

Hope Oliver Retires

By M. M. GRIMSEN, Claresholm, Alta.

"I'VE made lots of branding fires but I've never made one like this," remarked Hope Oliver to Mrs. Oliver as he lit a fire in the gas range in their home to which they have retired in Claresholm.

Without doubt Mr. Oliver had made many branding fires in the more than thirty years he was on a ranch. He had worked for the P. Burns Ranches Ltd., thirty years when that concern sold the "44" ranch west of Claresholm, April 1, 1952. Mr. Oliver was foreman of the "44" when it was sold to Dr. Cullen of the Argentine. Dr. Cullen, then resident in New York City, leased the ranch to Neufeld and Lassiter, Calgary, and Mr. Oliver continued as foreman until February this year.

Mr. Oliver was only nine years old when he came with his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. John Oliver, to this area in 1901. At that time Claresholm consisted only of the station and stockyards, Mr. Oliver remembers.

Mr. Oliver's father took a homestead 20 miles west of Claresholm and the nearest town was Fort Macleod, about forty-five miles "cross country."

Trips were made to Fort Macleod three and four times a year for supplies—"We used to buy dried apples and dried prunes by the hundred pounds," Mr. Oliver says.

One of Mr. Oliver's most vivid memories of the early days occurred when he was twenty-one—he was bucked off a horse and suffered fractures of both legs. The nearest doctor, Dr. A. G. McMillan, now of Calgary, was at Granum, south of Claresholm, and the trip there, and back, was made by wagon.

Perhaps it reflects Mr. Oliver's ability to judge men and his ability to work with them that he recalls no trouble with men who worked for him in over 30 years. He never hired a man without first seeing him and talking to him and he was always a "working foreman," working with the men no matter what the weather and asking no one to do what he wouldn't do himself.

"If the men who ever worked for him were around they would come back and work for him again, if he wanted them," says Mrs. Oliver.

Herefords of the "44" numbered about 2,500 average and about 1,000 calves were branded every year.

Mrs. Oliver has always been as conscientious and hard-working as her husband. In "branding time" she was up to prepare the early breakfast at 2 a.m. for the men who went out and "gathered" the calves before the flies began to harass the cattle.

That done the men came in for their second breakfast between 7:30 and 8 o'clock. After this meal the men went out and went to work branding.

A welcome break in the long day was two or three hours in the afternoon after which the men often spent hours "mothering" the calves, getting the branded calves back to their mothers.

The cows had been shut away from the calves all day and "they always bellered," Mrs. Oliver says.

For several years the Olivers were at the Walrond ranch twenty miles from Lundbreck. One year during the "hungry thirties" when wages for men were



A team of young buffalo was driven in the 1925 Calgary Stampede Parade. Shown are: Driver Bert Bishoff and riders, left, Harry Shore, and right, Mickey Dirrairie.—Photo by McDermid Drug.

\$1 per day, calves were trailed instead of shipped to Calgary.

About 2,000 head from the Walrond, the "44" and the Flying E ranch west of Stavely were driven to Calgary by eight men with an extra string of saddle horses and a pack horse.

"We stopped wherever we were at sundown," says Mr. Oliver. Feed was bought from ranchers along the way and the cattle were fed every night.

The trip which took place during November, took from eight to ten days. The herd swam the Bow River at the old Ricardo ranch.

In the thirty years she was on the ranch Mrs. Oliver says she made so many hot cakes if they were laid end to end they would reach from here to California and back. When she thought she would make hot cakes only every other day, "You could see a fork reaching for them if they weren't there," she says.

Hope Oliver and Miss Betty Etherington were married in 1921 and they have two daughters and one son. The eldest daughter, Mrs. Gordon Watt (Evelyn), Stavely, is still teaching Couler Coulee School near Stavely. The younger daughter, Mrs. Danny MacDonald (Irma), Calgary, is a graduate nurse. Their son, D. J. Oliver, lives in Calgary. There are five granddaughters.

While the family lived on the Walrond the three children attended the convent in Pincher Creek. Well does Mrs. Oliver remember the two miles between Pincher Creek station and the town when they went for the children once a month, "rain or shine."

During the 30 years the Olivers worked for the P. Burns Ranches Ltd. mutually satisfactory relations existed. For many years until 1943 the supervisor of Burns ranches was Tom Farrell, Calgary. From 1943 until the "44" was sold the supervisor was Raymond Clifford.

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