

THIS is Larry Sprunk and the following is an interview that I had with Mr. Earl Henderson of Watford City. The interview is held at the Good Shepard Nursing Home in Watford City, Thursday, November 13, 1975, and it began at approximately ten o'clock in the morning. Although Mr. Henderson was interviewed in Watford City in McKenzie County, the recollections that he offers are mostly from Dunn County ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> consequently, this tape is filed with Dunn County or is listed for Dunn County and it is complete on this cassette.

LARRY: Now, Earl, you didn't come up from Texas did you?

EARL: No, we were Minnesota people.

LARRY: Were you born in Minnesota?

EARL: Ya, down north here Dundash, Minnesota.

LARRY: That was a few years ago wasn't it?

EARL: Well, I don't know exactly whether it's 81 or 82.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: I kind o' lost track o' my own age--kind of you know? I'm two again and, by golly, I'm in the 80's. Ya, that's a few years ago.

LARRY: Why did your family come to North Dakota, Earl?

EARL: Why?

LARRY: Ya.

EARL: Well, I can't tell you that ~~because~~ <sup>because</sup> I was too young to know just what they was doin' in Minnesota, you know? I think it just wasn't big enough for my father, that is, what he had to work on. He was kind of a lumberjack and hauled lumber from the woods into town and one thing and another and he brought--I don't know how many--a dozen and a half<sup>9</sup> milk cows. He milked there, too, so I know he brought milk cows along. He milked cows in North Dakota for two, three years.

LARRY: When your family came to North Dakota, Earl, did you come right here to the Badlands area?

EARL: No, we settled down at Stark County at six, eight miles south of Richardton is where our father's homestead was.

LARRY: And that was in the 80's?

EARL: That was in the real early early 80's. I think it was '83, I think, if I remember right. '83 or '84 or about that or what it was.

LARRY: That was pretty wide open country, too, wasn't it?

EARL: All early homesteads that was there and then, of course, a few years later the foreigners come in there and took everything. It was all settled.

LARRY: Is that where your dad got started in the cattle business Earl?

EARL: Well, he started in Minnesota. He shipped one or two cars of cows and heifers up from Minnesota there where he homesteaded. I think he had two stock cars. He had four or five Herefords besides the cattle and, I believe, he used two cars.

LARRY: Before I forget to ask, Earl, what was your dad's name?

EARL: Isaac Henderson.

LARRY: And how many were there in your family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

EARL: I had three brothers and two sisters.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: Ya, and they're all gone.

LARRY:

█: Were you the youngest in the family then?

EARL: Ya, I was the youngest.

LARRY: Earl, were there any ranchers of any size down there in Stark County where your dad homesteaded?

EARL: Well, I don't you would call 'em big ranchers. At that time there was some ranchers there ahead of my father that had cattle and there were stockmen; but I don't think there was any big ranchers right in that neighborhood, but there was ranchers in North Dakota of big concern but not in that territory.

LARRY: Earl, a lady south of Dickinson told me that there used to be a Styles Cattle Company south of Dickinson that had cattle. Do you remember that?

EARL: What do you call 'em?

LARRY: Styles?

EARL: Styles<sup>2</sup>no. They put them names on, you know, since the early days. They're kind o' gettin'--oh--up-to-date on their names.

LARRY: Did your dad get away from the dairy business or from milking cows and more into beef cattle then?

EARL: Well, yes, he did; but he still milked cows as long as I can remember, but he did buy beef cattle. He had Durum(?)--Beef Durum *Rolands* (?) I don't think he had any Herefords at this time. My brothers bought the Herefords later on. I know he had some Durum.

LARRY: Where was his homestead from Dickinson? How many miles south of Dickinson was it?

EARL: Oh, I tell ya. The closest town it was to was Richardton. It was about seven miles straight south nearly from Richardton.

LARRY: Oh, I see.

EARL: And we called it 35 miles to Dickinson.

LARRY: Oh? And when the homesteaders came in and started taking up all that land, Earl, were they mostly German or were they French?

EARL: Oh, they were everything--Fudge and nationality. See, there at that time every half o' section was railroad land. See, they could only homestead on every other section and then, o' course, they had to buy additional that they.... So it was kind o' slow settlin' up. There were people comin' in there that didn't have money, you know? They had to wait until they could buy that railroad land with very little down payment and pay for it then and so gradually it was picked up.

LARRY: Have you been a cowboy all your life Earl? Did you start pretty young.

EARL: Yes, I started as young as I could start ridin' a horse--ya, ya.

LARRY: So you worked for your dad?

EARL: Ya, ya, I worked with him for as long as he was alive.

LARRY: Did he move again, Earl, or did he stay over over there south of Richardton?

