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In the division of my Grandfather Noelke's estate, the Goat Whiskers' outfit drew one of the best cowboys in the country, Cecil Parks. Cecil worked for the family from 1933 until his death in 1986. The Big Boss claimed he was the best horse tuner to come on the ranch. Put another way, he came from a school of mounted men who tracked and captured what they gathered and didn't spill them at the first gate.

Cecil and his wife lived at the Whiskers' line camp north of the highway. In those days, Goat Whiskers the Elder worked all the pastures south of the highway in a set of cow corrals 11 inches deep in powdered dirt bedded in dried thin residue. Strutting peacocks and chattering guinea hens blocked the outside gates. Lucky indeed was the cowboy who could ride off on the north side with Cecil for a last look from a high point at the swirling dust from the corrals at the headquarters.

After Goat Whiskers the Younger took charge, my sons worked there during the summer months. The main vocation was crowbars and shovels; however, on a couple of summers, John, the middle boy, lucked into a saddlehorn job instead of lining up postholes. Part of the time, he helped Cecil. About all the help Cecil ever needed was to put yearling cattle or yearling ewes across the highway, or maybe round up brushy pastures bigger than 2000 acres.

Being such a loner, the way of all camp men, Whiskers was surprised how often Cecil started asking John and

another kid called "Yellowstone" to come over to gather the bulls, or doctor sheep. (Cecil named one "Juan" and the other "Yellowstone.") Later on, much later on, after John was off to college, we'd be over at the Whiskers' outfit working and Cecil always asked, "When's ol' Juan coming back to help us?"

Took several roundups to understand, but I caught on one wet fall when we drove Young Whiskers' lambs over to the railroad to ship. They drifted along, grazing the new fall grass into a light east headwind, jumping to the side now and then from a shadow cast across the trail. We were out of range of the peacocks and guineas. The lady cooking was always on time wherever we were at noon. If we had a care, we'd have had to make it up. While I was down on foot walking out a stiff lamb, Cecil rode over on my drive. Without an opening, he said, "Monte, why ain't 'old Juan' coming back where he belongs?" He turned and rode back on his side of the herd without waiting for my reply. I saw then for the first time that he couldn't imagine a boy giving up a chance to be a cowboy.

It all came back the other day in a story about the musician Dave Brubeck. His daddy wanted him to be a cowboy, but his mother insisted he go to college. Watching Mr. Brubeck playing a piano on the stage, flicking across the keyboard, it's obvious he'd have been a good roper. A fellow that coordinated could have recoiled and had another loop in the air while an ordinary hand was pulling up his slack.

No telling how many more good prospects twisted off and went to college. To name a couple, Paul Patterson, who taught English in high school to the likes of Elmer Kelton, threw away a promising career on the Shannon ranch breaking outlawed horses for \$30 a month to go to the University. Russell Drake, who wrote for this paper and the *The Wall Street Journal*, quit an outfit out at Kent, Texas, so western they used a team and wagon to put out salt as late as 1950, to go to journalism school. The only exiles who ever came back to the ranch were the ones who had a relapse and temporarily became unsound of mind.

My son, John, must have had a spell up in Connecticut last year when he bought an old unlined Porter saddle 2300 miles from his dun horse at Mertzon. I ran a test to see how close he was to becoming a dude. Relining a saddle in Connecticut takes a six-month waiting period and costs twice as much as it does in Texas. So I sent him a black rubber pad, guaranteed to slip out from under the saddle all winter and gall a horse's back in the summer.

He must still have some sense, as he hasn't thanked me yet for that crawling piece of heating pad. Porter Saddlery has been out of business a long time. But that doesn't mean the "Juans" and the "Yellowstones" might not fall for buying a memento to make a link to a long ago past as a cowboy. I bet if there was any way of getting the truth from them, ol' Dave Bruebeck, Paul Patterson and Russell Drake wish they'd stayed cowboys.