul:** Right!

494

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495 **Bill:** So that it has the rest of the season to put the nutrients back into the roots.  
496  
497 **Paul:** Right.  
498  
499 **Bill:** It seems like an awfully long time.  
500  
501 **Paul:** Ya! 75 percent of the gain on grazing cattle from July 15<sup>th</sup> [he meant to say April  
502 15<sup>th</sup>] to the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, which we consider a full season, of grazing; 75% of the gain  
503 of the cattle, the weight gain, happens by the 15<sup>th</sup> of July.  
504  
505 **Bill:** So that's when most of it is taking place. Then, move on to something else. Move  
506 the cattle off to someplace else to get their nutrition. [Paul utters agreements] Whatever  
507 the next stage is... Most the cattle that are grazing are yearlings?  
508  
509 **Paul:** Yes, anymore, they are. One the interesting things that we are watching, is this  
510 ethanol business; the high cost of corn for the feed lots... and the economic deal of the  
511 cattle business. We may see more cattle grazed longer... in the Flint Hills... just to get a  
512 bigger animal...  
513  
514 **Bill:** To move them further along...so they don't have to get the grain-fed later... to  
515 finish them off.  
516  
517 **Paul:** Right! Take a little less grain, to do it. So if we do that, if that happens, then we  
518 have to give these cattle more acres; and probably have to keep them on there longer  
519 which I don't like, but we may have to.  
520  
521 **Bill:** But if you spread more cattle over larger acres, it wouldn't cut the grass down, quite  
522 so much.  
523  
524 **Paul:** Right.  
525  
526 **Bill:** What's double stocking?  
527  
528 **Paul:** Well, that's what we are doing. Way back, when I used to manage a ranch, down  
529 near Fall River, Elk City, Kansas, for an oil man out of Wichita, we used to run 2300  
530 cows, we'd graze 1500 steers, and had a little feed lot down there. We could feed about  
531 2000 cattle down there. At that time, that little feed lot was one of the largest feed lots in  
532 Kansas. [Laughter]  
533  
534 **Bill:** Really! When was this?  
535  
536 **Paul:** That was the late '50s, early 60s.  
537  
538 **Bill:** That's changed!  
539

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540 **Paul:** Ya... but I used to lease grass over here at Rosalia

541

542

**Track 9**

543

544 **Paul:** ...and the Dunn Ranch, that just sold here a while back, I used to lease that. The  
545 old man I leased it with was quite a character. He had a rule of thumb: You give a  
546 yearling four acres and you give a two-year old five acres. You give a cow – you run a  
547 hundred cows to a section, so that would be 6.4 acres. Of course, the cows then were  
548 probably 900 to a thousand pounds cows; now they're 1200 to 1400 pound cows.

549

550 **Bill:** Really!?

551

552 **Paul:** The style of cattle has changed. So, if we go back to his stocking rate, we would...  
553 double-stocking then, would give them 2 acres, instead of 4. And that's kind of what we  
554 do here. We give them a lot less acres, but move them off quicker, so it comes back. I'm  
555 not sure that... well, when we started this; we were grazing cattle that came in here at  
556 475... maybe 5, at the most. Now, these cattle are coming in weighing 5 and a half to 6  
557 hundred pounds.

558

559 **Bill:** Larger!

560

561 **Paul:** Larger. So we are going to have to give our cattle a few more acres, than what we  
562 originally thought. So, that's what double-stocking is. One of the sad things about some  
563 of these people who double-stock is... and I get accused of this, but I don't do it... you  
564 charge me for the pasture season, and I take my cattle off, and you restock it... you bring  
565 some more cattle in. We don't. We don't do that. We try to... now, we use these cows...  
566 we come back on the grass with these cows, where we've grazed these yearlings. But we  
567 do that after a hard freeze. So the grass has quit growing.

568

569 **Bill:** So you don't do it until the fall.

570

571 **Paul:** Right! ... 'til the grass quits growing. Then, we'll come in and supplement the  
572 cows with protein supplement.

573

574 **Bill:** They're not going to be eating as much grass.

575

576 **Paul:** Well, they're not eating growing grass. It's quit growing. It's stored its supply in its  
577 roots. It's dormant, for the winter.

578

579 **Bill:** It's just standing there. You can feed a little bit.

