

The Big Boss broke a flax mane and tailed gelding as his final pupil in a long line of students. Happened in the Boss's career as a horse tuner when he spent more time gentling the horse than putting on a show.

Caesar's mother was a mare called "May Dew." All her colts except Caesar broke sound and gentle. She must have rolled over at the wrong time when carrying Caesar, as long after the trainer and the trainee's deaths, I've deduced that Caesar's brain seated upside down. But I'll relate the facts and let you decide.

Speculation behind the Boss's back ruled that Caesar was blind or stupid, or perhaps so stupid the defect ruined his eyesight. All diagnosticians wore spurs and chaps instead of stethoscopes and wristwatches. The only introduced consultant was an old race horse trainer from Louisiana whom the Boss hired to float teeth and perform such equestrian tricks as firing hooves or maybe knocking out an ingrown tooth. Sim's philosophy was to study comparative symptoms in the riders and the ridden to solve a problem.

First, however, you need to know Caesar's problems. His front feet had to be shod first. To shoe his hind feet, I had to rub his belly while Jose tacked on the shoes. But when Jose started on the back, slowly sliding his hand down the ham toward the hock, Caesar lifted his front foot, interrupting my massage. The minute he dropped his front

foot, he kicked on the off side so hard he hit his own belly.

Now please look at the scene: a flax mane and tailed brute of a 1200 pound horse standing under a brush arbor, one five-foot, four-inch Mexican cowboy holding a rasp protected by leather chaps for safety gear, and myself holding a cotton lead rope poised to turn the 1200 pound beast away from Jose. Yet him kicking the wrong foot on the wrong side trying to hit Jose.

Have that? But if he knew he had on the front shoes, why was he lifting up his front feet when Jose patted his hind leg? All right, remember Sim's advice. In those days a cowboy named "Coyote Bill" helped us every fall and every spring. Had been a college basketball star and a much sought-after roper in head and heeling events.

One spring "Coyote" arose in such a rush, he failed to discover his boots mismatched until he finished breakfast at the coffeehouse. Too late to go back home and change boots, he worked all day wearing the mismatched ones. He admitted later that it took him until the Fourth of July roping before he paired his boots again. Thus it could have been that Caesar's front shoes were not mates, or like Coyote Bill, the switch confused him.

The second case was a mare named Clementine. She should have been named Runaway Clemmie. She'd break loose or throw an old boy, then hit a high run toward the barn. Thirty feet before reaching a crossfence, she'd rise in a high jump and land just in time to hit the wires full

force. Tore up saddles, broke cowboys' hearts, and never suffered a serious wound. Must have lived for 400 years before she died from too much leisure.

Back to Caesar, Jose thought a witch cursed the old demon. After shoeing him every spring and fall, Jose began to believe he was cursed. And not being superstitious, I figured the reason we had to shoe Caesar was to get a check at the first of every month.

Caesar seemed to know he was the Boss's pet. Invariably, when I was roping a mount for a cowboy, he would charge between me and the loop. Don't know how many times I heard, "Watch him, the old sapsucker is going under your rope." I do know how many throws it took for me to catch a horse. My lifetime average was four loops, not counting the warm-up.

Was also my job to lead him over to the railroad pens for the Boss to ride when working cattle. Wasn't but one half mile. Had to drag him every step, staying on guard so he didn't rimfire my horse. I learned to curse in the first grade and did my graduate work as a shine boy at the barbershop. Became recognized as a polished performer in the art of profanity in a cowboy world of curse words fit for a sailing crew by leading the old fool to the pens on shipping days.

"Coyote" never mismatched his boots after one siege, or if he did he kept quiet. Jose began to take longer vacations to Mexico. Caesar stopping on his front feet

began to bother the Boss. One spring, weeks apart, the horse and the owner expired.

So I have the final say: May Dew rolling completely over on her back in the last term of her pregnancy turned Caesar's brain upside down. What do you think?