

The safe time to tell or write a story comes up after the characters disappear. In this case, the *Livestock Weekly's* founder and first editor, Stanley Frank is gone, and such hombres as Elmer Kelton have also left for "over there."

Not to Hereford, Texas like Stanley always threatened to do on a Wednesday deadline when the presses broke down, or the press man stayed drunk an extra full 24-hour day of the week, either. They are gone from Barnhart and Crane, where they grew up as lads and studied in school.

Even money says Elmer and Stanley both wanted to be cowboys before they owned pen staffs. Their step-dad and dads ranked as top ranch hands. Paul Patterson, the writer, and "Ranch Romances" Magazine inspired Elmer; Stanley only credited his mom, or the free San Angelo newspaper in a Barnhart hamburger joint.

One long night, Stanley admitted the bad horse of the Blackstone ranch, "Tar Baby," might have been the turn in his career. After that ride he said it didn't seem like much fun to say "Think I'll go out to Blackstone's this fall and sap ol Tar Baby out." (Mr. George or Mr. Nip Blackstone might have brought those horses back from Kansas

or Oklahoma from a summer steer work. Wherever, they bucked off a big bunch of shortgrass cowboys every fall and spring. Stanley rode "Tar Baby".)

Stanley must have learned part of what it takes to be a journalist from Houston Harte's newspaper to be able to run his own sheets. Stanley set and kept the standard of freedom and independence at the *Weekly*. He contended that if the editorial copy met the standards, you didn't have to sell advertising or subscriptions.

He meant this, too. Stanley wrote ads, if asked. He might have filled in subscriptions in the early days around the West Texas scene. He never asked a reporter to sell classifieds or a subscription.

Now, at 2:30 a.m. on a Thursday, he would call the ranch house to order the pressman assassinated by a hit man named "Jesus" he'd heard of in Juarez. "Killed in cold blood," that's how he wanted him, for not telling him until Wednesday that the press wouldn't roll.

No one had told Stanley the pressman was drunk. No one noticed that every ledge in the back of the building on the way to the men's restroom held an empty Falstaff beer can. Nope, ol' Stan had to bear the grief of the whole world over a wire hooked to a faraway ranch, when he lived in a town full of soft-hearted Christian brothers too sleepy-

headed to answer a morning call. (Remember this is 2:30 a.m. Boy goes after the horses in three more precious hours in those days.)

Stanley didn't outright say not to sell subscriptions. Not much use at Noelke Switch, or up on the Divide, to have a ban on selling, unless it features a solidmouth ewe or hollowhorn cow. Once I told a group that I made a quarter for selling a subscription. No one laughed, so I dropped that line.

The men at lunch on Tuesdays in Angelo occasionally regret dropping their subscriptions on the same day some stranger at the buffet shows absolute wonder that I still write for that little livestock newspaper.

The other day one long-time pal asked how to find a copy of the column on how to cook cornbread. His wife wanted the recipe to critique for her cooking class, I suspect, as she is a mighty good hand in the kitchen and doesn't need mine or anyone else's recipes.

He seemed to doubt that I didn't sell subscriptions, but he was raised at Paint Rock, off east of Angelo, a burg of disbelievers and distrusters. The toughest trades on cutback lambs and broken-mouth ewes to ever be held in the whole world were transacted by his uncles in Paint Rock shearing pens. His Uncle Pete was the jaybird I wrote about

who fell so out of patience with Young Whiskers and me the fall we received calves at Pete's pens and preferred coffee at dawn over Jack Daniels.

After 46 years, I wasn't going to break Stanley's policy. I told him to tell his wife to go by Dr. Makin's waiting room on Greenwood Street. Doctor was able to afford a subscription and kept a nice edition on the coffee table in front by working hard and saving his money. Further, the new library downtown was another drop. As a last resort, she could just go by the newspaper office out on Sherwood Way and read the article on the spot.

With the cell phone rage on, folks must play out after midnight nowadays. My late-hour telephone pals are all gone. Wish now one would call at two some morning with an assignment to hire ol' Jesus.