580

581 **Paul:** You can harvest that. You can eat it all. The bad thing about eating it all is the lack  
582 of mulch for the rains. That's one of the disadvantages of burning too early. I had a  
583 dramatic experience when I was on the ranch at Fall River. Neighbors eat their pastures  
584 off, just slick; and I had pasture right next to it. We had a lot of mulch of our grass. Came

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585 one of these two inch showers... hard rains... These old kids ponds filled up; my pond  
586 never filled.

587

588 **Bill:** You were holding the water. Interesting.

589

590 **Paul:** Right! Learned that real early in my career! [Laughter]

591

592 **Bill:** Watch, observe, and learn.

593

594 **Paul:** Yes.

595

596 **Bill:** What is backgrounding?

597

598 **Paul:** Ok. You take these calves here; you wean them in October, probably... and sell  
599 them to somebody. They want to take those calves and do something else with them.

600 They want to put them on some stock fields, or put them on wheat pasture...

601

602 **Track 10**

603

604 **Paul:** ...put them in the feed lot, maybe. These calves are very sensitive to being pulled  
605 away from the mothers, and its upsetting to them, like it would be to a child. They have  
606 to learn to eat and get along with the rest of their herd. And, they have a lot of sicknesses;  
607 that is one of the reasons we vaccinate. Before we wean these calves, we'll re-vaccinate  
608 them, about a month before we wean them.

609

610 **Bill:** So you're not weaning these you had here today. You were just pulling them out to  
611 be vaccinated. Then you'll put them right back in with their mothers.

612

613 **Paul:** Right. The vaccine they're getting now creates a little bit of immunity.

614

615 **Bill:** Is this the first time you've vaccinated them?

616

617 **Paul:** Yes.

618

619 **Bill:** And they're what, three or four months old now?

620

621 **Paul:** Born in March. So, about September, about the first of September, we'll get them  
622 in, again, and we'll revaccinate them, again. Then, when we wean 'em, they've got a  
623 tremendous amount of immunity built up to handle the stress of the weaning, and all the  
624 other diseases. Not everybody does that. So the guy buying these calves to put on his  
625 wheat pasture or to graze his stock field or to put them in the field lot, he will background  
626 them, in other words... or have somebody do it. And they have these backgrounding lots  
627 where guys take cattle in and do that. And you always have some sickness in these  
628 calves...

629

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630 **Bill:** What are they doing when they are backgrounding?

631

632 **Paul:** Well, they're teaching them to eat; they're giving them probably a medicated feed

633 ...

634

635 **Bill:** This is whether or not they've had the second vaccinations?

636

637 **Paul:** Yes, regardless!

638

639 **Bill:** This is a normal process that goes on every cycle. What do you call those calves in  
640 October, when they've just been weaned? They're not yearlings yet, until the next  
641 spring?

642

643 **Paul:** Ya, probably, and we just call them calves.

644

645 **Bill:** You just call them calves.

646

647 **Paul:** Some of them will brand them; some of them will do all kinds of things to them ...

648

649 **Bill:** And that goes through the fall and into the winter? Then, some of them will come  
650 back out on the prairie as yearlings to graze?

651

652 **Paul:** [utters agreement] Some of them will go on the feed lot. Depending on how they  
653 well they are taken care of during the winter time. If they grow real fast, put on a lot of  
654 flesh, they might just go right to the feed lot. If they are thin, at the end of winter, they  
655 will probably come on the grass.

656

657 **Bill:** Each different cattleman will approach it differently...

658

659 **Paul:** That's right. It depends on their feed supply, what they want to do...

660

661 **Bill:** How they want to allocate their costs – how they think they can get the maximum  
662 gain, over a particular period of time. [Paul utters agreement] So, that is why you see so  
663 many different combinations.

664

665 **Paul:** There's another aspect to it, its timing. It used to be important. I don't think it's as  
666 important as it used to be. A guy says, I like that October fat market, so these particular  
667 cattle are weighing 400 pounds now, what do I do to have them fat, ready to kill, in  
668 October? What do I have available? What do I have to do to hit that market? Somebody  
669 else might like the December market. Or, his feed supply, his...

670

671 **Track 11**

672

673 **Paul:** ...help his ability as a farmer or rancher... Some of the successful farmer/ranchers  
674 will say I don't have the help, now, to do this. So I want to do it at the right time.