EARL: Ya, we stayed there. He stayed there and when we left that ranch south of there, why, we went to that Beulah country. Well, after we went to that Beulah country, why, my father wasn't very little. I and my brother was there at Beulah and then from Beulah we came up into McKenzie.

LARRY: Which brother were you working with Earl?

EARL: Ashley. He was the next brother older than I was and he passed away too. I had two brothers, Gideon and Ashley, and they're both gone.

LARRY: What kind of a homestead did your dad build south of Richardton? Was it a log cabin or a frame house?

EARL: A framehouse. He brought lumber in to build a house from Minnesota in a car--ya. Ya, he build a two story. O-o-h, I sspose, it had three bedrooms upstairs and a kitchen and a dining room and a bedroom downstairs.

LARRY: Was your dad lucky enough <sup>,Earl,</sup> to get on a crik or a spring or did he have good water? [REDACTED]

EARL: Well, there wasn't too much about the water proposition. We dug a lot o' wells around there, but we did have one well that was pretty decent water. There was not too much of it, but there was a crik that run through that held water nearly the year around and then we had only about three quarter of a mile to a nice spring that we took our stock to water there in the wintertime. Ya, Bulton Spring(?)--little fish and minnied in it the year around.

LARRY: Did the homesteaders put a squeeze on your dad or was he able to pick up a little more land before they came in?

EARL: Oh, we bought a railroad quarter that was joinin' us. It was pretty good land and he bought that before anybody else did--ya.

LARRY: Did your dad get you started in ranching, Earl, or did he like farming?

EARL: Oh, my dad was a stockman as well as a farmer as far as that goes. He always had stock o' some kind.

LARRY: Now when did you and Ashley go up to Beulah then?

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EARL: When did we go up to Beulah?

LARRY: Ya, did you start a ranch there?

EARL: No, that Beulah place was practically started when my father had that stock and Ashley and I operated it, but my father owned it. We had a few head o' our own that he had given us; but, otherwise, he owned it all. No, when we came south, we didn't own much of anything until we came here to McKenzie County.

LARRY: Was the place up there by Beulah a winter camp or just grazing or did your dad have a headquarters up there too?

EARL: Well, we operated there the year around.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: Ya, pretty much the year around.

LARRY: How old were you then, Earl, when you came to the Badlands to McKenzie County?

EARL: I think I was twenty-one that year we moved up here. I think I was twenty-one that year.

LARRY: And did you and your brother buy out a rancher then or did you....

EARL: No, we just located a place and build up--ya.

LARRY: Where was your homeplace from the nearest post office or town?

EARL: In McKenzie County?

LARRY: Ya.

EARL: Well, our nearest post office at that time was Oakdale.

LARRY: Oh, you were down between Killdeer and Grasse Butte then?

EARL: No, we was nearly straight north from Davidson.

LARRY: Oh.

*Start*  
EARL: <sup>Dickinson</sup>~~Davidson~~ was our hometown in a way, but Oakdale is where we got the mail and that was between us and <sup>Dickinson</sup>~~Davidson~~, you see. Oakdale was about 20 miles south of our location.

LARRY: Now, Earl, when you came here, there were a lot of ranchers that had been in operation before you came. How were they? Were they pretty friendly to new ranchers moving in?

EARL: Oh, yes! Yes, we didn't have any trouble with them--no trouble. Oh, once in awhile there would be something would happen that would cause a little hard feelings but nothing... *to amount to much.*

LARRY: Now did you and your brother buy land, Earl, or did you just run your cattle in the Badlands? *omit.*

EARL: Just run 'em in the Badlands. We homesteaded but didn't buy any land at ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> present time. Nobody owned land then, you know. They begin to buy it later on.

LARRY: So you got a homestead quarter and your brother got a homestead quarter?

EARL: Ya. *omit.*

LARRY: And the rest was just open range?

EARL: Ya, the rest <sup>it</sup> was open range and, of course, after we came here, why, we homesteaded here when we came to the county, but then our open range was mostly all on the reservation. We'd lease on the reservation.

LARRY: Oh, I see. Was that where <sup>you would</sup> keep your stock winter <sup>and</sup> summer? *omit*

EARL: No, <sup>it</sup> In the wintertime we had to bring 'em back out to the homeplace, you know.

LARRY: Would you put up hay ~~then during the~~ summer at the homeplace there? *omit*

EARL: Ya, ya, and <sup>S</sup>ometimes we'd put up hay on the reservation and we could make feedcamp down there and feed it if we wanted to--ya. *Stop*

LARRY: Who were some of your rancher neighbors around where your brother and you had your headquarters north of Dickinson? Who were some of the other ranchers around there?

