WINK CRIGLER
1942 -

Honored as 2017 Historymaker
Rancher

The following is an oral history interview with Historymaker Wink Crigler **(WC)** conducted by Zona Lorig **(ZL)** for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by **Tom Lorig** on June 26, 2023.

Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.

ZL Congratulations on being named a 2017 Historymaker by the Historical League. Due to a very unfortunate incident, your oral history was lost, so we need to take another one, so your history is preserved. Would you please begin by stating your full name and where you were born and the date if you desire.

WC My name is Wink Crigler. My given name is Sarah Marge. I was born in 1942. I was actually born in Prescott, but I've lived here at the X Diamond Ranch all my life.

ZL And how did you get the nickname Wink?

WC I don't really know the answer to that question. My dad just always called me Wink and that's what I've grown up to be all my life.

ZL Probably when you were little, and he liked it.

WC I – I don't know. *[Laughs]*

ZL You're a fourth-generation Arizona rancher, is that correct?

WC That is correct.

ZL So when did your family arrive here?

WC Well, my family actually arrived in the area, in 1879. On this property in 1893.

ZL And where did they come from?

WC Oh, Utah via Council Bluffs, Iowa, and points beyond.

ZL And after they arrived here, what did they do?

WC They did what everybody did. They farmed to make a living so they could survive. Raise cattle and farmed. And freighted. Raised cattle, farmed and freighted.

ZL And where did they freight to?

WC Fort Apache.

ZL Tell us about your grandparents.

WC My grandparents were John and Molly Butler, that operated what became the MLY Ranch from – this was the winter headquarters and raised and produced beef. Ran a herd of cattle between here and the foothills of Mt. Baldy. My grandmother made butter and cheese and freighted it to Fort Apache and then as it got into the early 1900s they somehow became known to a lot of people like Zane Grey and Stewart Edward White, that came to visit and so they also kind of became guides and a tourist attraction, which grew into being 1910 Molly Butler Lodge that has operated continuously since that time.

ZL In Greer?

WC In Greer.

ZL And did they build that lodge?

WC Well not what's there today, but they built what were the original buildings.

ZL And how did they do during the Depression?

WC Oh, as far as I know, they survived very well 'cause they were able to produce their own food and they were able to stay, and everybody thrived.

ZL What breed of cattle were they running, do you know?

WC Mostly Herefords.

ZL Okay. How did Molly influence your life?

WC Well Molly influenced the lives of a lot of people just because of her sort of commanding but entrepreneurial personality. I guess the greatest things that I recognize about my grandmother was her ambition, the enthusiasm that she had for life that just kind of oozed into this spirit of other people to get out and do things and to work and produce. Uh, Molly's main goal was to – to be a productive individual and to help take care of other people. Feed them, provide lodging for them, make rag rugs or whatever it was.

ZL So she also built cabins and a lodge besides the restaurant?

WC That's true. They had lodging as well as – as the restaurant there.

ZL And, in addition, your grandfather was leading tours, Zane Grey, the American author who loved to write about Arizona, was one of the people and so was Theodore Roosevelt?

WC Stewart Edward White, Lou Wallace, the author of *Ben Hur* and Governor of New Mexico, Governor Hunt, and – and a long list of others. Judges and so on. They have a long list of people – James Willard Schultz, oh, Thompson, from Thompson's Arboretum. He built a private lodge for the Thompsons from Thompson's Arboretum and took Thompson and his notable friends on hunting and fishing trips across the mountains and so on.

ZL Interesting. And when did your mother's side of the family arrive in Arizona?

WC They came to Arizona some time in the early 1880s. They were cattle people too. Primarily people that came into territorial Arizona in the ‘80s came for basically two reasons, one was because their people had found a little gold, a little silver. But with the presence of the military, farm commodities and beef were in high demand to feed the presence of the military. One-fourth of the Army occupied the landscape at that time. And the big thing was how do we feed

them? And so that was the primary source of revenue, producing and feeding the military.

ZL For your family?

WC No, not just my family. For everybody that came here.

ZL What was the last name of your grandparents?

WC On my mother's side? Wingfield. They participated in the building of the Strawberry School House, the oldest known schoolhouse in Arizona, standing. And ran cattle. And of course, Ft. Verde, Ft. Lincoln was there and, as I say, the scenario pretty much across this territory was how do we feed the military and the Native Americans?

ZL I was on the State Board, the Historical Society, when they worked to preserve that Strawberry School House quite a few years ago.

Your mother was Helen Butler and did she ride and work outside?

