

Young waitresses in orange and white seersucker uniforms scurried about the hamburger joint. City folks flocked in for the lunch hour. San Angelo, it seems, has a goal to provide a franchise restaurant for every citizen. From the front window of the one I speak of, I could see four or five other fast food places doing a thriving trade. The grilling and greasing or soybean paddies and sesame seed buns must be a number one business, as many new spots open every year.

At the time, however, I wasn't making an investigation of franchises. My thoughts were on the most unlicensed deal of all - the marketing and shopping of drouth produce. Namely, the sale of potted calves matured to matted hairbals, the movement of drouth lambs turned to wool and bones, and worst of all, the exchange of middle age cows that had suddenly changed to ancient discards that had no home outside of a packing plant.

In the depths of the above tragedy, I had chosen the hamburger operation for tow reasons. Number one, nothing on the menu had enough beef in it to remind me of the old cows. And number two, not one of the busy city fellows had one story to tell of an ill-fated run in the North or a desperate dispersal of a foundation herd in the South.

I remember ordering a "No. 9." My call number was 192. Advance payment of the check was exactly \$1.80. I know that's the precise amount, as I recall being amazed that in these glorious times of runaway inflation and high taxes, a vendor of grease soaked grain and burned bread could move his wares in even money at fancy prices. Perhaps my thoughts weren't that clear; nevertheless, by written deposition or on a witness stand in front of high bench and black robe, I'll swear that the cashier short counted me out of a dollar.

Hot grease ran from a fold in the napkin down through the creases of my palm and past the inside of my wrist. I'm unsure of the motion or the stance. I watch a moderate amount of television. I suppose I was holding my hands up like a sullen gangster in a crime show.

Sixty minutes before, settlement was completed on one year's work on the sheep. Early in the morning, a handshake concluded the title change and pasturage for life of the old cows. Can a mere pittance like a dollar swindle by a hamburger salesman freeze the emotions or paralyze the nerves? I think it can and did.

Greasy handprints on the steering wheel of the pickup prove that I drove home. The tolls and casualties of a drouth are hard to keep track of. What's a dollar more in a game that's going to take it all?