EARL: "Old Man" Christenson's dad was our nearest neighbors on the reservation and then Ben Manning was another one and then the Kiel boys was foremans. They were all ranchers in the neighborhood.

LARRY: Was that Frank Kiel then?

EARL: Frank Kiel and his brother, Jack, and he had two sisters that was there.

LARRY: And Christenson was an old-timer, too, wasn't he?

EARL: Christenson himself was an old-timer. Course, he had a family and three boys and he had a daughter.

LARRY: Earl, was he the fella that had the boys that were pretty good bronc busters--Christenson?

EARL: N-o-o.

LARRY: Or was that you?

EARL: W-w-ell.

LARRY: Let me tell you a story that Gordon Olson told me. He told me that in 1917 or '18 the Army wanted to get a bunch of horses for the cavalry and so they asked ranchers in western North Dakota to bring in good horses for the cavalry and Gordon Olson told me that this one old-timer--I thought he said Christenson--brought in a bunch of horses and this guy from the Army asked him whether these horses could be rode. And this guy said, "Sure, my boys ride 'em all the time."

EARL: No, that wasn't neither one of us.

LARRY: Who was it?

EARL: I'd say I just can't tell ya. I remember that, but that is true. They did ask if they could be rode. We sold horses to 'em , but most of 'em that we sold to 'em were ones that we had rode and broke more or less. They did want 'em rode a time or two--yes. I just don't recall that person there that you got in mind. Gordon Olson wasn't too old a boy that time either, you know?

LARRY: That's a true story though?

EARL: Yes, that's true, but I can't quite recall him by name. I think his name was Christenson though, but then there was a Tom Christenson and different Christensons around through the country, you know, so I'm kind o' off on that. That was none of my affair.

LARRY: Well, the Christenson that lived close to you and your brother, what was his name, Earl?

EARL: Hans.

LARRY: Hans Christenson.

EARL: A little Dane, bowlegged and an awful good fellow.

LARRY: Was he a Texan?

EARL: No, I don't think so. I think he come direct from Denmark, him and his wife, and Dickinson was their homeplace. They had a place there in Dickinson and he ranched around Dickinson closer for a good many years 'til he eventually ventured down farther and farther. Ya, old Hans Christenson-- I thought most of Hans.

LARRY: Earl, had you seen the western part of North Dakota or had you been into the Badlands when you were living with your dad south of Richardton or with your brother up by Beulah? Had you ever been over in this country?

EARL: No, no.

*start* LARRY: When you saw this country for the first time, how did you like it?

EARL: Well, I ~~liked~~ <sup>liked</sup> it fine. Course, I was young and tough then; <sup>[laughs]</sup> everything looked rosy. Yes, oh, I put a lot o' hard knocks in--ya.

LARRY: Earl, when I drive into the roughest part of the Badlands ~~and look into the Badlands,~~ it seems to me that it would be hard to drive cattle through the Badlands or even to round 'em up because it's so rough. Was it?

EARL: Oh, no, there was always coulees leading one to the other that we could always manage to get cattle through.

LARRY: *omit* Oh?

EARL: Oh, ya! No, we never considered that any kind of a hard job a' tall because we had trails that we could follow, you know, that the cattle could. *get through.*

LARRY: But would you ever miss any? *omit* when you.... It would seem to me that you would have to look in every....

EARL: Oh, yes! Oh, yes, oh, yes, you'd miss 'em dead and alive. <sup>[laughs]</sup> That was in the game. If you didn't get 'em alive and drive 'em out, why, you'd go back and look for 'em, why, you might find 'em dead or you might find 'em where'd they gone out of the Badlands and was out in the open--oh, yes.



And at that time, you know, we had the other people that moved 'em out by force. that we never found. [laughs]

LARRY: Earl, last night I was talking to Jim Connolly from over by Dunn Center and he told me he could remember when the Stockmens Association was formed.

EARL: Yes, yes, that's--I know Jim well. Where's Jim now located? At the home ranch?

LARRY: Ya, north of Dunn Center.

*Omit*

EARL: They had a place, you know, and had different camps. Yes, I know Jim and his father and his brother.

LARRY: Were you there, Earl, when that Stockmens Association was formed?

EARL: No, I wasn't at the meeting at all, but we joined 'em later on.

LARRY: Did you and your brother keep working together then?

EARL: Yes, we stayed together for a good many years after my father passed away; but after we both got married, why, we decided we'd separate so we dissolved partnership. Then our homesteads and our work was all--we still worked together. [REDACTED] When the land opened up for homesteaders, we took two homesteads there adjoining one another so our two homeplaces at that time was only about a half a mile apart so we was close together all the time.

LARRY: What was your wife's maiden name Earl?