WC My mother worked outside, but my mother was a gardener and a schoolteacher and so she raised the gardens and flowers. Sold flowers to our local market and as a kid we also would take vegetables to the market once a month – once a week or something like that in the summertime. And then she taught school.

ZL In Eagar?

WC Yes.

ZL Elementary school?

WC Yes.

ZL Share a couple of other memories about your parents.

WC *[Laughs] My* mother always had beautiful gardens. She – long years back, she had built and operated some greenhouses and grew orchids and all kinds of exotic flowers and had a little

contract with our local market in town to supply them with plants and flowers and that kind of thing. She did sew a lot for us kids, canned a lot because we lived off of our gardens and so on. My dad was just a true and true cow man and cowboy. From the time I was 6 years old, probably we rode the range just nearly every day except blizzards and formidable weather and knew this country like the back of his hand. And could always tell you a story about why something was whatever it was or something that happened there that was historical in nature.

ZL So you started riding as soon as you were able to?

WC I've lived off a horse all my life.

ZL Did you have any siblings?

WC Two.

ZL Male, female?

WC Two sisters.

ZL Older or younger?

WC Younger.

ZL Did they – were they involved in ranching like you were?

WC No.

ZL So you always lived on the ranch?

WC That's true.

ZL And you drove – how did you get to…

WC I went off to college, but I always lived here. I always came home on weekends or whatever and summers too, to help and work on the ranch.

ZL So how did you get to school?

WC Well, when I was 6 years old, by that time we had a little road out here and the Coulter family of Coulter Cadillac used to come to Greer. They were very early tourists in Greer from probably the late 20s and…

ZL From Phoenix?

WC From Phoenix, Coulter Cadillac on Central Avenue. And when I turned 6, my mom took a job teaching school, and I can remember that before that we didn't have a car. And when my mom – when I had to go to school, an Oldsmobile showed up in our driveway and my mom taught school and drove us to school.

ZL That was very convenient wasn't it?

WC It was.

ZL Did you have electricity on the ranch?

WC No.

ZL So, how did you get light?

WC Well, we had a candle. We had kerosene lamps and sometimes we had a little wind generator, but it was very undependable.

ZL Yes. And used only rarely, probably?

WC Right. If you worked hard enough, you didn't worry about lights 'cause you were tired enough to go to bed and you didn't care whether you had a light or not.

ZL How about washing clothes?

WC We had a gas washing machine. And you ran it maybe once a week or once every two weeks

outside and hung everything on the line. Sometimes longer because sometimes the weather wasn't conducive to that.

ZL Definitely in the wintertime up here.

WC And when you had to wash – when the wintertime, yes. We knew how to rinse something out.

ZL And then you probably stretched out the washing?

WC That's very true. You didn't change clothes three times a day, I guarantee ya.

ZL *[Laughs]* Who were influential people in your life during school years, beside your family?

WC Oh gosh, that's a hard question to answer. We knew so many people. Coulters, a lot of the cattle growers; there was people like Everett Bowman who was a world champion cowboy; Joe Rice from First Federal Savings, Burt Payne from Phoenix. My dad knew almost everybody, and I was always on my dad's tail. Lone Wolf from Lone Wolf's Museum spent a lot of time visiting…

ZL And where is that museum located?

WC In Greer.

ZL So, he spent a lot of time out here?

WC He actually lived there in Greer for quite a few years when I was a youngster.

ZL You got your bachelor degree from Arizona State University.

WC That's right.

ZL How did you choose that one?

WC Just because I knew I had to go to college, or my mom would kill me.

ZL *[Laughs] Did* you live on campus?

WC No.

ZL You got an apartment or?

WC No, I lived with a lady that had a house in Greer and so I – I'd stay there in the winter to go to – to go to college. And then I drove back and forth up here every weekend.

ZL Every weekend?

WC Almost every weekend. Help my dad and mom.

ZL Wow. What was your major?

WC Elementary education.

ZL Do you remember how many students were on the campus at that time?

WC I don't. I went there for one thing. I went to class and that was it.

ZL You earned a master's degree at the University of Arizona?

WC That's right.

ZL And how many years after you got your bachelors was that?

WC Only about one or two. I met a lot of people and had a lot of experiences. We worked for Ben Johnson, John Wayne for a lot of years showed horses, the DuPonts from back in Maryland, traveled all over the country. Had a lot of world champion horses. I taught school all at the same time, finished my master's degree.

ZL How did you get your master's – we didn't have on-line in those days. How did you do that?

