

## Extension Oral History Project – Dean Frischknecht - Part 2

Date: February 9, 2008

Place: Dean's office on the OSU Campus

Time: 35:04 minutes

Interviewer: Elizabeth Uhlig, Oral Historian

Transcriber: Sue Bowman

EU: This is part 2 of the interview with Dean Frischknecht.

**[00:05]**

Dean, when we ended Part 1, you had just come home from Japan and you were out of the Marine Corps. And so, 1946. What did you do next, then?

DF: I went to work for Deseret Live Stock Company. I would like to have gotten back into business and been a full-time rancher myself. But while I was gone, my younger brother who was deferred to run the ranch, was able to pick up a small herd of sheep that ran in the same outfit and he was going to have about 250 head of sheep of his own and although the two of us had leased the ranch from my parents, we couldn't be equal partners and there was nothing else available. I really wanted to be a full time rancher but there was nothing available and Deseret Live Stock Company wanted me to go to work for them. So I did and I got there during their shearing just in time for their shearing and it worked out wonderfully well.

**[1:35]**

EU: You said their ranch, Deseret, was in southeastern Utah?

DF: Charlie Redd's was in southeastern Utah; Deseret Livestock was in northeastern Utah along the Wyoming state line. They have a little property in Wyoming. And Deseret Live Stock Company is a marvelous ranch, and they ran approximately 40,000 ewes, a little more than that, plus their lambs, plus over 5,000 cattle and they did own and use 400 horses. So that was a great place for me to go to work. I enjoyed my time

there and it was a time of building again. And from Will Sorensen I learned how to manage those 40,000 ewes and Mr. Dansie, general manager, told me to get familiar with the cattle operation and we also broke our own horses, trained them to work, to do draft horse work or for saddle horses.

**[3:10]**

EU: It must have been hard work.

DF: It was hard work. We would be up early in the morning. At Deseret Live Stock Company the first bell rang about six o'clock in the morning and to wake up the late sleepers and to let everybody know that breakfast would be served at 6:30. And people would get up and get dressed and get ready to go for breakfast at 6:30. At noon, the first and only bell rang at 12:00 noon so the work at the corrals was halted a half hour before it was time, I shouldn't say "lunch" because it was quite a heavy meal at noon and also another heavy meal at night and the first and only bell rang at 6:00 and you could adjust your schedule accordingly.

But this was a wonderful place for training. Walter Dansie taught me things that had to be done as general manager, Will Sorenson taught me how to run the sheep along with working with cattle and a lot of our sheep and cattle ran on the spring range together and the home ranch. Deseret Live Stock Company had a summer headquarters for their sheep and a winter headquarters for their sheep. The summer headquarters was up near the Wyoming state line, a little land just inside of Wyoming and the shearing corral, where I headquartered, was approximately 18 miles from the ranch headquarters which we called the "home ranch." This was a private outfit - that ranch was 225,000 acres, ninety percent privately owned, ten percent public. The winter range for the sheep was down south of the Great Salt Lake in what was called the Skull Valley; that was where our winter headquarters were for the sheep. We would have the sheep in generally 15 herds for the winter, and these were large herds with 2,700 head to about 2,850. We tried to keep them less than 2,900.

But for the winter there would be every camp had its own wagon for the herder and camp tender for their living quarters, they had a team of two draft horses and then they had two saddle horses. It was the camp tender's job to move the camp to fresh feed, to take care of the horses, he'd have to melt snow for the horses sometimes during the winter, but he had equipment to do this and generally there would be two men, the herder and the camp tender with each winter herd.

EU: So you lived...

DF: Yes, and in the wintertime we lived at the headquarters in Skull Valley, the winter headquarters. Had a nice home there. A six room house.

EU: So your wife was there with you and your children?

DF: Yes. We had two children. Our third son was born while we were working for Deseret Live Stock Company and then we had a daughter born while we were working for Deseret Live Stock Company. So we had two sons and two daughters. We lived at the shearing corral in the spring. Water had to be carried from the well and there was an outside toilet about 50 yards east of the cookhouse and there was another outside toilet out by the shearing corral about 100 yards. But water that you used in the home for washing yourself and for culinary use was dipped out of the well there at the spring and carried to the home. So Kathryn, my wife, really appreciated it when we got to live in Skull Valley because there was a six room home, a bungalow type and it had inside plumbing and inside bathroom and inside water under pressure. So being up at the shearing corral was quite a hard thing, rugged for the ladies.