EARL: Well, my wife's maiden name was Olga Isaacson from Wisconsin.

LARRY: How did you happen to meet her?

*Omit*

EARL: She came out here as a homesteader.

LARRY: Is that right?

EARL: Oh, ya! Ya, her and her sister and a whole flock of 'em from Wisconsin come out and homestead<sup>ed</sup>--ya.

LARRY: So some of those homesteaders were alright, huh?

EARL: Oh, ya, some of 'em got good homesteads and some of 'em were nice people too--oh, yes. Ya, I don't think we ever had any trouble with homesteads.

LARRY: Earl, when the homesteaders started coming, did guys like you and your brother and Christenson and the ranchers in the Badlands think that the government was making a mistake letting homesteaders come in on a quarter section o' land?

*omit*

EARL: Well, I don't know. I don't think that was ever talked over much.

There was once in awhile we got a homesteader on a 160 acres that was a pretty hard case and we knew he would butcher a beef once in awhile <sup>for</sup> from us and one thing and another. He didn't ususally stay too longer. I imagine it got a little warm for him in different ways that wasn't agreeable. <sup>through</sup> He would take the hint and <sup>move</sup> ~~leave~~ away. That's the way it would be. <sup>stop</sup>

LARRY: Were you close to the Ukranian people or were you further east because I understand there were a bunch of Ukranians north of Belfield?

EARL: No, we had no Ukranians in our area no. No, we didn't have any.

LARRY: Your place was almost straight north of Dickinson, huh?

EARL: Yes, straight north of Dickinson. The west side of the reservation line was almost straight north from Dickinson and then, of course, our operation on the reservation was east and north. It ran clear to the big Missouri on the north.

*Start* LARRY: Earl, I want to ask you about some cowboys that I've heard about talking to older folks. Did you ever meet "Turkey Track Bill" or did you know "Turkey Track Bill"?

EARL: I knew "Turkey Track Bill" well.

LARRY: What kind of a fella was he? He's a legend almost.

EARL: *omit* Well, I'll tell ya, I was a pretty small kid when I met "Turkey Track Bill". "Turkey Track Bill" was a wonderful cowboy, you know, until he got to town and he got boozed up is when he got his reputation, otherwise, Bill was a dandy fella.

LARRY: Good cowboy?

*omit* EARL: Good cowboy, good man, nice fellow, stayed at our camp many nights-- yes, yes. Them fellows, you know, would put on a party when they hit the booze.

There really was no discount for <sup>it</sup> because they were prince of men when they were sober, them fellas, and you couldn't blame 'em very much for having as much fun as they could git out of it 'cause it was only a short time that they'd be there.

LARRY: What was his last name Earl? Do you know? *omit*

EARL: No, I don't. No, I don't know and I've never heard it. We had a character here that was worse than "Turkey Track Bill". You know that McCurdy? He went by the name of McCurdy, but it wasn't his original name. I don't know what his original name was. He was a a drifter that come in with a bunch o' horses that some fella brought in here to sell to the farmers and he just got.... Well, I 'spose he was naturally born wild and he got.... They camped around town like Richardton and naturally he'd go to town and get stewed up and raise hell around there and then they'd chase him out o' town and he'd go back to the horse camp and go to work. He finally got to stealin' horses and drivin' 'em to one country and another, you know, and he finally was shot. He was finally killed. He stayed at old man Christensons. I played cards with him across the table--nice fellow, nothin' wrong wit' him. He just took up that kind of a life when he got a drink or two and that was all that was to it.

LARRY: Now, he wasn't any relation, Earl, to the McCurdy that ranched up..

EARL: No, no. That might not o' been *omit* his name as far as I know. He could have just put that on as he come here. He came here as a total stranger with a fella that brought horses from someplace-- I don't know from Wyoming or someplace<sup>?</sup> to sell to the farmers and he came with him. He just got agoin' here and he didn't go away. He just stayed here and raised the devil.

LARRY: Was he shot by a sheriff?

EARL: No, well, I can't tell ya *omit* that just.... A posse of men went out and the sheriff went with him, but who shot him is a question. ~~Bob~~

LARRY: Now, this McCurdy wasn't the same as this McPete? *omit*

EARL: Well, McPete is a man. He used an alias. He went by McPete too--  
Jim McPete.

LARRY: Oh? This is the same fellow? *omit*

EARL: Same fella, ya, ya..

LARRY: And you played cards with him?

EARL: Yes, I played cards with him many o' nights. He stayed at our and  
slept in our home shack--ya.

LARRY: And when you knew him, he was a pretty good fellow?