WC I went to Tucson for nine months and finished my master's degree in nine months.

ZL Wow. Interesting. Well, first you taught in Maricopa, which is a little community about 30 miles south of Tempe and…

WC That's true. We taught in … we lived in Maricopa…

ZL So you were married at the time?

WC I was.

ZL And who is your husband?

WC Oscar Crigler.

ZL Okay. Thank you. And was he raised up here? Or did you meet him in…

WC No, he, when I was working – when I went – started in college, I spent the weekends – I worked some at one of the feedlots there and I met him at one of the feedlots there, working in a feedlot. And then I taught school one year in Maricopa and I got a fellowship. I was asked to go back to school for a master's degree, which I did. And I told him that I *[laughs]* I had to do it in nine months' time. And we worked it out, so I finished my master's degree in nine months. And we trained horses and rode horses there and then I went back to Maricopa and taught school there for one year. And we worked for Sam White and some other cattle people in Arizona at the same time and I was teaching as well. And then we moved – I was offered a job up here, so then we moved back up here.

ZL In Springerville? Eagar?

WC Yeah, Eagar. Well, we lived here, but I worked in – actually I lived – worked in Springerville at that time. There were two school districts. There was Springerville and Eagar. Later on, they were consolidated and then I taught in Eagar, but it was one school district.

ZL That must be a very large district area wise.

WC Well not – I don't know what very large means, but not so large. At that time the schools were very small and relatively speaking, the district encompassed, let's see now, Nutrioso, Vernon, Greer.

ZL Vernon? Wow.

WC Not – I think – the way I remember it – not all the classes in Vernon. I think they had a primary school over there and the middle school.

ZL High school.

WC They bused them here to Round Valley. I don't what very large means, but it wasn't all that big. But it did take in some of the little outlying communities at that time.

ZL So you taught in Round Valley 24 years?

WC Mm-hm, that's true.

ZL That's a long tenure.

WC It was long enough. I didn't retire, I just quit.

ZL *[Laughs]* What were you teaching?

WC You know, I taught everything from 4th Grade all the way up through high school, adult education, English as a second language. Had a master's degree in the teaching of reading and minor in special education.

ZL Wow. So you moved back to the ranch when you were teaching in Springerville.

WC When we left Maricopa, we came right here to the ranch.

ZL Your ranch is in the White Mountains in northeastern Arizona. What is the elevation range here?

WC Well, we range from about 7600 feet elevation to 9500 feet elevation.

ZL And what are the main types of trees you have on the ranch?

WC Ponderosa pines on the lower elevations. We have blue spruce, sugar pines - those are the good trees that we have. We have a lot of cedars and junipers which are what I call trash trees. On the higher elevations, we have aspen.

ZL The White Mountains has the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest, and they experienced two devastating fires in recent years. In 2002, the Rodeo-Chediski fire burned 452,000 acres and in 2011, the Wallow fire burned 535,000 acres. How did these fires impact you and the ranch?

WC Well the Rodeo-Chediski didn't impact us at all because it was not – it was nothing…

ZL Too far away?

WC It was too far away. It was further to the west of us. So that one didn't really impact us at all. The other fire, I don't know that I would call – I mean, fires are bad, yes, but I don't really think of it as totally devastating because the fires did a lot of good. And people have a misconception of the use of fire as a management tool of our forest. Our forests are totally, totally overgrown-overgrown and mismanaged. So even though there were some structures lost, as far as our watershed, grass production and the conditions of our forest, there were a lot of benefits that came from the Wallow fire.

ZL Very interesting.

WC We just need more managed use of our forest instead of – instead of less. Because we're subject to many more fires. It's not a matter of if, it's just a matter of when they happen.

ZL The State of Arizona has four types of land on which ranches operate - private deeded property, state leases and then federal lands, including U.S. Forest and the Bureau of Land Management. Would you share what kind of property you have on X Diamond?

WC Well, like any ranch in Arizona, we're private, state and forest. We don't have BLM here.

ZL Okay. But all three others. What about water for your ranch? The Little Colorado and the South Fork run through your ranch. Do you have any other water source?

WC We have a lot of springs that we've put developments on, so that they provide wildlife waters

and whatever on them. We've tried to maximize whatever other sources of water there are to make it a habitat for wildlife, good for livestock and so on.

ZL And what breed of cattle do you run?

WC Primarily angus.

ZL Angus. Black or red?

WC Black primarily.

ZL Is it a cow/calf operation?

WC Yeah, a cow/calf operation.

