Dick Wilkinson Named 1965 Cattleman of Year

(Continued from page 1)

a cow that doesn't have a calf as it does to keep one that produces a calf every year.

This year for the first time on a large scale, Wilkinson is trying a new practice in marketing the calf crop. He is weaning the calves, separating them according to size and sex, and putting them on hay aftermath pasture for at least two weeks before shipping.

An active range improvement program is an important part of the operation, and he plans for more when time permits.

Cross fencing is one of his main tools. By cross fencing his pastures, he can confine cattle on areas they normally wouldn't use and keep them off areas they use too heavily. He has installed some 20 miles of division fences in the past four years. This program requires more water developments, and at the present he has some 30 stock ponds built to catch excess runoff water and store for later use.

Haying Mechanized

Haying on the Wilkinson ranch is about as mechanized as it can get with machinery known today. Three men now put up an average of 1000 tons of hay per year as compared with the former six or eight required to put up much less hay. This increased production with less manpower comes from the use of a windrower, baler and a new bale wagon.

Always looking for new ways to improve his cattle operations or to make his work easier, Dick is trying two relatively unique inventions. The first of these is a tranquilizer gun to be used in treating animals away from corrals and squeeze chutes. A small dart loaded with varying amounts of tranquilizer, depending on the size of the animal, is shot from a pistol, and in a few minutes the animal becomes docile for easy handling.

Second is truly unique. He is planning a closed circuit television installation with the camera to be located in his calving barn near his home. Dick plans to put the heifers in this calving barn since the heifers have the most trouble in calving. With the camera scanning the scene, the Wilkinsons may watch on a TV screen in the comfort of their home. This will save inumerable trips to the barn throughout the night.

The installation, using a transistorized industrial type camera, wil cost around $600, he says, and Haskell Sharrard, local television serviceman, is planning it for him. This innovation will be on display at the stock growers' annual meeting this week-end.

200 Miles of Fencing

Dick estimates that he has some 200 miles of fence on the ranch. He has devised some movable sections of board fencing that he finds versatile for use as corrals, setting up for feeders and for other needs.

He has seven or eight cattle guards on the place and has definite ideas about them. The guards are always set back into the pasture or towards the farm from the fence line. Angled fencing to the guard from the main fence diverts the stock away when they are inside.

Wilkinson favors grasses for hay, as contrasted with alfalfa, although he has some alfalfa.

"You don't have to work the ground with grass, and you can use it for pasture," he said. This year he could have taken two cuttings but decided to leave the second to ween his calves on the pasture. However, he waited to wean them until the crop was mature enough so that it wouldn't be washy.

The Wilkinsons have only 254 acres of wheat on their ranch operation this year and it is spread over 11 fields. Cost of machinery is too great to make this a major part of the operation.

Father from England

Dick's father, Frank, originally from England, moved to the present place, two miles from Heppner, in 1920. He had homesteaded at Fossil and ran sheep there. His mother, Mrs. Wavel Wilkinson, who lives in Heppner and retains a half-interest in the operation, was born in Fossil, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ball. Her father is presently living in Hermiston.

Expecting to enter World War I, in which he had lost a brother in action, Frank sold his sheep and homestead, but the Armistice was signed before he could complete his enlistment and he returned to marry Miss Ball in 1919 in Fossil.

The couple went to England on their honeymoon but returned in the spring of 1921 and bought the ranch, living in a tent while their home was under construction. Dick was born in the new house, which adjoins his present home, on December 19 of that year.

A sister, Frances, now Mrs. Walter Oslund of New Castle, Wyo., was born in 1923, and a second sister, Shirley, now Mrs. George Rugg of Heppner was born in 1929. Oslund is employed by Western Pipelines, an oil firm, and the Ruggs have the sheep operation that was started by Frank Wilkinson, now centered at Parker's Mill. Mrs. Wavel Wilkinson also retains a major interest of this operation.

Goes Through School Here

Dick went through school in Heppner and entered Oregon State University in the fall term of 1941. Army service interrupted his college career, however, and he completed five terms in three different years, taking animal husbandry.

In service, he started in chemical warfare and finished in the quartermaster corps with rank of T/5. For a time he was stationed in the Hawaiian Islands, and coincidentally, Miss Virginia Dean, daughter of a chief petty officer in the navy, may have been there at about the same time. She lived with her parents in the islands for three years and had no idea at that time that she would one day be Mrs. Dick Wilkinson and live near Heppner, Oregon.

Dick worked with his father as a young man, and the sheep operation expanded under Frank's shrewd guidance. The home place was at first 2400 acres, being half of a larger place that was split with the other half going to Wendell Cleveland, father of Howard Cleveland.

Frank acquired property in the Parker's Mill area and the north end of the county where one day the Boeing site would be located. The family remained in sheep together until 1957 when the elder Mr. Wilkinson died at the age of 72.

Father 'Good Operator'

Dick looks back on his father with considerable admiration, saying, "He was a real good operator."