*omit*  
EARL: Oh, he was a good fella there; but he was raisin' hell someplace  
else, stealin' horses and bringin' 'em in this country or takin' 'em out  
here and takin' 'em someplace else, but we didn't know it at the time. He  
was campin' around--no. No, we didn't know it. *Stop.*

LARRY: Do you know Ben Byrd? *Bird?*

EARL: Ben Byrd, yes.

LARRY: What kind of a fellow was he Earl?

EARL: I couldn't tell ya; I didn't know him very well. I know him when I  
met him and that's all--Ben Byrd, ya. This McPete, I imagine, was a 6 foot  
2 or 3 man and heavy. ~~I would say he was a 200 pound man.~~

LARRY: Pretty tough cookie, huh?

EARL: Yes.

*Start* LARRY: How about Scott Gore? Did you know Scott Gore?

EARL: Yes, I knew Scott Gore. I never heard anything horn blowing about  
Scott, but Scott was so darn powerful that he could--he was a bronco rider.  
That's the reputation Scott had. He had a ranch of his own and tend to his  
own business and he took on a sale of corduroy pants and different clothing  
of that kind. He got the itch in the fall o' the year and he'd go out and  
peddle that goods just to fill time. He was a fella that if he came some-  
place where they was workin' cattle or horses or somethin', he'd go right to  
work like a man and work 'til he got through before he'd even mention buyin'  
anyt'ing.

LARRY: Oh? *omit*

EARL: No, Scott was a good fella.

LARRY: He was kind of a loner, wasn't he?

EARL: Well, I think when they first settled here.... I didn't know him at the first years he was here; but, I believe his father was with him.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: I believe his father was out here at ~~the same~~ <sup>omit</sup> time. I don't know just what the setup is. I've never been even to the graveyard. They have a graveyard up there in the country where he located wherever he's buried.

LARRY: Was he buried with "Poker Jim"?

EARL: Ya, I believe so. I've never been to it. There's been some people from here gone up there just to see it; but I never did, but, I believe, they're buried at the "Poker Jim" cemetary.

LARRY: Was Scott a good rider?

EARL: Yes, a very good rider--oh, yes.

LARRY: Would you say that of the cowboys you've known, Earl, that he was <sup>one of</sup> the best bronc rider that you knew?

EARL: W-w-ell, that's pretty hard for a man to put a line on because ~~there~~ there's a lot o' good riders, you know, that accidentally got thrown off or didn't make connections right. I've never seen it happen; but, I imagine, that Scott has had them accidents, too, 'cause I've never seen a man that rode much that didn't get throwed off in some way or another, you know. If they got on a horse, and the horse bucked with 'em and everything went right, why, he was a good rider, but a lot o' times things don't always go the way they should. The horse may start to quick and catch his leg or foot ~~in the stirrup~~ <sup>in the stirrup</sup>; upset him, walk all over him, ~~kill him~~ and just like that it can happen and a good man at that, you know. If he hadn't o' mounted that horse, he'd o' been saved. I've had the same thing happen. I was ~~consider~~ considered a fairly good rider although, I never rode for exhibition or anything of that kind, but I've had such things happen to me. I've had my foot hung in ~~the~~ the stirrup and the horse would jump too quick and I would fall down and I hit the ground, but I never had it that I stayed in the stirrup. Stop

I and my brother we never....

DAUGHTER: Hi!

EARL: Oh, hello there. Good morning. I can't introduce you 'cause I don't know your name.

LARRY: I'm Larry Sprunk. I work for the North Dakota Oral History Project and I'm talking to Earl about old ranching days.

EARL: She's my daughter.

LARRY: Oh.

EARL: You can see that.

LARRY: Ya, there's a resemblance.

DAUGHTER: How you doin'?

LARRY: Real good!

DAUGHTER: Well, maybe I should just leave you guys alone a little bit.

LARRY: Well, you're sure welcome to.... You might know some things that you could remind Earl to tell me about the old days. I'm just kind o' fishing here.

DAUGHTER: Ya, well, I'd help out if I could, but I don't know just where you're at now so just go ahead.

EARL: No, I'm afraid she got in the circle a little too late.

LARRY: Too late, huh? Did you know Elmer Clark?

EARL: Yes.

LARRY: Was he a good rider, Earl?

EARL: Real good rider. For a little man he was a r-r-eal good rider--yes.

LARRY: Now Scott Gore was a bigger fellow?

EARL: Oh, ya! Scott Gore was a big man. Well, I say a big man. He was not a fat man or anything of that kind. He was just a good big man. I don't know what Scott weighed--175 or 80.

LARRY: But Clarke was a little fellow, huh?

EARL: Clarke was a little fellow. I don't suppose Clarke would weigh over 135 pounds maybe not that.