ZL And would you describe that for the record?

WC Well, we've always been a cow/calf operation here; primarily a calf/calf operation here. Calving in the spring, some of the cows and the calves stay here through the summertime on the high elevation pastures and then, of course, sell off the calf crop in the fall because winters can be formidable. The forage, the nutritional value of our forages, diminishes significantly in the winter when it turns cold and dry. And so, in order to be able to maximize the production of your herd, you've pretty much got to run it with a summer cow/calf operation. A lot of times yearlings, if you bring yearlings in, cattle that are not used to this high altitude and the forages we have, don't prosper well here if you just bring 'em in. They need – they need to pretty much be native cattle and especially – especially yearlings in order for 'em to maximize growth and weight gain.

ZL So where do you buy your yearlings?

WC I don't buy yearlings. We raise our own. We do all our own mother cows and calves.

ZL How many cattle brands do you have registered?

WC How many brands?

ZL Mm-hm.

WC I just operate under one brand.

ZL The X Diamond?

WC The X Diamond.

ZL And that's also the name of the ranch. I don't think we've ever identified that. Do you winter your cattle anywhere?

WC We – since the introduction and the increasing presence of wolves we do generally winter our calves – calves away from here, most of the 'em, down in southern Arizona on a farm so that we escape the presence of wolves as best we can. The presence of wolves for me has made a great deal of difference in management of livestock across the landscape here.

ZL And when did that begin?

WC Well, it started in 1991, but it didn't really become an issue until we got to about the year 2000 when the wolves left the immediate recovery area and started spreading out across the landscape. Then, they began to become an issue and continued to become a greater issue as the population increases. We have them pretty much everywhere now, including even right here on the private property. We have a lot of takings right on your private land.

ZL Which they don't know is private land.

WC They don't read the signs.

ZL *[Laughs]* Right. You must have quite a few horses here because you…

WC Well, I used to…

ZL …your guests can ride them.

WC I don't have trail horses anymore. I used to keep about 45 head of horses, but I'm only one person and horses now, good horses are very expensive. Hay's expensive. And we just focus on our livestock herd. So, I don't have trail horses for people anymore and offer that service.

ZL Okay.

WC Any horses I have are just old, retired horses.

ZL Ranchers have a lot of book work keeping records. Are you responsible for all of that?

WC Whatever records are kept, I am responsible.

ZL Well, it's a – quite a bit of work and takes a lot of your time.

WC Well, it's what you do. I try – I do most – a lot of my book work is keeping track of forage production, what happens, rain – precipitation totals, management plans, all the things that happen the landscape, the range, so that I know more about what's happening across our range life – range land than hopefully anybody else, so I know how to manage it. And how to deal with – with the livestock on the landscape.

ZL As a woman, have you felt discrimination about being a cattle rancher?

WC Hell no.

ZL *[Laughs]* And you haven't had any problem hiring people to work for you?

WC No.

ZL You're involved with the National Riparian Grazing Management Team, and they were concerned about you allowing cattle to graze near the Little Colorado, but you worked with them to allay their fears. Can you talk about that a little bit?

WC Now that was a joint project that I got involved in initially with the riparian area along the Little Colorado River. What we really found out is that grazing in a riparian area – managed grazing – actually can benefit that ecosystem for a variety of reasons. One of the greatest things that

happens in our riparian area is that if we don't remove some of the growth off of those riparian areas, the overburden becomes so heavy that it prohibits new growth from coming up because that soil never sees the sunshine and stays very cold in the spring and pretty much just kind of smothers it out. It's sort of the same principle as mowing your lawn. You've got to have some breakup of the soil and some hoof action, number one. And number two, you can't have too much of an overburden across a layer of the soil because it prohibits the regrowth of vegetation when spring comes, or if it doesn't totally prohibit it, it certainly delays it because the ground stays very, very cold.

We have a very healthy riparian management – we have a very healthy riparian area. In about 2010, or I don't remember the exact year, I actually was awarded the national management award.

ZL Yes, you were. The University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cooperative Extension selected you to help monitor range health in Arizona, so that kind of goes along with what you've been talking about.

WC That's all what we do. I have 'em coming on Tuesday or Wednesday, we're coming to do some more work.

ZL Cattle ranchers in general face a lot of challenges today. What in your view are the main obstacles and how can individual ranchers work towards helping the industry?

