

DECEMBER 14, 1978

Weeks fail to pass without more news of foreign interests buying U.S. ranch land. Oil rich shahs and yen heavy Japanese, along with the French, the Swiss and the Germans have developed a terrible appetite for our property. Successful real estate operators, I feel sure, are learning new languages. Federal and state governments talk about laws restricting foreign investments in our country, but no one has figured out how to keep Americans from taking money.

You don't have to travel abroad to understand why our land is so popular. By watching the Sunday evening news sketch, it's obvious that folks everywhere are developing blisters on their elbows from rubbing up against each other. Sagebrush flats must look mighty good to a fellow whose horizon is about 17 inches from his nose.

I'm not even semi-tolerant of the idea of allowing outsiders to move in on us. I've seen enough of those pickled fish and painted feather dealers to settle my desire for foreign neighbors. I remember one time I was over in a country named Morocco on a short visit and guarding my passport and pocketbook like they were crown jewels.

Until I caught on to the show, I was curious why the men over there wore toga like robes that looked like an evening dress made from sweat suits. After I'd observed these hombres' tourist fleecing methods, I figured out the reason for the billowing robes. They were to keep their brothers or anyone else from knowing where their hip pockets were located.

In November, I thought of Morocco again. The king of the country was visiting the White House. I started to write Mr. Carter's staff to warn them about inventorying the spoons and the rest of the china closet. But then I remembered that Mr. Carter's background in the peanut business and politics had probably taught him enough of the old hocus pocus that he knew a ringer whether he was an African king or a camel driver.

In a right casual report, I read that the Japanese had bought a big bank in California. The article didn't say whether the jug was going to continue to accept the small accounts of the oval eyes, or was going to merely serve as a large clearing house until the Japanese money could be loaded on ships for home.

Whatever they were going to do, if it's going to be a trend we herders are sure going to be in a jam. From what I know and have seen, jugkeepers and ranchers have had a communication problem without adding a language barrier. The first time an old boy walked into a Japanese bank carrying a tale of woe about the everyday hardships of the rangeland might just be the first time that old boy was ever handed a hari-kari sword with the instructions written on the handle. Those slanteyed fellows have some funny ways of looking at human failure. It'd be a hard struggle to break them into the tragedies of our game. Lots of bad jokes have been made about native American bankers, but that sure didn't mean we didn't like them.

Perhaps I'm becoming a regular Chicken Licken or a fretful old maid. For all I know, I may like borrowing a cup of rice or a bottle of wine from a neighbor. It really isn't so bad, because once they get their second winter's feed bill, they'll head for home. So try to think of something else during the Christmas season.