

Leonard Hopkins

Leonard "Hoppy" Hopkins was born in Denver, Colorado in 1910. Hoppy has spent nearly all his life in Elko County. First, working on ranches in Ruby Valley, then later managing both the Big Springs Ranch and the Winecup Ranch near Wells. Hoppy and his wife, Hazel, also operated their own place just north of Wells until their retirement in 1976.

"I left home in 1927, rode the rails out of Denver and when I got to Elko, I had just enough money to buy a bowl of soup. I went across the street to the Hines Cafe, ate all the crackers off the counter, and that night George Cotant let me sleep in one of the cells at the jail.

"The next morning Earl Wright came into town looking for someone to feed cows, and that's how I ended up in Ruby Valley.

"I spent a lot of years in Ruby Valley working for Bob Duval and other ranchers, cutting post, irrigating, running horses, whatever needed done. That was before they ever created the Ruby Lake Refuge.

"There wasn't any deer to speak of, when I came to the country. Along in the 1930's Chris Guldager killed a deer there in Pole Canyon. It created quite a stir, everyone in the valley came to see it.

"It wasn't until the 1940's, during the war, that the deer got thick, mostly because everyone was keeping the predators down.

"I served on the County Game Board for several years in the 1950's. Things were a lot better then, we had some say, they'd listen to us, but then in the 1970's the State took over the game management and things have gone downhill ever since.

"The fishing isn't what it used to be either. When the Fish Hatchery at Cave Creek was a county hatchery, Skeet Moore would plant nearly all the creeks. We even planted fish in that little creek at the old Woodhouse Place. It provided a lot of good fishing, and took the pressure off the reservoirs.

"I don't think people remember just how much freedom and wildlife we did have then. More government hasn't helped anything. Government's a joke. they can't manage anything, they made it worse.

"This wild horse thing has gotten clear out of hand. Before government control, the ranchers would gather the horses twice a year, cut (castrate) the best ones, turn the mares back out, and go to the railroad with the rest.

"The ranchers controlled the numbers and it wasn't a million dollar program either, all it took was a good pocket knife.

"Its getting worse all the time, here we are, we have one segment of society trying too make a living, while another segment is trying to take it away from them.

"Bureaucracies are dangerous, after they reach a certain size they can't be controlled, they just continue to grow".