WC Well first of all, I think that you have to work with the public and present a very positive image of what you do. Ranchers are not strong in presenting all the values of grazing and what livestock operations do like maintaining water supplies for all the animals that are out there. Secondly is fire risk. When a cow eats a certain amount of grass that eliminates fuel across the landscape and the less fuel we have, then we don't have such a hot fire. It also stimulates regrowth because you don't have the dominant growth of vegetation crowding out the less dominant vegetation, so you have an opportunity for greater biodiversity. I call my cows partners on this landscape.

ZL What changes have you seen through the years you've been ranching? How about the amount of precipitation that you've seen up here?

WC Well, historically, and I've gone back in weather records for decades and decades, precipitation

has always fluctuated in this country. Clear back as early as about 850, we had 50 years of dry weather so the idea that we've only had drought and whatnot the last few years is - it's not true. And the last two summers, we've had way above normal precipitation.

ZL Okay, you've changed the way you did the business of ranching. You've diversified because you run the guest ranch, fly fishing, this museum, an archeological dig and cabins for rent. That's a lot of fish to fry.

WC It is. *[Laughs]* We have a venue here. We do weddings, reunions, group ceremonies, group events, group meetings as well; I can seat about 140 people in our event center.

ZL So when did you start all this process?

WC Oh about, I guess about the year 2000, somewhere around there.

ZL And you turned it into a guest ranch? Or you added, I should say added.

WC Well I didn't call it a guest ranch. I just called it a ranch with a few guests because… we operate as a ranch, but we operate it for people that like to come here and enjoy the benefits of a ranch setting. Open space, wildlife, the quietness.

ZL And the fly fishing?

WC Oh, that was a project that I guess we started, oh, I don't remember the exact year when we started that. But it was a result of some, probably a 500-year flood that we had here in 1968, following a winter of six, seven, eight feet of snow.

And so, the Little Colorado River through here was really devastated, and it brought in acres and acres of trash and changed the whole stream course and so on. So that was a kind of a con-conservation project that we did here to restore the channel of the Little Colorado and to re-create it as a fish habitat. And it was a project that we did with, then it was SES Soil Conservation. And now it's NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, but it's all the same agency. It just got a new name, that we did to create a habitat so that we had pooling and gravel beds and plunge pools for oxygenation of the water and all those kinds of things that are conducive to a fish habitat.

ZL Interesting. You have a museum here that we're sitting in today which has what, four rooms?

WC All these buildings out here are part of the museum. Um, when did I start working on that? 1986.

ZL You had quite a few of these items, but friends and you must've accumulated from a lot of different places?

WC Well, a lot of people have brought things that are family treasures to share with other people just so that we can reflect on the lifestyle here of the1870s, 1880s, 1890s and tell the story because history is what makes us what we are. And if you don't know something about history, then you really don't know how you got to be what you are.

ZL Well it's a beautiful place and has such interesting items in it.

WC Thank you.

ZL I could spend a lot of time wandering around and reading. What about the archeological dig?

WC The archeological dig is a dig that is a site that, according to authorities, was inhabited between the years of about 400 to about the year 800, 850. According to dendrology, tree rings, somewhere right around 850, um, I say before Al Gore invented climate change, we had drought and those people that inhabited the area and that site left here because of drought and this is supported by the study of dendrology, tree rings.

ZL And you allow people to come and view that and…

WC I do. I've always had a person working there, a person trained in that science until the last couple of years and I lost our – we lost our helper. And I've not been able to replace him. But, we still allow people and I still show them and – and show some of the artifacts and explain what I can explain to them about the nature of the settlement here and where the petroglyphs are up in the canyon walls and that kind of thing.

ZL Fascinating. And what about the cabins you have to rent?

WC Well, my idea was that, – this is an influence, I guess, of my grandmother. My grandmother

always liked to share the richness of her life. That is, the lifestyle, the area that she lived in and so on. And so, it was kind of my vision that by having some cabins here, we could maintain the pristineness of the ranch and the landscape, but still provide an opportunity for people to come here and enjoy this ranch quality of life. To really reconnect with the land and the values of the land towards food production, wildlife habitat, water resources, and so on. And so little by little we built a few nice cabins just scattered across the ranch landscape to provide that opportunity for people to kind of absorb this lifestyle.

ZL Are they available in the spring through fall or?

WC 365 days a year.

ZL How do you get people in here in the wintertime?

WC Oh there's always the – we can plow the road. They're almost always open. There's been only a very rare occasion where they might be closed for one day or a few hours or something like that.

ZL And have you built these cabins through the years?

WC Yes.

ZL *[Laughs]* You don't sit on your laurels, do you?

