

NOVEMBER 17, 1983

The lawsuit I was planning against the false hearted jockey for posing as a horse rider never did get filed. Lawyers, I learned, aren't indignant about such crimes as horseplayers are. In particular, they aren't when the injured himself is having to maintain a solvency pose that's about to suck out the major part of his acting ability.

So now it's all right to reveal that I am out on the West Coast, visiting San Francisco. I didn't come to ride the trolley cars. I came to see Goat Whiskers the Younger's sister, who is the sole member of my family that has the good sense to look back on the ranch business as a childhood memory and nothing else.

Being so far away from the rest of the clan she does take my raving and threats seriously. For instance, today she actually sent me into lunch with a couple of big time lawyers to discuss suing that counterfeit jockey. Perhaps I'm wrong in claiming she believed me. It might have been that she thought my seeing these fixers would shut me up about the races.

But the reason the phrase "big time" fits these legal arrangers is because they took me to lunch at a men's club that'd make the clubs over in London or New York look like they were having to do on their own tablecloths or iron their own napkins. You may have heard of the club called the Bohemian Club, or have been there for all I know. It was by far the grandest outfit I'd ever attended. And if I say so myself, I looked mighty handsome sitting at a polished table, eating cold fish and cold soup like I'd never seen a flour tortilla or a piece of cornbread.

Now it wasn't that I didn't have a hard walk getting to this Bohemian Club. Other than the bay front, San Francisco has about four square feet of ground space that's level. At rest stops on my climb, I figured out why the shops and the row houses and the big mansions are so tastefully done. Before a workman can start a job, he has to custom fit a set of scaffolds to fit each piece of terrain. By the time he's leveled the scaffold legs, his eye is so sharp that the stroke of his brush or the swing of his hammer becomes artistic.

I had to watch and read about the pedestrian traffic to appreciate that this bunch of hill climbing daredevils are among the hardest in the world. On foot or behind the wheel, movie makers are bound to find all the stuntmen they want around here. I read a short report in the morning paper of a pickup driver that'd careened off curbs on Market Street and finally pinned a lady against a brick wall. The item went on to say that the lady was released later from the emergency room with minor bruises. Down in Texas, we have to be hospitalized from tires hitting our hind legs.

We'd be in an awful strait were we to be sandwiched between a chrome bumper and a brick wall.

Out where I'm staying at my cousin's, the lawns and gardens look like props for a slick garden magazine. On my walks, brilliant gold poplar leaves rain around me, and the pungency of tall eucalyptus trees flavors the air I breath.

Yesterday morning, in the briskness of post dawn, I was taken on a hike along hills that were like the best part of the Island of New Zealand. Afterwards I feasted on broiled salmon and a rich chowder. I find the scene much to my liking. The people are

quite friendly out from behind a steering wheel or loose from a set of handlebars. I am in no rush at all to go home.

As I told the two lawyers at lunch, I knew back in 1950, when the Franklin Life Insurance Co. raised me to 35 bucks a week, I was destined to eat in fine clubs like theirs. When I quit selling burial insurance and started being a herder, I knew for sure that some day I'd be going up on a 52-story building like I did last night, all dressed up in a soft grey sport jacket. So with great peace, forget about the litigation and don't worry about me. It wasn't that I was running out during a bad drouth. It was that I badly needed a change of scene and season.