

Twelve hundred days into the new century and I am still trying to remember who the cowboy was I helped bring a bunch of saddle horses to the 09 from the Barnhart stock pens. There I was on a 1935 horse drive as the rest of the world spun through technological advancements that'd make Tom Edison consider junking his light bulb idea.

In a book called "Undertaking," the writer Thomas Lynch says, "An old man writes his memoirs and a young man writes his resume." Goes on to expand the statement by saying, "The old man lives in memories, the young man on imagination."

Mr. Lynch's charge came at an appropriate time. Two grandsons were coming from Austin to spend part of the summer working at the ranch. One a 16 year-old, the other 20, they were to arrive on a weekend. When they came they were bearing enough directions for their care to have raised all eight of their mothers, fathers and uncles from childhood to ages 21 years.

The youngest forgot all of his gear except his guitar and a pocket comb. The oldest arrived far into the night, outfitted with half the stuff he'd packed for college last fall and failed to unload during the school year. My son Ralph loaned him an old hat. Without clearance, he borrowed

his Uncle John's saddle. I loaned him a belt. And the cowboy working at the ranch dug out a pair of old chaps long enough to reach down his hindlegs to protect his knees from thorns.

I took the younger boy in hand. Told him not to carry his pocket comb to work as the comb and the guitar represented all his material possessions – his nubbin, so to speak. To abide by his grandfather's and great-grandfather's before him rules to never bet your whole roll on anything except cattle or sheep. To never borrow money to gamble on cards and dice unless the dealers or the croupiers were family members. And to remember the sage advice of his great-grandfather, the Big Boss, to never steal a bicycle in Hong Kong.

Next day's post brought a packet containing a power of attorney granting authority to seek medical treatment for the minor from his mother and dad. Enclosed was a check for \$300, making me the bearer. I didn't feel so broke that I needed an emergency fund. We had just sold last year's \$2800 black bull for \$770 less freight. Didn't hurt my feelings to bankroll the three hundred, but after reading how often she wanted him to use sunscreen, (she's my daughter – a doctor), I figured the money was to buy suntan oil or sunscreen one.

The boys worked the first week learning why not to stand behind black cows and which side of a steel gate was safe in a crowd pen. For a break at midweek, I took them to San Angelo for a controlled visit of the lights. While I went to a meeting close to Angelo State University, I sent them to find the physical science building, instructed not to talk to coeds, not to ask coeds questions for directions, and not to answer questions from coeds. Sounds strict, yet girls are what lured every one of my sons away from the ranch. I wasn't going to make the same mistake again.

After the meeting, we went to an "all you can eat" barbecue rib place. I wanted to see if the place could meet the challenge of the protein requirements of two teenage boys. Sixteen and twenty year-old boys can clean a side of rib bones to a sheen that'd make an African jackal think he was a vegetarian. The management held up under the deal, but once I thought I detected a 911 look in the old gal running the cash register.

Next we went back to the University to see the "Cowboy and the Astronomer" show in the planetarium, narrated by Baxter Black. The object was to direct the boys' interest toward star watching - a passtime possible to follow at the ranch and stay away from town. The downfall of many a young

cowboy was watching a movie of a slick red convertible winding up a coastal mountainside carrying a slicker looking gal rubbing the shoulder of an actor wearing a white scarf blowing in the sea breeze.

Too early yet to see how well my ideas and advice are working. Every day, they ask fewer questions about the past. Today is a Saturday afternoon. The boys are asleep in the back room. Said they wanted to rest instead of going to the college's concert on classical music. I wonder if the 300 bucks was intended for entertainment expense.