WC Try not to. That doesn't get anything done.

ZL People come and want to fly fish, do you take somebody up there to help them? Or do…

WC I have two guys that people can contact and make arrangements for instruction and guiding and so on. We do keep it private. We limit it to only four fishing persons per day. That's so it's a nice, quiet solitude, but productive kind of a day on the river.

ZL And how far is that from the headquarters?

WC Well, it's right out the door 'cause the river runs right in front of us here, so it runs up and down

the canyon.

ZL And what are the varieties of fish?

WC Trout and browns. I mean, rainbow trout and browns.

ZL I know there's a lot of pictures of John Wayne when I wander around the museum. Talk a little bit about your connection with him.

WC We had 26 Bar Ranch which was a ranch that John Wayne and Louis Johnson acquired somewhere around about 1965, give or take a year or two; it neighbors this ranch. The 26 Bar Ranch had a herd of commercial cattle and then they had a very fine herd, nationally recognized herd, of purebred Hereford cattle. And so, for most of the years that John Wayne and Louis Johnson owned that ranch, when my husband was alive, we took care of the commercial cattle, the commercial herd of cattle because it neighbored this ranch, and just go through the gate. It was a very compatible endeavor to work here and help my dad and to take care of John Wayne's and Louis Johnson's commercial herd of cattle as well.

ZL Interesting. And how long did that last?

WC Well, about until John Wayne passed away, whenever that was.

ZL Okay. And then, Tom Chauncey bought that ranch?

WC Tom Chauncey- no, not at that time. When John Wayne died, the demise of most ranches, of course, is inheritance tax. And so, after the passing of John Wayne, the ranch was sold by the family to Karl Eller of Circle K. And then in a few years, Karl Eller, Circle K, experienced some financial difficulties and went into – I don't remember if it was Chapter 11, Chapter 13, some kind of a financial reorganization. And so, with that, the 26 Bar Ranch was put up for sale again. And that's when Tom Chauncey bought it. Well, Tom Chauncey was an elderly gentleman when he acquired the 26 Bar Ranch and so it was only a few years of management under Chauncey. Then it went up for sale again and at that time it was acquired by the Hopis, and it's now operated as the Hopi Three Canyon Ranch.

ZL Interesting.

WC But it's really three ranches. So, the 26 Bar is still in contact, but it operates in conjunction with two other ranches, so they call it the Hopi Three Canyon.

ZL And the other two ranches are adjacent? Or in different places?

WC No, they're not adjacent. I think one is at Williams and maybe one at Winslow. Somewhere in that neighborhood.

ZL What about the Four Forest Restoration Initiative? We've talked a little bit about the forest fires, but…

WC You know, I don't know a whole lot about the Four Forest Initiative, the idea of land treatment and tree thinning and more forest management is a great idea. The only problem is, it was never, put into full effect to make the difference that we need to make in forest management to prevent wildfires like the Wallow Fire. We need significant land treatment, significant forest management for tree growth because we are way overloaded. Our fuel loads are excessive on the A Bar – A Bar S and another dry year and we are subject to another fire or more fires, I should say.

ZL It's very threatening.

WC Very threatening.

ZL We have an abundance of wildlife in the White Mountains - elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, bears, beavers, porcupines, javelinas, turkeys, sheep, mountain lions and squirrels. Do you have all of those on this ranch?

WC We have every single one of them.

ZL Did I miss any? *[Laughs]*

WC I don't know what you call a wolf, but we have a wolf, too.

ZL Yeah. Hunting is really popular in Arizona - elk, deer, antelope and a lot of hunters draw for areas in which to hunt. How much hunting takes place on your ranch?

WC We always invite hunters in to come in and we have quite a few hunters that come here and stay during hunting season. We always allow people to cross across the private land to get to the forest lands or state lands…

ZL As long as they close or leave gates open.

WC *[Laughs]* We hope they leave them closed or open, depending on how they find 'em. We've always, too, tried to help people get to where their harvests are because not all of it is accessible by roads, so I have a couple of contacts of people that have pack outfits that can help them bring in their harvest or whatever. So, we try to be as helpful to the hunters as long as they're respectful of the landscape and the gates and our livestock as we can.

ZL You've written two – and published two books, *Beans 'N' Things* and *Fadin' Footprints*.

WC Well, now I have to add to that. I've actually done, I guess maybe – I've done at least three more since – that I've done in addition to those two.

ZL So, tell me a little bit about those.

