

City folks mention the dry weather more often than the country people do. Market collapses added to high priced feed bills muted the herders before drought became a topic of conversation. Plenty of the fanciers of horns and hooves have had the wind knocked out of them so hard that their voice boxes lie too far in their chests to make conversation. By spring, I look for sign language to develop.

Livestock bankers are already tapping out messages with their fountain pens on the desks. Jugkeepers, like mad wives waiting at the kitchen tables, show displeasure by pecking on wood. I've seen old gals that had to be led blindfolded toward a cook stove spend all night sitting in the same kitchen waiting on a husband that'd been delayed by important business or confused by a time lapse.

Weather reports show that it's dry everywhere. Fellow - wrote me from California to send some rain for his grape vineyards. Writing the Shortgrass Country for a rain is the same as asking the Irish Republic to develop a peace plan. I honestly believe that we have less rain than the Irish do peace, as the Irishmen do stop fighting each other every once in awhile to try to whip the English.

Things are going to improve from the cow herders. The last crash of the fat cattle market seared the hollow horn set's nerves clear to the tap roots. Coin and chattels cease to be important after a depression sings past the sword's hilt to the knob on the handle. When an operator gets burned so bad he can do a duet with a fire-walker without so much as arching his instep, sad news from Omaha or Sioux City isn't going to bother him.

At a Christmas party, an old college friend asked about the cow business. I told him that I was no longer interested in material wealth. As far as markets were concerned, I had abandoned them for a deeper meaning. He was so upset that he went home with a bad headache.

Space was no problem after that confession spread through the gathering. I'd been polishing my buffet manners for the event. You know, eating with my elbows clamped against my ribs and answering folks with "indeed" instead of saying "yeah."

However, I might as well have been at a chuckwagon supper in a 50 section pasture. Closest human contact I had for the rest of the evening was a tanglefooted waiter tripping on my boot heel.

I hadn't realized that San Angelo society was so bigoted. Some might fancy citizens go to Yogis for meditating sessions. Goat Whiskers the Younger and myself once hired an attorney that followed the practice. We figured that he was all right until one day Whiskers caught him staring off in space when we were paying him to stare at his law books.

Man doesn't have to be a money grabber to be happy. Government programs support hombres who tip the pool hall help more than a heifer calf brings. Mammon is a false god. No use worshiping something that you are not going to have anyway.

Economists say that prices will improve in the third quarter. Confound the third quarter. Ground Hog Day lasted as long as the month of August used to take. St. Valentine's eve is a far away figure.

Feeders and cow and calf operators are going to have to be put under communal oxygen tents unless there's relief. I don't want to hear about the third quarter. The pressing date is the one when the banker is going to want to talk over renewing the paper.