

Tom Manning Patricia, just give me your name for the Camera.

Patricia Garner: Patricia Garner.

Tom Manning Okay, and so the second day after new years day, the blizzard set in. Where were you?

Patricia Garner: We were working on a ranch south of Crawford, between Crawford and Scottsbluff.

Tom Manning And what were you doing on the ranch?

Patricia Garner: We were just hired help. It was a big ranch. Dr. Watson's ranch.

Tom Manning Was that a cattle ranch?

Patricia Garner: A cattle ranch, mm-hmm (affirmative). The storm started on Sunday, and the next morning it was terrible. It drifted so high, we walked over the trees to go to work. It was something else. We lived in a little three room house, and we lived in the living room because it was so cold in the kitchen. The snow pulled the curtains off the windows, that's how deep. The night it started I was frying pancakes and the sparks were just flying, I had to have the towel around my handle to hang onto it.

Tom Manning The sparks from static electricity?

Patricia Garner: Mm-hmm (affirmative), like Jimmy was saying happened at his house. I've never seen anything like it, but we just had a chimney with a stovepipe, you know? That probably made it worse.

Tom Manning Did the snow infiltrate the house a lot?

Patricia Garner: Just mostly in the kitchen. That's where it pulled the curtains off the wall, off the window.

Tom Manning And so, what were your responsibilities?

Patricia Garner: Well, I didn't really have any, my husband worked on this ranch. He lost a lot of cattle. One cattle field had sixty-five head of cattle, some of them even standing up, frozen. Most of them were laying down with their heads like that, and they never could, they weren't any good.

Tom Manning Was there also any sheep on the ranch?

Patricia Garner: No, ranch, no sheep.

Tom Manning Just pure cattle?

Patricia Garner: Mm-hmm (affirmative). They fed with horses.

Tom Manning Did your, your husband had to go out during the blizzard?

Patricia Garner: Well, they finally didn't after about the second day because it was so bad, so deep, and you couldn't see, you couldn't really do anything. We stayed there like two weeks before we had to help his dad, but one day while we were still at Watson's, he and another hired man rode to a different place to check on some Cattle. They went in the house and were standing by the stove, and this man had whiskey in his back pocket, and it broke, and it got warm, and he had to ride the rest of the way back in wet jeans.

Tom Manning It was a what? It was a flask?

Patricia Garner: A flask of whiskey in his back pocket. They didn't say anything, they just left.

Tom Manning And your husband didn't get into any serious trouble then, as far as getting, you know, lost in the snow or anything like that?

Patricia Garner: Well, one night he said he'd try to take some bales of hay to his dad's, and he had this horse and he pulled him on a sled, and he was going to stay all night, well the horse had got loose and came home, so they didn't know where he was, but he was fine, he was still at his dad's. About two weeks later, we quit Dr. Watson's and went home to help his dad. He had like 180 [inaudible] and my husband had about 90, we lost 20 of those. We had the water, the cistern where they drank the water from the well, the cistern to the tank, got something in it, and so we had to dip water out of this cistern to water the cattle, it was horrible. They finally got that fixed, but it was just terrible.

Tom Manning Were there any fatalities in the area that you know of?

Patricia Garner: Yes, there was a neighbor's, her brother was taking a load of hogs to dinner, and he had his wife and a little daughter with him, a little baby, and they got stuck. There was a trucker there in a big semi, so his wife and little kid got in there, and he walked. He got to this ranch and he wanted help, and they said they couldn't help, so he kept going, but he froze, froze to death. His name was Wayne Yule.

Tom Manning I heard about that story.

Patricia Garner: Yeah.

Tom Manning Actually, I found a photo.

Patricia Garner: Oh, did you?

Tom Manning Yeah, of where they found him.

Patricia Garner: That's the only fatality that I knew about. It is a miracle there weren't more.

Tom Manning Yeah, and how did you fare through the storm? Were you, you know, worried that things might not work out so well?

Patricia Garner: Well, I, you know, just that it was going to quit, but it didn't. It was like 30 below, and 70 mile an hour winds.

Tom Manning The drifts must have been enormous.

Patricia Garner: They were terrible. In this flat country, there's no protection for the cattle.

Tom Manning I guess, the drifts, they'd need something to drift up to though, like a bush.

Patricia Garner: Well, there was just deep snow most everywhere, and big drifts. It lasted for forever, it was so long because they'd get the roads open and they would blow shut. We had several people stay with us because they got stuck.

Tom Manning Right. That's also another thing I read about. A lot of people really, you know, I was surprised to hear you say that one family couldn't help. You know, from what I was reading, a lot of people just really opened their homes.

Patricia Garner: Well, they wanted him to stay there, but he just was wanting to find ... but there was no way anybody could help, you know? And his wife and daughter were okay.

Tom Manning But people that got stranded on the roads sometimes found ranches.

Patricia Garner: Mm-hmm (affirmative), we had people stay with us.

Tom Manning Did you experience any of the lightening and thunder that Francis was talking about?

Patricia Garner: No, I didn't.

Tom Manning It's a different, the storm was different in different areas.

Patricia Garner: It was just a noisy storm. It was just, I don't know. I'd never seen anything like it, and I hope I never do again.

Tom Manning Anything else you can think of?

Patricia Garner: Not really. I didn't get to see my folks for about six weeks. I was homesick. I grew up with trees around, and it was just flat country.

Tom Manning I guess when the snow hit it was maybe even flatter, just featureless, almost, except for the drifts, I guess.

Patricia Garner: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. Well, it was just deep all over, and then drifts.

Tom Manning So when you went out, I mean, was it waist-deep?

Patricia Garner: Well, it was more than that, I think. It was hard, you walked on the snow. My dad and my family were at my grandmother's house, and they stayed there that night and he walked home after the blizzard. They were there like a week before he could get home.

Tom Manning How far of a walk was that?

Patricia Garner: It was only like 3 miles or so.

Tom Manning Still, in those kind of temperatures, in that kind of wind.

Patricia Garner: One of the neighbors was snowed in Lusk and he walked home clear to north of Harrison. He [inaudible] sitting on the top of a telephone pole, it was that deep.

Tom Manning I just can't imagine drifts that deep.

Patricia Garner: It was unreal, and it took a long time for it to go away because it kept snowing and blowing.

Tom Manning Yeah Jim and I read it went all the way, you know, basically almost to the end of February.

Patricia Garner: Yeah, it did. I remember we sold our yearlings that fall for 17 cents a pound.

Tom Manning And that was a bad price?

Patricia Garner: A terrible price.

Tom Manning I also had heard that you could tell a lot of the cattle that made it through the blizzard because they'd be missing parts of their ears and tails. Did you see any of that?

Patricia Garner: No, well not really, but some of the cows had their necks turned and they couldn't straighten them out. It was ...

Tom Manning It's gruesome.

Patricia Garner: It was gruesome. I'm just surprised more people didn't freeze.

Tom Manning I think the state total was sixteen deaths.

Patricia Garner: Was it really?

Tom Manning [inaudible]

Patricia Garner: In Wyoming.

Tom Manning Yeah.

Patricia Garner: That's about all I remember.

Tom Manning Okay, thank you for talking with me.

Patricia Garner: You're welcome.

Tom Manning Great.