WC One I did was a book called *Farm Kids*. It's the story of the farm where our cattle winter. It was written by two kids that are adopted that have grown up on this farm and become extremely productive young people and extremely knowledgeable of the process of agriculture. Nationally the 2% of America that feeds all the rest of America averages to be about 65 years old and unfortunately we have very few young people that are brought up in the world of agriculture. And these are two young girls whose family's just done an incredible job in indulging them in – into the world of agriculture and feeding the people. And so, a few years back, I had an idea. We created our little company. Not on paper, but just between us called Books for Kids by Kids and they wrote the story of their farm and then I had a photographer, Scott Baxter, who came and photographed all their work, and it came out to be just a beautiful story of what happens on that farm. It went into many schools across the state and so on, to try to expose young people to what actually happens on a farm and also maybe create some interest in a few young people to learn and become in somehow involved in the endeavor of agriculture.

ZL Tell me the name of that book again.

WC *Farm Kids.* Socrates – Socrates said agriculture is the greatest endeavor of all. Without it, you're all dead.

ZL We wouldn't be alive.

WC That's right.

ZL You're very involved in your community. You started the Wounded Warriors Fishing Program. Is that still ongoing?

WC Yes, we call it Healing Waters now, but it's still a part of all…

ZL Healing Waters.

WC It's still a part of the same project. They come here every year in very end of September for a retreat here.

ZL How do you get the names? Or how do they find out about it?

WC Well, I don't know. We just – it just has a – a historical presence, I guess you could say. And whoever the leaders of the groups are just know that it's something that we do here. And so, we have a line of communication, and they call me and tell me when they're coming and who's coming and how many are coming and how many cabins we need in order to house them and so on.

ZL You also started cowboy golf on the ranch. It raises funds for the Round Valley medical program.

WC That was something we did for about, I don't know, somewhere around ten years or something. In 2001, we had a very, very dry year and it also became very big, and I did most of the work to put it on. One year we had 1100 people here in one day for the golf tournament. And so that dry year was our last year to do that, but we did have a very successful fundraiser. And we did donate the money to the Round Valley Regional Medical Center.

ZL Ranching Heritage Alliance, you helped establish that in 2008?

WC That is something that we still do. That was a group that has always been an informative group whereby each year we bring in specialists to help with some of the range issues and bring new information into our local ranch population and any community members or whatever that are interested in participating and learning about what it is. We've done everything from riparian monitoring, grassland monitoring, beef quality assurance, livestock stress, livestock handling. We have covered a wide variety of topics that are relative to the ranching industry with the help of the Cattle Growers and the University of Arizona, Dr. George Ruyle, riparian service team, the Forest Service. You know, just an involvement of a lot of people to put on a diversified program.

ZL It's held here on…

WC Here at the ranch.

ZL Amazing. In 2009, you were named Arizona's Top Ranch Manager.

WC That's true.

ZL *[Laughs]* Now who – who awards that?

WC Well, I don't know if that was for the state. That would be the Society for Ranch Management because one year it was for the State of Arizona and one year it was the national…

ZL I'm sorry, I have that. National Range Land Management Award for U.S. Forest Service.

WC That was done by the Forest Service. That was awarded to me by the Chief of Forestry at that time. I've forgotten his name right now, but anyway, we went to, let's see, where was that? I can't remember if that was Denver or Salt Lake City we went to.

ZL Very good. In 2012, you were honored as an Arizona Culture Keeper. That was a 10-year project for a hundred Culture Keepers, named ten for each year to reach our centennial for Arizona. And that covered the whole state, so…

WC That's true.

ZL Do you have anything you want to say about that one?

WC Well I thought it was a great program. I went there, gave a presentation and, here again, I believe worked with Scott Baxter on some of the projects.

ZL Well, Scott Baxter did his book that year, 100 – Arizona 100…

WC 100 Years, 100 Ranchers. That was a project…

ZL 100 Ranchers and you were one of them.

WC That was a project that we started right here.

ZL Yeah and that was – that's a wonderful book. I know your life here is definitely here. Do you ever see yourself retiring?

WC No.

ZL *[Laughs]* So, who do you hope will carry on _____?

WC Well I hope my niece will.

ZL Okay.

WC She grew up here and – and she's a hard worker and has an interest.

ZL Wonderful.

WC You know, that part you never know. But you can only hope.

ZL But you do have a plan?

WC Well, yeah. *[Laughs]*

ZL What would you like your legacy to be?

WC I guess just what it is. Land steward, ranch manager, proponent of open space, multiple land use, historical information, perpetuation of legacies.