LARRY: Earl, one of the things I wanted to find out. Where did you ranchers get your cowboys from? Were they homesteaders that would come over and work for the ranchers or were they guys that were left over from the Texas trail drives?

EARL: Well, o' course, there were a few o' 'em that come up from the Texas trail, a few of the early ones, but most of the other ones were local men or young boys that drifted in here from the East and took it up. Now, you take Bill Chandler. He was a Eastern man so was the Patterson boys. They were all Eastern men, but they rode a horse or two that bucked and they got to likin' it and they just got better and better as they went.

LARRY: Now is this the Chandler, Earl, that had the ferry on the Little Missouri?

EARL: Ya, Chandler. He used to ride anything that they could give him.

LARRY: Oh? And he came in from the East?

EARL: Yes.

LARRY: You mentioned that some of the cowboys that were riding when you and your brother started ranching were left over from Texas. Do you remember any of those guys Earl?

EARL: No, I couldn't recall 'em.

LARRY: But "Turkey Track Bill" was one of 'em?

EARL: "Turkey Track Bill" would be one of 'em. They used to headquarters at our place both at the first rancher head and at the farm. They used to stop. I was too young to soak much o' that up, you know.

LARRY: Were there any good Indian cowboys?

EARL: Oh, yes! Yes, good riders among Indians too.

LARRY: Did you know Guy Fox?

EARL: Yes, he worked for me.

LARRY: Oh?

DAUGHTER: For many years.

LARRY: Is that right?

EARL: Ya, I knew Guy and George both. They were fellows--both good men. Both good men--ya.

LARRY: I've been told, Earl, that guy was a pretty good rider?

EARL: Ya, he was a good rider. Ya, he was a r-r-eal good rider and a good man on a horse.

LARRY: Oh?

DAUGHTER: He was a very picturesque rider. He was a pretty rider, you know? Some looked rough and clumsy, but Guy just come up and down just like he belonged.

EARL: Ya, he was a good man.

LARRY: How were the relations with the Indians on the reservation. When you guys would pasture your cattle on the reservation, did the ranchers and the Indians get along pretty good in those days?

EARL: I have never known myself a White man and an Indian to have trouble over a rancher. You know, I don't know what was the reason of it. You know, it's no trouble to kick up trouble between a couple White men, but an Indian didn't seem to take it that way. If a White man was usin' Indian land.... He had his land and he was runnin' cattle on it and if he'd give the Indian a beef once in a great while, why, he was a friend of the Indians and the Indian would do anything for him so that--it seems to me--is what kept the Indians good natured. They weren't misused. If they'd o' been misused, I think, we'd o' had lots o' trouble 'cause they could make it if they wanted to.

*Start* LARRY: Earl, were you around for that last wolf? I was told by somebody that there was a wolf on the reservation or on the edge of the reservation.

EARL: I was around alright! I followed him amany a mile.

LARRY: Is that right?

*Om?* EARL: Ya, ya, there was one lone wolf left here for I don't know how many years. Nobody was lucky enough to catch him. They'd run on him and knock him over and he'd get away! People would catch him asleep and shoot at him and miss him! He just seemed to be charmed!



LARRY: Did you ever see him Earl?

EARL: Yes. *Omit*

LARRY: Was he a big one?

EARL: No, not extra big no. I seen his hide after he was got and we all figured he was a cross between a dog and a wolf is why he was so terrible smart.

LARRY: And he was the last one?

EARL: *Omit* Ya, he was the last one *stop*

SIDE TWO

LARRY: Did you know John Lakee?

EARL: Ya.

LARRY: He was a Texan man, huh?

EARL: Ya, I never knew John. I never worked with the man a great deal. I met him at meetings and places like that, but I never knew him. No, John ranched up here on the Little Missouri.

LARRY: <sup>Earl,</sup> one of the things I wonder about. Would those of you who were over in the Killdeer country, south of Killdeer and north of Dickinson and in that area get to see much of the ranchers that were south of ~~Medora~~ ~~Medora~~ Medora, for instance, or those that were up here around Watford City?

EARL: No, we wouldn't see one another too often--no. Might be some ~~4th~~ 4th of July or some special shipment o' some kind o' cattle or something. That'd be the only time. No, there wasn't a great deal that was really visiting, you know, them days.

*Start* LARRY: Where would you and your brother ship your cattle from? Were you shipping from E land west of Dickinson?

EARL: No, we shipped from there a time or two, but most of our cattle ~~from~~ from this country was shipped across from Plaza on the Soo Line. We'd swim that Big Missouri and go over to that little place east of Plaza. There's the railroad station there on the Soo--ya.

