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We tested our bulls on the fifth of January. Inventoried three fertile low birthweight sires to put on the heifers the same day. Three days later, one ox headed south over three fences onto our neighbor on a sightseeing trip. In the same sequence, one of his pasture mates was disqualified because of his weight and weakness of his hind legs, leaving us short two bulls.

Problems developed so fast, I penned the overweight bull too late one evening to chance driving him to the headquarters, thinking also that a night in jail might make him stay home. Next morning, my helper loaded him in the trailer for a ride back to the bull pasture. On the following day, he was back weighting down heifers in a dangerous way.

Took the two of us to pen the bull a second time. Once we were able to talk, we tried to figure how the rogue learned the way from the bull pasture to the south side of the ranch riding in a trailer. All we could decide was that he was looking out the sides of the trailer watching for landmarks.

Once on a hair goat outfit in Central Texas, a horse tuner claimed his bay two year-old was so smart he learned to pen goats standing in the trailer, watching his kids

putting the goats in the shed at night. Must have saved "Bay Boy" for "shedding" goats, because all the time we were working the Boss's cattle pastured on the place, the old colt never stepped out of the trailer. As much I remember those times, the cowboy probably learned his skills watching from a trailer, too, as on every calf thrown, he lost his hold on the hind leg about the time I was leaning over with my knife.

Our neighbor Alfredo brought the traveling bull home. He's a high powered Angus bull rated as low birthweight and high yearling weight on his EPD. My brother raised him, so I know the information is correct. However, checking his pedigree showed his paternal grandfather was a bull called "Distant Horizon" and his maternal side went back to "Gypsy Gal," a line bred prodigy of "Tail Light" and "Dusty Trail." Transfer records showed "Distant Horizon" and "Gypsy Gal" had been residents of several parts of the state.

After I added the number of times we'd trailed the grandson down, I decided that as bad as fences are today, I'd better not chance adding such a transitory bloodline to my herd, or I'd have cattle migrating into Mexico. Also, packer bulls were selling on a strong market. I opted for the sale ring. I sure didn't want to risk him breaking his

leg jumping a fence as the animal rights people restrict the sale of bulls hopping on three legs. Guided by a deep love of animals, I suppose, "the rightists" think it is more humane for a broken-legged animal to suffer a slow death on the prairie than be salvaged for food in a packing plant.

Faced with having only one bull left to breed the heifers, I called the head of the agriculture department at the University in San Angelo for help to find heifer bulls. "The college's sale isn't until March," he said. But he offered to help find bulls, and did. He's a plenty savvy hombre. While he was on the wire, I asked him if there was any chance of creating an EPD rating for fence breaking and jumping characteristics. I seemed to lose him. The gap between the soil and the classroom is always a wide one.

The breeder the professor found having heifer bulls was an old time Angus cowman off the Caprock close to Lamesa, Texas. Driving into the ranch, the lay of the land showed to be a big country. The outside fence on the highway looked bull-proof. Corrals by the side of the road were normal height. I watched fencelines for pushed up water gaps and broken top wires driving to the house. I didn't want to take any chances of introducing a new bloodline of fence-hurdling cattle.

After picking two bulls, the seller said the bulls were from farther north in the Texas Panhandle. I flinched, but held ground. Fog was thick above the Caprock where I had just come. I figured if I could drive fast enough through the fog, the bulls would lose their sense of direction. I'd had all the homing pigeon oxen I wanted.

So I refused an invitation for lunch. Every time I stopped to check my tires on the way back, I punched the bulls around facing backward in the trailer. Before I turn the bulls out, I am going to brand the new prospects my Grandfather Noelke's trail brand. Also, we need to close in the sides of the trailer. Most of all, we need a change of luck...