

## Hercules Performed Great Feats, None Involving Stubborn Old Ewes

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MERTZON — It's a shame one of the government's experts on Range Ewe Management, or a young chap studying Animal husbandry, didn't drop by my boss's shipping pens about 7 this morning. Either one could have helped load what must have been the most contrary 57 head of sheep in Texas, and gained some experience that would have lasted for life. And if some energetic youngster pursuing academic knowledge of the sheep business had shown up, he would have been most welcome. There were times when the crew — made up of a pasaporte, a trucker and myself — would have embraced any visitor, whether he was a sorefooted viajero from Coahuila or a distributor of pamphlets for some little-know religion.

Such a newcomer would have been joyously received if for no other reason than he was capable of going in search of help.

There was no reason for these sheep "taking the studs" as they did. The ground was wet, the sky was cloudy; nether dust nor sun in their faces could be blamed. The setting was perfect for working sheep. Except for exhibitionists who tour the country exercising their sheep dogs in air conditioned rodeo arenas, no man could have asked for better conditions.

Nor could my helpers be blamed. The pasaporte had worked sheep on this side of the Rio Grande long enough to know which end of a sheep to punch. And the truck driver, unlike some you've seen that are more help when asleep in the cab, was a gent well schooled in handling ornery stock.

Then, you may say, the ewes must have been hot and tired. This can also be ruled out. The distance they'd traveled could be made in a trot by a circus fat lady without a drop of sweat on her brow.

While we're at it, I might as well list a few other things that were not ailing these balky old nellies: they were not sick, over full of feed and water, nor excited. They had not been fought or otherwise abused. They were most certainly not inexperienced; these old grannies had been through this same chute enough times to know every nail in it. Never at any time did we fall into a rage and stomp our hats or shout obscenities that would make a seaport bartender blush.

Granted, we were tempted to tell these vapor-locked old sisters where to go. But we didn't because we knew by heart what old Jim Whittier, or was it Jim Greenleaf, once said upon returning from a stint with a sheep camp in the desert country. "When a man is confronted with making a sheep yield to his wishes, he needs two things: luck and patience. But should he have a choice between these, he should take luck and hope like hell the patience comes later."

If I am not mistaken, old Jim abandoned the sheep business and made quite a poet. But I am not certain of this; at least he never made any rhymes about the beauty of sheep or their herders.

Well, the long and short of this tale is that we finally got the sheep worked by legging out the last six head, and the loaded truck headed for the auction. This evening, as I review the morning, I'm glad we didn't have 500 head of the same caliber to work; it's doubtful if we could have got them to next week's auction in time to get them sold.

After all, there's really not much call to get extremely upset over 57 head of old ewes when you can pick up the paper any day and read that several million — or it several billion — Orientals are rarin' to go to war.