

FEBRUARY 3, 1983

Up north of us, the snow and ice have been slow to melt. Winds off these snow banks have held a winter chill on the Shortgrass scene. Around the coffee houses, hombres are bumped up from cold pickups and drafty domino halls. We've seen harder winters. I feel sure, but it seems that time is lowering our resistance.

During the thaw, we were forced to start working off our thin cattle to separate pastures for more feed. As I mentioned a week or so ago, our senior division cattle are wintering in hard shape. The older cows have already consumed so many range cubes that their mouth\ whiskers have turned to a cottonseed meal yellow. I fear that the fast food house that ends up grinding these old sisters into patties may have a hard time concealing the milo taste.

Besides their nutritional deficiencies, these particular cows are suffering from a lack of cooperation with their owner. We spent the better part of a morning this week sorting off one bunch of hospital cases. It took so long, and it got so cold sitting on a horse, that I shook my neck scarf down around my stomach.

I'd start an old Nellie away from the bunch, trying to pick a route so we wouldn't have to face north. Every single one of these black patients wanted a flush of cold air in her face. By the time I'd located my scarf it was so twisted up that I'd have got frostbite before I could untangle the mess.

My Mother used to have a clothesline that'd twist up sheets and towels when the wind changed to the north. But I can't remember them shaking as bad as I did on that particular morning of the cow work.

Most of the time I had my head sort of bent toward that light, 60 mile an hour breeze. I kind of think may, be my scarf was related to some socks I've owned that always ended up in the toe of my boots. With synthetic blends being so popular, it's no telling what kind of strangulation perils exist in any fashion year.

After I got back to the house and got warmed up enough to dry the tears from my eyes, I examined all my wardrobe for wrinkles and twists. I didn't want to hang myself in my own costume. Before I got that scarf off my belly it was cutting the circulation off my chest. It doesn't sound very romantic to me to die from being twisted up in your own clothes. I didn't find anything else dangerous; however, I did lengthen the buttons on my chap tie down.

Every time I go look at those old cows, I prescribe one more pound of feed per day. Spring is going to have to come early to save that wreck. Next fall, I am going to cull down to short four year-olds and then cut deeper according to flesh. It's the last time I am going to winter any old cows on our grass. If you want to profit by my bad judgment, you'll follow the same rule.