LARRY: Is there any reason, Earl, why you would ship from there rather than from Eeland? Was it because your cattle were over there all summer long anyway and then you would take them to Plaza? OMIT

EARL: No, it was a shorter drive for one thing and we had better service from there. That was another thing.

LARRY: You mean for cattle cars and....

EARL: Yes, ya. OMIT

LARRY: What's the trick, Earl, in taking a herd o' cattle across the Missouri? What would you watch for? Was there a place where you crossed all the time?

EARL: Well, I don't know that I could tell ya that, but in certain places that river bends and we tried to put 'em in a place where the water went to the other bank on the other side, you see.

LARRY: So the current would carry them?

OMIT The current would

EARL: carry them pretty much as they swam and put 'em on a landing on the other side. That helped an awful lot, you know. You'd get a bend of the river that was against 'em they would turn back and come back to where they went in, but you get 'em in a place where the current was going across on the other side, then they would swim with the current and walk out on the other side. Now, that was the main thing<sup>is</sup> to get 'em swimmin' where the current was right.

LARRY: Did you ever lose any?

OMIT  
EARL: No, we lost one bull one time swimmin' 35 or 3600 head o' cattle and this one bull just refused to swim and he just floated up.

LARRY: Oh!

OMIT  
EARL: I don't know what was wrong. He wasn't an old bull or crippled of any kind. He just refused to swim and he just skirted off down stream and he drowned o' course. We couldn't catch 'em.

LARRY: But that's the only one that you lost?

OMIT  
EARL: That's the only one I ever seen that acted that way and drowned.

Stop.

LARRY: Earl, I've heard that '86 was a bad winter for Texas cattlemen in North Dakota. <sup>that</sup> They really had their herds cut down.

EARL: '86? They prett'i'near all went out o' business in '86.

LARRY: Did you see any bad winters like that from when you came and were old enough to remember some south of Richardton there with your dad until you and your brother were ranching here north of Dickinson? Did you see any winters that were bad like that?

EARL: Oh, I don't know; I ~~don't~~ don't remember. I don't know just how bad '86 would be.

LARRY: Ya.

EARL: You know, '86 we was in the country and the only thing that would make it tough winter in ~~the~~ '86 for the cowmen would be that there was an awful lot of snow. Now, I don't remember whether '86 was an awful deep snow or not. We wasn't ranchin' at that time. We had a bunch o' Minnesota milk cows; but they were all inside, but there was an awful lot o' cattle died in '86.

LARRY: When you were ranching, how long would you keep a steer before you shipped 'em out? Would they be two or three years old before they were shipped?

EARL: Oh, if a animal was alright, normally, we wouldn't ship 'em before they was three years old.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: Some of 'em we would even carry over 'til they were four, but we aimed to ship at three years. They were usually pretty well growed; but, you know, some of 'em growed more than others before they begin to put on extra flesh. It was the flesh we would look for, the fat, and if a three year old steer was thin and wasn't fat, why, we would <sup>probably</sup> carry ~~them~~ <sup>set</sup> over until he was four. So there was no real date <sup>set</sup> for a steer to be shipped. Some of them steers was naturally raw boned and big, you know, where others was short coupled and put together and they'd be fat, you see, so there'd be a difference there.

LARRY: You mentioned that your dad used ~~Roan Durhams~~ <sup>Roan Durhams</sup> to breed up his beef blood? Did you and your brother start getting beef bulls then to kind o' upgrade the stock?

EARL: Oh, ya, we went out o' the Durums after we went to ranchin', but there's a strain o' Durums that is awful good cattle. There's no doubt about it.

LARRY: What were most of the ranchers in the Badlands and on the edge of the Badlands trying to bring into their herd when you and your brother were ranching up by Beulah and down later north of Dickinson there? Were they after Shorthorn?

EARL: Well, no, most of 'em were Herefords.

LARRY: Herefords.

EARL: A lot of 'em went to the Angus--the black cattle. There were a lot o' black cattle.

LARRY: That early already?

EARL: Huh?

LARRY: That early?

EARL: Yes.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: Yes, ya, there's lots of Angus; they were good cattle too.

LARRY: Is one breed of cattle better for being out on the range than another breed would you say?

EARL: Oh, yes, you wouldn't want to put Gernseys or Jerseys or anything of the milk strand cattle out on a open range. You got t' get the beef stuff.

*Start* LARRY: Earl, what makes a good cow pony? Is a cow pony born or can you train 'em?

EARL: I don't know as I can tell ya. There's been cow ponies, cow horses, of all breeds that I know of, but it's just got t' be something that they take to. We used to say ~~they~~ they had cow sense, you know. It takes two horses with the same breedin'. One of 'em you probably couldn't learn t' follow a herd or a steer or a cow or anything else, Where, another one, <sup>it</sup> might <sup>start t'</sup> follow one, he'd pick up his ears like that and his eyes and he'd keep

track o' the steer just like you would.

