

SEPTEMBER 1, 1988

The sheep business went on the wildest spree this spring we've ever witnessed in the Shortgrass Country. Prior to this year, had a woolie operator dared mention that he thought staple wools might sell for over \$3 a pound in the grease, and spring lambs might sell for a \$100 cwt., he'd not have only lost his freedom, but they'd probably have shut up his wife, too, just in case such insanity might be contagious.

And from the way the prices held, it looked like those of us who were going to have fall lambs to ship were going to have to hire financial advisors to reinvest our money. After I'd made the first tally at marketing, I began to see a check printed on green banking paper that had a long string of figures in that hallowed space after the payee's name.

On the way in after the mail, I'd stop sometimes and pull off and figure out how many dollars the lambs and my old ewes were going to be worth. Being real careful, I'd deduct the trucking and the commission and allow for a shrink and a summer death loss. Still, I'd have the biggest pile of cash I'd ever thought about making in the ranch business.

However, along in June, the fluff began to go out of those high floating clouds. First, I thought the big break was just the traditional hot weather mark-off that occurs every summer. When that didn't pan out, I began to hope that perhaps the buyer I'd been calling was in a personal slump.

I knew it was his regular habit to eat breakfast over at the yards with one of his compadres before they went to work. By the time they consumed enough fried eggs, buttered biscuits and pork sausage to feed 11 or 12 cowboys, the amount of sage and black pepper alone that they were taking on from the sausage patties was sufficient to put a shadow on a new moon much less what it could do to a sheep buyer's disposition.

But those ideas turned out to be wrong. Summer rains came and cooled off the ground, a trucker said the stockyards cafe had a new cook, and lambs still slipped every week.

One of these days one of those windfalls is going to hit us broadside and make us all rich. It takes a fast dealer to catch a boomlet that quick. Now that it's over, I think I feel better than I did when I had so much to look after.