EU: Especially with all the children.

DF: With the kids. And so, high on the summer range we'd be up there. It was a beautiful country and we lived in a two-room log cabin on the summer range – two-room

log cabin to start with. We were with Deseret Live Stock Company for nearly eight years. It was a wonderful time of growth and that helped me every day of my life.

[10:10]

EU: I think you told me before that you're writing a book about the Deseret...

DF: [whispers] Yes, I don't know if I should say it on here or not, probably not, but it's at Utah State University and they are going to publish it.

EU: So when you were working for the Deseret, the experience you gained; that stayed with you?

DF: Yes, and that helped me here in Oregon in my Extension work. Working for Deseret Live Stock Company was wonderful; I have explained this in a book that I hope to have out within a few months. I explained just in more detail how we ran the outfit.

EU: So you worked there for eight years?

DF: Yes, nearly eight years, I was through nine shearings, counting my Master's degree, I was through nine shearings and Will Sorenson who eventually retired said that I was the man yhat should replace him running the sheep day by day and I was glad of that.

EU: Why did you leave the company?

DF: The company had changed ownership and I had an opportunity to go into selling life insurance for a man who had his own dealership with Pacific National Life – Ivan Johnson – there in Salt Lake. And he said to me one time after we had small educational policies on each of our kids, he said, “Dean, if you ever leave Deseret Live Stock Company, I'd like to have you go to work for me.” So, after the company had changed ownership, the new man thought I was being paid too much. They said, “How come you and Walter Dansie got paid so much more than everybody else on the outfit?”

And I said, "Well, he was the general manager and I was in charge of the sheep." And I said, "I don't think what I'm making is too much for the responsibility." And one of the new investors in the company actually, a syndicate of investors mainly from Salt Lake were able to buy Deseret Live Stock Company stock and they kind of gained control of the company. And one of the new men who was brought in who had put about \$220,000 of his own money into Deseret Live Stock Company stock wanted to be the general manager. Now, he was a good man and he became general manager but he told me then after I'd been there a few months that he voluntarily took a cut in pay of \$200 a month from what Walter Dansie had been making and some of the new directors of the company thought I should take a similar dock in pay. And I told him I couldn't take a dock in pay of \$200 a month.

And so we agreed that I would stay for awhile until we got the sheep on the winter range. He told me this in the fall and I said, "Let's let her go the way it is; I'll stay indefinitely and do what I'm doing, but I don't want to take a cut in pay. I don't want to leave here and go somewhere and say Deseret Live Stock Company was only paying me this much." And I said, "I'd like to leave here with the company still at its peak." Because some of the new men wanted to cut the sheep operation very much and so we agreed to get on the winter range and then talk about it again. Which we did and so as a result, I didn't want to take a pay cut.

And I figured I could make more money selling life insurance for Ivan Johnson than I could make there. And so Johnson gave me a quota to sell by the first of June and said, "You get this much sold and we'll take you and your wife Kathryn, to our annual convention at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs." Which we did and there I was given a quota to sell for the next year and the convention would be at the Del Coronado Hotel just outside San Diego. And he said, "You sell that much insurance and we'll take you and Kathryn and your four children to the Del Coronado with all expenses paid." And so I made that quota and at the Del Coronado they said, "All the insurance you sell during the next year will qualify you for the convention at Waikiki Beach in Hawaii in

1956. So that's what happened and so Kathryn and I qualified for that trip to Waikiki Beach in 1956.

**[16:50]**

Frank Ballard had interviewed me in the fall of 1955. Now I was thinking of Extension after I thought I was going to have to take this cut in pay at Deseret Livestock and things were working out very well but I thought I could make more money selling life insurance than I could taking a cut in pay to what they wanted me to take at Deseret Live Stock Company.

EU: Frank Ballard, then, was the director?

DF: Yes, Frank Ballard was the Director of Extension.