Timber sold from some of his lands of the Parker's Mill area helped finance improvements and expansion of the farm operation. At one time they ran up to 6,000 sheep.

Meanwhile, Dick had met and married Mrs. Virginia Cochell, whose first husband had died. She was employed in the ASC office in Heppner and first became acquainted with Dick at a rodeo dance. Their romance blossomed into their marriage in 1950.

Virginia, appropriately enough, was born in Virginia. Because her father was a career man in the navy, the Dean family lived in a number of places and moved as his duty called.

She graduated from high school in Florida, however, and considers this her native state. Her father still lives there.

Daughters by her former marmiage are Pam (Mrs. Michael Bostwick) of Tempe, Ariz., and Judy (Mrs. Dick Paine) of Pendleton. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bostwick are attending Arizona State University and Paine is engaged in the insurance business.

The change to cattle came following Frank Wilkinson's death. When the state industrial development came in the northern part of the county, it split the operation so that Mr. and Mrs. Ruggs took the sheep and Dick and Virginia turned to the cattle operation.

Holds Many Positions

Currently president of the county livestock growers for the second year, Dick has been involved in many civic and farm activities. He served as chairman of the Morrow County school board; is a director of Columbia Basin Electric Co-operative; a director of the Federal Land Bank, Umatilla and Morrow counties; and is a director of the Heppner Rural Fire District.

He is a member of the Morrow County Grain Growers, a member of the county extension advisory council, and a member of the county weed committee. Dick is a member of the Heppner Masonic lorge and of Heppner lodge No. 358, BPOE.

He was formerly on the exective committee of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

Mrs. Wilkinson, who handles the important record keeping and bookkeeping part of the operation, is a past worthy matron of Ruth chapter, Order of Eastern Star, and joins her husband in his other activities. She is on the state OES committee.

Besides their ranch work, they enjoy bowling as a hobby, something that they can do together for recreation.

Standing beside the rustic sign at the entrance of their place one recent day, Dick and Virginia presented a happy picture. In view of their success, achieved through hard work of two generations in the family, the 1965 Cattleman and his wife have every reason to be happy.

"But the job isn't done by any means," Dick said. "We still have a long ways to go to get it where we want it."

TODAY'S RANCHES are businesses which require considerable record keeping. Virginia Wilkinson, wife of Morrow County's 1965 Cattleman of the Year, Dick Wilkinson, has the bookkeeping responsibility of their operation. She is shown in their comfortable farm office in their home. (G-T Photo).

SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT from cattle drives seen on TV is this one in progress up Skinner creek on the Dick Wilkinson ranch. Cows with this year's calves are being driven towards the home place to be separated. Since the operation of the 1965 Cattleman of the Year stretches into the mountains up Willow and Skinner creeks, he can move them through pasture to pasture without any long drives on the open road. (Gail McCarty Photo).

PLACID AUTUMN scene is presented in this photo of Gail McCarty, county extension agent, standing with the 1965 Cattleman of the Year, Dick Wilkinson, beside a farm pond on the Wilkinson ranch. He has some 30 farm ponds on his ranch. (G-T Photo).

Mustangs Finish With 7th Victory

Heppner's Mustangs finished probably their best football year in the school's history with a victory over Pomeroy, Wn., there Friday night, 13 to 6.

This gave them a 7-win, two-loss record for the year, the losses being by only one touchdown each, to Wahtonka, 12 to 6, and to Madras, 20-13.

The Mustangs scored early in their final game when Jacobs boomed over from the two in the first quarter, but the point try failed, and they held a 6-0 lead.

Pomeroy moved in front by halftime when Hibert grabbed an 8-yard pass for a touchdown in the second quarter. Davis caught a pass for the extra point, and it was 7-6 at halftime.

Neither team gained points in the third quarter, but Tim Driscoll went over on a two-yard run in the final quarter. Mark Murray kicked the point, and Heppner had the win, 13-6.

While it was a close game on the scoreboard, Heppner had a considerable advantage in yardage gained with 229 yards on running and passing to 115 for Pomeroy.

On offense, Driscoll gained 132 yards on 23 carries for a 5.7 average, Jacobs went 57 yards on 11 carries for a 4.6 average(and Ken morgan gained 33 on eight tries for a 4.1 mark.

Mickey Kindle was credited with 13 tackles, Simon Winters had nine and Murray and Jim Doherty each was responsible for eight.

Tell the advertiser you saw it in the Gazette-Times.

Ina Nichcols, 83, Dies in Pendleton

Ina Bertha Nichols, 83, a 67-year resident of the Lexington area, died Wednesday, November 10, in Hiersche's Nursing Home, Pendleton. Funeral arrangements are pending with Sweeney Mortuary in charge.

She was born near Roseburg on January 13, 1882, and she and her husband, Thomas H. Nichols, homesteaded near Lexington. He preceded her in death in 1946.

Among survivors are three sons, Archie Nichols of Lexington, Paul Nichols and Cletus Nichols, both of Portland.

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