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Two years ago, one of our seven boys came home without his report card. His excuse was that he was held up and robbed on the way from school. School authorities were able to reproduce the card. The bandit, however, was never apprehended, nor the case completely closed by the parents.

Mysteries occur in the schools all the time. Tuning human broncs is as hard on the trainers as riding wild horses is. Too many days by the blackboards, wrangling rusty snouted, mean kids takes a toll. Headmasters and schoolmarms wear in many places.

The most common deterioration in elementary educators is slipping into fantasy. Back when I was a student, one old gal had a mighty tough class of boys. In the pack was a special problem. He would have put the kindest of the saints to chunking rocks at the birds in the park.

Along about midyear, his family moved from Mertzon. For several school terms, the teacher kept marking him present on the roll call. She'd dreamed so long of the mean kid leaving town that she wouldn't believe it after he was gone. I think her superintendent snapped her back to reality with a dose of mineral water that they used to sell in those days, but I can't be sure other than it must have been potent stuff.

I'd completely forgotten about the case until the same thing happened in our neighborhood. My cousin Goat Whiskers, the Younger's daughter was able to miss three days without ruining her perfect attendance record.

Mrs. Whiskers swore that she was home, sick in bed. Under close questioning, her teacher testified that she checked the roll every morning and at lunch. The principal's office supported the teacher, yet the girl was registered in doctors' offices and seen at a drugstore during school hours.

The way teachers break is certainly no reflection on their courage. In World War II they had superb military records. Hard duty was difficult to find for them. After years of school teaching, the war seemed like a vacation. No assignment could match the lonely days behind a desk. Confronting a roomful of wild broncs.

One other report card mystery developed at the end of this past six weeks. Another card was lost. This time six stiff manila cards slipped through a small hole in my son's pockets. Investigation is still underway. I'm going to guess that when Child Who Sits in the Sun goes for the hair quirt that she plaited, the cards will reappear.

After all these years, citizens still grow weepy eyed about education. School is good for city folks, but out here it conflicts far too much with shearing and calf shipping.

I might as well have raised a pep squad or a dancing team, for all I g4et done with my boys. Instead of retiring at age 46, I'm dedicating my life to football and basketball games.

Mrs. Whiskers is continuing trying to prove that her daughter was sick. It'll probably turn out that the teacher needs a rest, unless they still sell that magic mineral water.