

MAY 25, 1972

Moisture conditions have improved. Dismal dry spots remain, but most portions of the Shortgrass Country have green feed. The situation indicates that winter has finally ended.

My neighbor, Goat Whiskers the Younger, is the rain leader in our parts. Counting dust settlers and dews, he has had over 4 inches. Two or three good clouds have unloaded on his outfit. The remainder of the neighborhood is having to count our honors in amounts of thunder and lightning received. We've had rain, but not like Whiskers has.

You can tell at a glance when Young Whiskers is off on a winning streak. As soon as his 'luck changes, he starts looking as woebegone as a cutback orphan kid.

He learned that trick from my Uncle Goat Whiskers. When Whiskers the Elder used to take in a swath of oil money or a fresh batch of cow money, he put on a poor boy act that'd fool a Hollywood makeup artist. Old man Whiskers could go around looking so sad that no one would think to ask him for a loan. The better things got, the better he'd play his part.

The reason the Whiskers' branch of the family (we are all kinfolks, in case you didn't know) became so expert in camouflage is because of the large amount of Noelkes who ranch in the area. They sensed a long time ago that the slightest indication of either grass or money prosperity was apt to bring on a barrage of loan and pasturage prospects that would have overloaded any outfit. I never did bother to count, but at one time there must have been enough of us to break up any size fish fry that could have been thrown on the Gulf Coast.

I used to try to get up the nerve to sort of move in on the Whiskers' ranch; but as hard as the country would get, I'd find myself worrying how they were going to get through the winter, when I didn't have enough grass to make it two more weeks.

Whiskers the Younger is actually worse than his father was. He's developed the habit of saying "no" sort of like people have a bad eye tic. You may have heard of those banks that claim that they say "yes" every 30 seconds. Well, Whiskers operates in the same way on the negative side.

I know he'd be more generous if he'd pay attention to the deals that come up. Several times, I offered him propositions that were sound on paper. Lots of those deals could have been handled by paper. In fact, 95 percent of them could have been completed by one of Whiskers' checks. As far as that goes, a check would have made the other five percent work a lot better.

I told Whiskers after the rains that he could relax, I wasn't going to ask to run one head of stock. Grass can cover up his loading chutes and I'm not going to ask for a blade. If he wants to be an old grass miser, he can just go on and be one. Short of building a dam, he can't stop us from getting his run-off.

When I get to heaven, the first thing I'm going to ask the Lord is why he made it rain so much on the Goat Whiskers' ranch. Preachers fret over the mysterious ways of the Maker. If they knew about the Goat Whiskers' case, they'd really be confused.