

JUNE 10, 1982

Viewed from the front of the ranch house, wild flowers are blooming in the full force of spring. Flaming reds and yellows blaze in the morning sun. Grass and weeds have covered the bare spots from winter. Feeble indeed is the old cow or mother ewe that hasn't made good gains. Calves and lambs also show great promise for fall weights.

The morning papers continue to chart the influx of Northerners to Texas. I don't suppose grazing conditions are drawing the immigrants, yet they are bound to be amazed at seeing our country for the first time. Movies and TV shorts normally show the state as being somewhere in between the great deserts of the continent and the wasteland around ancient volcanoes.

However, what the new citizens think of the landscape doesn't bother me as much as what they are going to think of us. Wind in Texas isn't necessarily limited to those that come raging across our plains, or the gulf storms that wreck our coastal cities. Within our boundaries are groups of big league story tellers that around the coffee houses and auction barns pressure up to mighty high gales.

From the way current events are treated down here, it's no wonder that 99 percent of the folks from out of state have false impressions of the land. I know some old boys in San Angelo who can expand the square footage of a yarn to the point that they can stretch the horns on a Longhorn steer past the width and height of the biggest airplane hanger in Texas.

Like yesterday, for example, I was involved in a horse deal out at the auction in Angelo. It wasn't my horse and it wasn't going to be my horse. To spare the details of a long story, let's just say that I got to talking when I should have been listening, and on June 4 found myself, mixed up as an intermediary in a registered horse trade.

Similar to anything to do with the horse business, to make the deal work was going to take more talking than riding or roping. The guy who was supposed to deliver the filly's papers was out of town. Prospective bidders wouldn't accept my guarantee that she had a bloodline that'd silence the very headquarters of the American Quarter Horse Assn., once the papers were presented for transfer.

In fact hombres who would have trusted me, I feel sure, with such a princely sum of \$600 gave me scornful glances at the mere suggestion that I'd warrant her heritage.

So while we were waiting for a photo static copy of the mare's birth certificate, two old boys got to playing indoor polo right in the middle of our table at the coffee house. Mallets began to whip faster than the racquets at the courts of Wimbledon; willow balls blinded fast riders. The heat of the chuckers made the bygone grudge matches of the British Army in India sound like a croquet game behind an English manor house.

Understand that this plunge in veracity was unimportant except that I knew in case those papers didn't show up, I was going to have a hard time ever throwing off these polo stories for an aura of truth and honor. Besides that, I was afraid I might be tempted to tell some big lie about a polo game myself, because when I, was a kid I'd spent several winters following my boss on that sporty circuit

The registration papers arrived about six minutes before the mare hit the ring. She brought about twice what I thought she would, and about 1/16th of what I'd assured her owners she was going to sell for. The two polo players must have been disqualified by a

waitress as they didn't make it in time to bid. But at least the effects of their corruption didn't reach far enough to sour the trade.