EU: In Oregon.

DF: Yes. And he interviewed me in Salt Lake and he said, "Well, I'd like you to come to work for us."

EU: And that was in 1956?

DF: Fall of 1955. And then,

EU: So he interviewed you in Salt Lake City?

DF: Yes. But I'll tell you how it happened.

EU: Okay.

DF: My Dad's younger brother, Dr. Carl Frischknecht, was the Director of Extension in Utah. And I went to talk to him and he said, "Well, I can't hire you because you're my nephew." But he says, "Frank Ballard....the Western States Directors are going to meet

here in Salt Lake City at the Newhouse Hotel in September of '55." And he says, "I'll introduce you to Frank Ballard, he's the Director for Oregon." And he says, "I think Oregon is the best place in the world to do Extension work because nearly every county has a livestock association." And he says, "I think Frank Ballard is the best Director of Extension in the United States." He says, "I'll introduce you to him." And I said, "No, I'll introduce myself to him. You just well me when they are going to be here. I don't want you to introduce me and feel like he's obligated to you in anyway. Just let me handle it myself."

And so that's what we did and I called Frank Ballard, Director of Extension and told him who I was and that I would like to talk to him. Oh, because my uncle said, "Oregon is looking for an Extension Livestock Specialist." And he says, "I think you would fit." He says, "I'll introduce you to Frank Ballard." And I said, "No, I'll introduce myself to Frank Ballard and let him make up his own mind." And so after we got done talking for a few minutes, he said, "Well, I'd like you to come to work." He says, "How soon can you come to work?" And I told him that it would take me awhile to wind stuff up 'cause I would be moving to Oregon.

And so he called me and says, "I think we'll leave this position open for a little while," but he said, "I would like to have my associate director, Mr. Jean Scheel come to Pocatello and you and your wife come up there and have lunch with him, would you and your wife do that?" And I said, "Sure, we can do that." So we had lunch with Jean Scheel and he was heavy on the "Mr." because you could think of it as a lady named Jean. But Jean Scheel says, "Well Dean, we'd like you to come to work for us." He says, "Well, you could come now, come next week." I said, "We can't come that soon besides I've got this trip I won to Waikiki Beach." He said, "Oh well, our men will feel good about that; Extension is largely selling. That will be fine." He says, "Come to work the first of July after you get back from Hawaii." But he said, "I'm offering you employment now as an Extension Livestock Specialist." And I says, "Well, I'd like it; I'll take." And I told him what had happened at Deseret Live Stock Company and he wanted me to take a cut in pay which I didn't want to take and I was doing better;

anyway, I was doing just as well selling insurance and it wasn't such hard work. But there was this thing about it; you kind of wanted to get a man and his wife together and that meant evenings and it's better if you have the man and his wife together if you are talking insurance. I learned that. (Laughter).

[21:55]

EU: Why do you think the Extension Service in Oregon had such a good reputation nationwide?

DF: Frank Ballard, I thought, was a businesslike man and he was much respected. And the other thing was, in Oregon nearly every county had a county livestock organization and this gave an animal science man, an animal man, a group to work with. And they had generally the livestock Extension man in that county was secretary of the livestock association so it was a direct working of the Extension Service with the county livestock association and that gave you a group to work with.

And there was one other thing that helped a great deal here. Years before that, when there was just one livestock Extension man, that was Harry Lindgren, and he and a few other people had organized the Western Oregon Livestock Association. Now they had different problems here, west of the Cascades than the Oregon Cattlemen, east of the Cascades. And Harry Lindgren was very much responsible working with Al Powers who was a timberman and a livestock rancher down on the southern Coast. Those two fellows helped organize the Western Oregon Livestock Association. And Harry Lindgren acted as their secretary to start with and treasurer and Al Powers was their first president.

I had been here, I came in 1956 and soon I was made their secretary of Western Oregon Livestock Association and just did that as part of my Extension work. And this gave us another group to work with and actually, it helped with the Oregon Cattlemen. They worked things together quite a bit; western Oregon with Oregon Cattlemen were quite a voice at the Legislature and it worked out very well. And actually, I was secretary of Western Oregon Livestock Association from 1958 until 1968, for ten years.



