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**SHORTGRASS COUNTRY by Monte Noelke**

Curiosity was the attraction to the annual meeting of the Holistic Resource group at San Angelo a week or so ago. A spot on the radio further seeded the idea. "The closing workshop will be holistic management—a process of solving environmental issues. Panelists will range from a member of the Sierra Club to officers in ranching organizations," the announcement said.

Alone at the ranch, the listing of the panelists sounded like the beginning of a good card at the YMCA gym for a Saturday night Australian team match.

Just to name a few of the representatives, there was one from the Texas Conservancy and a fellow from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and a tall bearded gent from the Texas Wildlife Assn. A landowner's outfit from out west had sent an agent. The editor of a livestock periodical was on hand. Sitting at his right was the guy with Sierra Club and on his left was an employee of the Texas Parks and Wildlife and the only one I knew very well, the president of the Texas Sheep and Goat herder's association.

The moderator opened the program by describing 60,000 acres of ranchland located at Rt. Hancock, Texas in Chihuahua desert. Each panelist was assigned a diverse role. The Sierra Club member, for example, was asked to pretend he

was an El Paso businessman, the owner of the ranch. The president of the Sheep and Goat Raisers became a leader in the Audubon Society, and so-on until all the panelists were given parts to play.

Next, they were asked to tell what their goals were for the land. Some proposed hiking trails and butterfly haunts; others wanted absolute private control.

They sounded better play acting than they do off stage. Some of these hombres, you know, are fueled by powers stronger than their imaginations; namely, big thick rolls of cash and influence to spare in the halls of Congress.

From where I was sitting, the roles were hard to keep straight. The fake range scientist and the lease hunter were dead give-aways; however, if anyone was playing the part of a practicing rancher, he must have decided to keep quiet and hope his 60,000 acres didn't attract the attention of any real or imagined panelists.

No defectors were apparent at the end of the session. I'm unsure, but I think when we used to choose up sides after school at Mertzon, no one wanted to play the role of a rancher.