

One of the cattleman magazines ran a picture in the last issue of a two ounce hamburger patty lying on a 12 inch dinner plate. Object of the layout was to dramatize the daily per capita consumption of beef by the American people.

It was obvious that a restaurant hadn't participated in the deal. Cafe cooks can't serve a hamburger steak without putting a parsley branch on a piece of aged lettuce. By my best estimates, parsley and lettuce in a cafe last longer than steel belted radials do on a small car. I've watched folks eating in cafes for 40 years. I never have seen anyone eat the decorations.

I'd already gone to bed when I discovered the story. Town dogs in Mertzon howl every night. High school kids run open exhaust automobiles at such high speeds that friction of the rubber wearing disturbs the night. Add Child Who Sits in the Sun's moon chanting to the disorder and you'll need a bedtime horror tale to ruin my sleep.

Without grim reminders, the nightmare index among herders makes the Richter scale on earthquakes look like a row of silver stars on a Sunday school report. Neighborhoods populated by heavy concentrations of stockmen have so much groaning and moaning after dark that outsiders have gone so far as to ask for protection from the busing laws. I try to think of 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. as my nap time. It works better than losing eight hours sleep reworking the days. I feel refreshed from a nap; I despise missing a full night's sleep.

The amount of bad news the cowboys receive certainly offsets the surplus of cattle. For every million cows, we must get 60 metric tons of discouraging reports. Gloom accumulates faster than the cows produce calves. All of the two ounce hamburgers rolled into one ball won't cover the amount of writing and talking about the end. We are sure lucky that we don't have to furnish the work oxen to carry off the trash or we would be in a jam.

Psychiatrists advise against avoiding the truth. Ignoring adversity, they say, causes folks to depart from reality. I disagree. I favor letting the doctors face the truth and allowing the rest of us to believe that the story of Little Red Riding Hood was the most authentic work ever published on grandmas and wolves. That is, if that'll make us happy. At a hundred dollars an hour, a doctor doesn't need to dodge anything but his income tax form. On a hundred dollar an hour wage scale, a fellow should be able to face a 700 pound san gorilla with her hair curled up in pink rollers.

Other emptyheads go around saying that the truth never hurt anyone. Parties afflicted by that misdirection need a short course on 38 cent cattle matriculated at a set of cow scales followed by a session on the wrong side of a banker's desk. Slow learners could be sent out to San Clemente to talk to Mr. Nixon. The rest, I suppose, could be marked off as hopeless.

Advertising agencies know about the truth. I like to look at those cigarette ads showing two cowpunchers holding the reins of their ponies, wearing hats creased so perfectly that the wrinkles in their jackets stand out.

Smokers go for that image. Tobacco companies need a real life sequence about as much as they'd need a picture of an X-ray machine on a pack of cigarettes.

How much do you think they'd sell showing two hombres so humped up over a weight sheet that their boot heels were cutting prints in the concrete? About four packs a year, counting the samples distributed. That's the answer.

No, the truth is a tool. Under limited circumstances, honesty is a policy to consider on any deal. Over-exposure to the future is going to get us before fate can act. I say dodge whatever you can, as there'll be enough direct hits as it is.