

It Seems That First Man To Saddle Shed Is Best Equipped

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Page 6

MERTZON — The greatest single improvement in the modern shortgrass scene has been a breaking down of certain rules that have reined over saddle sheds and pastureland since the Wet Blanket era of our history. The old standards are fading, and the future promises to be one of unrestrained behavior patterns for cowhands of the windshield age.

The first restriction to definitely disappear is the foolish law that said, “thou shall not touch, fondle, ride, disturb, distract, or denounce another man’s mount without first obtaining his permission.”

This ancient decree is fading faster than the hula hoop craze of the ’50s, though it once was a guiding force in the rangelands. The reason for the decline of the one-man, one-horse rule stems from the new relationship between the rider and the ridden.

It is now understood that an atomic-age horse can be commanded to hop on a trailer by as many as 10 different masters in one day without in the least damaging the animal’s comprehension that “git in there, you hardheaded old sapsucker” means the towing process is beginning, regardless of who is issuing the orders.

So, since the essence of the modern roundup is centered around the trailer, the towee and tower naturally become indifferent companions. They function quite will, unbound by the old rule that once governed their close contact.

Another rangeland development has been the overthrow of the long-burdensome commandment that reads, “thou shall not beg, borrow, deface, string or unstring the rigging of a fellow drover.”

This restriction was based on the false notion that a man’s saddle and trapping were something sacred and personal, like his wife or toothbrush. This cruel conception inflicted an incalculable amount of deep psychological damage to youngsters who were first tasting the flavor the range. It was a groundless discrimination, aimed at the ill-equipped members of the working force, and it is bound to have caused many a half-baked, half-outfitted novice to suffer hours of painful embarrassment over a pitiful void in his tack.

Under the modern order, men are no longer obligated to observe the sanctity of their fellow drovers’ equipment. Liberty and freedom of choice apply to every single item found hanging in a saddle shed. Throat latches, curb straps and spur leathers may be exchanged without formality. Saddle pads, headstalls and ropes can be divided among the early risers without any more ceremony than a headhunter needs to justify the addition of one more monkey to his pickling vat. License to cut rope strings, unlace stirrup leathers and switch bridle reins enjoys such tolerant acceptance that the sum and total of the current attitude would shock the unknown coiner of the phrase “communal property.”

In general, this era of jets and imaginary inflation has brought a new order to the rangelands, and it is based on the old adage that “the time to get the pie is when it is passed around the first time.”

Of course a scattering of old fashioned hands still cling to the obsolete customs. But for the most part, the awesome regulations of a few decades ago are finally becoming adjusted to conform with the glorious advantages of an era that the Indians would have called “the Time of Hollow Meaning.”