LARRY: Ya. Did you ever have any cow horses, cow ponies, that were exceptionally good?

EARL: Oh, ya. Oh, ya, oh, ya, y-y-es. You may get badly fooled. You might pick up a horse that you want to make a cow horse out of and after you ride him a few times and worked with him, why, you find out he's no cow horse at all. He's just a slut horse. You can pick up another one ~~you~~ you won't know what he's goin' to be and he may be one of the best cow horses you ever rode. No, you can't tell. You can't tell from most of 'em; you can't tell 'til you try 'em out. I've broke amany of 'em. I've broke a lot o' cow horses. No, o' course, there is a certain breed o' horses that are used for cow horses that naturally have that instinct, ~~you know~~ to be cow horses. ~~and~~ then you get another breed that's just as good o' a cow pony as a--well, you can't hardly make 'em look at a cow a' tall. so it's something that you just have to find.

LARRY: How many years can a good horse last?

EARL: W-w-ell, that's a....

LARRY: Ten, fifteen? ~~omit~~

EARL: Well, that all depends. Now, if I have shippin' work and spring work, summer calf work and just a few times ~~in~~ in the year that I use that same horse, he would last for years, you know. Then there's others that's good horses like that that you might be ridin' regular at somethin' else. Well, that horse will die off quicker than some o' the others. But in my string o' horses if I had a tough cow horse, why, a lot o' times I'd do my cow work ~~and~~ if I was cuttin' for beef, I would go home and change and get a rough horse that would save that cow and if you save 'em, why, you can make 'em last for years, but that's the only way. You can ~~stove~~ stove a horse up by usin' him too much.

LARRY: Ya.

~~omit~~  
EARL: No, it's cowboy sense how long a horse will last.

LARRY: Earl, this might be a dumb question; but, if you stay with a horse long enough, do you get to the point where you're thinkin' the same thing at the same time. I mean does a cowboy and a good horse work together?

EARL: A-a-h, pretty much, pretty much. I had cow horses if I would ride through the herd, and he'd walk along the herd until I hesitated maybe a minute and see something I want and I started t' followin' this cow he'd knowed it and he's got his eye on this cow and he'll follow it out.

LARRY: Do you get so you have a affection for a horse, Earl? I mean if you have a good horse, do you get a feeling for that horse?

EARL: I certainly do! You certainly do. I've had horses I wouldn't hurt in any way if I could help it. I might hit him a couple on the        quarter or something when he made a mistake or you might hook him up pretty good with the spurs if he made a mistake and he knows it--don't worry. He knows he'd didn't do what is right.

LARRY: One of the things <sup>that</sup> I wonder about is what you ranchers did when you were spread out so much and you didn't live close together? What kind o' social life did ranch families have around 1910, '15 when you and your brother were ranching? What did you do for fun?

EARL: For fun?

LARRY: Ya.

EARL: The only fun we ever had is when we happened to get in a bunch by mistake or something. It wasn't because we went anyplace or anything. Oh, we might go a good many miles to a dance or something, but we figured we wasn't out there for fun.

LARRY: Oh. Were there dances at Oakdale?

EARL: Oh, ya, sure. Y-a-a, there generally was always a dance someplace. It might be many miles away, but we'd get there if we wanted t' go.

LARRY: How many miles would you ride to a good dance? If you wanted to go, how many miles would you be willing to ride?

EARL: 20, 25 miles.

LARRY: Oh?

EARL: It wouldn't be anything out of the way if we wanted t' go.

LARRY: Wasn't there a shortage o' girls around? All you cowboys and ranchers that were around. Who would you dance with?

EARL: I've been at dances when some o' the men would put on women's ~~clothes~~ clothes and we'd use them as partners! N-o-o, that was common--ya.

LARRY: Earl, it sounds like that was a pretty rough life, but it sounds like you enjoyed it?

EARL: Well, I got along fine with it. Ya, I have no kick on the life a' tall. It's not an easy life. I think I'm gettin' over bein' young, but I don't know whether that's altogether the fault of it or not.

LARRY: No, I don't think so.

EARL: I don't think so.

LARRY: When you were younger and if you travelled around and got out of North Dakota and somebody asked you where you were from, did you ever feel apologetic because you were from North Dakota?

EARL: No.

LARRY: Do you like North Dakota?

EARL: Ya, ya, ya.

LARRY: Been a good state to live in?

EARL: Suits me pretty good.

LARRY: Ya, I'll say.

EARL: I heard it did a dead fella good so I imagine made ~~use~~ of it anyway.  
use