**[25:10]**

When I went to Argentina for five months in 1968, they wanted an Extension man from the United States to come down, and someone who had worked on large ranches. And so I had a call from Dr. Bob Temple in Denver asking if I would go down to Argentina. And he said that my work on large ranches would help me down there. And he wanted me to go down for five months and my experience there would be to help the people of Argentina raise a higher percent of calf crop and lamb crop.

EU: Was that with the UN?

DF: Yes, I was working then for the United Nations. And it worked out wonderfully well and people here at Oregon State wanted me to go down there for the experience and they thought I could do them some good. And my salary that I was making here at Oregon State as an Extension Livestock man was continued all the while I was in Argentina and that was a big help to me down there. Because Oregon State University Extension Service wanted me to be working for them too in Argentina and to represent the Oregon Extension Service in Argentina. But it was working for the UN; United Nations and that was a wonderful experience.

**[27:20]**

EU: When you worked for the Extension Service, were you always here in Corvallis?

DF: Yes. Now, then...I've got to think here a minute. After my retirement. I retired at age 65 in the month that I was 65 -- in April of 1985 I officially retired from Oregon State. But they had me go over to eastern Oregon and work with -- I worked over there with the Oregon Cattlemen, I did some work at Union at the Experiment Station, and at Burns. And was headquartered in Burns for a few months. Now this was after I had retired, but I was actually doing Extension work.

EU: But when you moved to Corvallis in 1956 and you were the livestock specialist responsible throughout the state?

DF: Yes, well, there was one other one. Dr. John Landers. John Landers had been here before me and the way they had us arranged, John was to take the south half of the state and I was to take the north half of the state and that's how we worked it and we were both headquartered down the hallway here. Halfway down the hall on the left side.

EU: In Withycombe Hall, here?

DF: Yes.

EU: What kind of livestock did you work with?

DF: My work in Oregon was a little more with cattle than anything and beef cattle improvement was one of my huge projects. And we worked on that at the Hermiston Experiment Station and in Umatilla County at their other experiment station and at Burns and Union County. It was more beef cattle improvement than anything.

And when the Beef Improvement Federation was organized in 1968, Doug Bennett who was manager of Stone Herefords up in the west end of Umatilla County, he and I represented the Oregon Cattlemen at the Organization of the Beef Improvement Federation which was a federation of beef organizations in the United States and Canada; a little participation in Mexico, but not much in Mexico.

Doug Bennett and I. And then I was sent around to these different livestock meetings. Here's a meeting we had - Extension Livestock Specialists – throughout the country we met in Nebraska at Lincoln and Dr. Mast, here...

EU: We're looking at a picture – there's you on the right and Dr. Mast is on the left.

DF: Yes. He's from Virginia and Dr. Herrick was from Iowa and he was stationed in Washington D.C. Let's see what – he was western livestock marketing project at Denver. But I was good friends with these guys and so this, can you read that? I don't have my glasses on...

EU: Okay. Let's see, this was 1974, April.

DF: April 10<sup>th</sup>, '74. I had been retired for quite awhile, but I represented the Oregon Cattlemen at that time. And I think that's when I asked for a copy of this. Oh, this was April 9 and 11 for National Beef Cattle cow/calf workshop. State of the art beef cow production. Extension Educational Program recommendations for commercial beef cow producers. C.C. Mast.

He told us this story, he says, "I grew up in a little town out there in Virginia country, way out there in the Blue Ridge Mountains and we didn't have a regular preacher man, but he said, kind of an itinerant preacher who come by and talk to us about once a month on Sundays." And he said, "The man didn't read very well, he couldn't see very well to read, but he would open the Bible someplace and then read a few verses and get an inspiration and close the Bible and give a hell-raising talk." This preacher opened the Bible and said, "And there were five wise Virginians and there were five foolish Virginians...." And he said, "That seems to me to be a very high percentage of Virginians. " He said he gave us a helluva talk. (Laughter.) Oh jeeze, I've had a wonderful life.

EU: Let's take another break here. This will be the end of Part 2.

DF: Yes, let's do that.

**[35:04]**