ZL: And what advice would you give to young people?

WC *[Laughs]* Well, laughingly I can say, don't buy a ranch. *[Laughs]*

ZL *[Laughs]*

WC But realistically I mean, but realistically it is to indulge yourself in – in the – in the field of agriculture in a way that you can make a contribution to the survival of people because the people, the land, and survival are – they're inseparable. I'm doing a program on August the 18th, called The Connection, and it is the land, the people…

ZL And where is that?

WC At Molly Butler's.

ZL Oh nice. And – and how do you get invited to that?

WC You give me your names and I put them on the list. We only do 110 people. This year our program will be just what I said, The Connection. Our guest speakers will be a person by the name of Niles Jennett. He's really a veterinarian, but he's a nutritionist, an animal nutritionist that works on ways to learn how to sustain our dairy and our beef industry with our limit – limiting capacity of forage availability, water supplies, and so on. So we have to figure out innovative ways in order to sustain that capacity by tighter management of nutritional supplies for our beef and our dairy herds.

ZL That sounds very, very interesting.

WC And then, my next speaker will be Dr. George Ruyle from the University of Arizona and that will be on the contribution of ranchlands to the survival and sustenance for the…

ZL How do you spell his name?

WC R-U-Y-L-E.

ZL Okay, thank you.

WC And then my next speaker will be Jason Bernard from Rodeo, New Mexico who's a very, very fine farmer who's learned how to multi-crop diversify on the farm. He's the dad of the two girls that I told you and runs a beautiful farm that is a great example of multiple use of our landscape and productivity of our landscape. And then our final speaker will be Senator Kerr from the Arizona Legislature. And then we have a beautiful musical program, a luncheon and – and so on. My invitations are somewhere into printing right now. I'd hand you one, but I can put you on the list if you'd like to come.

ZL That would be wonderful.

ZL How do you see Arizona's future?

WC Well, I guess I'll just speak more to the ranching industry, then the state in general. For the state in general, unfortunately, I'm very concerned about our loss of productive land, both to development and to the sale to foreign countries. I think that's very disturbing and it's very bad for our state. I also see some government intervention in the capacity of agriculture to be as productive as it should be in terms of both forestry, farming and livestock operations. There are a lot of challenges to try to deal with, that inhibit good management and maximum productivity. For ranches, more challenges, inheritance taxes, taxes.

Wolves are an immense challenge to people to be successful and to be able to be productive. We don't have enough money to pay for what it costs to sustain these wolves across our landscapes and, I don't know how long ranches can survive, a lot of them. They are being sold off. Private lands are being subdivided as we speak. When that happens, a landscape loses its functionality because you have water over here, grasslands over here. When they get separated they become less functional. Our wildlife habitats and our wildlife passageways are being fragmented because the landscape is being so divided and so fragmented with development and people selling off for various and sundry reasons. The most money in a ranch is to sell it to a development. But if a ranch isn't a ranch, it's going to be a condominium is the short way to say

it. And when that happens, everybody loses, whether you're an elk or a deer or a wolf or the populace of our state. Our watersheds become less functional, less productive and more broken. So, I guess that's kind of how I see it. I don't see enough young people staying on the landscape to keep a lot of our ranches going because it is hard work, and the lifestyle is a great reward. But the financial reward of it is not as great as people can find in other endeavors. So, I sense the loss of a lot of our family legacies in ranchlands and the functionality of our lands; a lot of our landscapes.

ZL Well I hate to end on such a sad note.

WC I – oh, I just lost it. In essence, what it says is, I've often wondered how it is that punchers are not more often struck by lightning. It must be that they are not as black as they are painted. On the other hand, they tell you that the good die young. I used to ponder on the subject quite a bit while on my lonely guard. And I believe that some of the Creator's greatest sermons are open to mankind right out under the stars in the canopy of heaven.

ZL Beautiful. Thank you Wink.

WC I'll share – I've got a little thing here that sums up our ranching industry in my opinion. I did do this for our Molly Festival for last year. "A rancher is more than a man who feeds cattle. He's a man that feeds you. Right now, he is caught up in an epic battle to save the only life he ever knew. God just save the cowboy. Give him strength to stand trying to save his land."

ZL Beautiful. Well thank you very much for sitting down with us today and sharing some of the highlights of your life. It's been delightful.

WC Well I'm sure there's a lot more, but…

ZL Well of course there is. *[Laughs]* You are so diverse in your interests and your activities and what you've accomplished. It's incredible!

WC Well thank you.