

Brief Visit With Dallas Doctor Makes Shortgrasser Very Homesick

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DALLAS, Texas — I have been up here (in Dallas) for two days. So far, all I've managed to accomplish is a case of homesickness that would make Adam Clayton Powell's devotion to credit card travel seem like a recessive gene. If the strain of the past drouths and plagues hadn't destroyed the last vestiges of my judgment, I never would have left home in the first place. A bottom-of-the-class sociology major knows that country people have about as much business messing around in the city as a tree ape has of applying for a place in a ballet troupe. The most amateurish of human behavior students are aware that outlanders are best suited to towns where the skyline is limited to the light of the courthouse dome.

My wife was the main force behind this trip. Sometime last year she began saying over and over, "Why don't you have one of those Dallas doctors look at your ears?" she said some other things, but there's no place for that sort of thing here. On at least 40 different occasions I tried to convince her that throughout the history of mankind, married men had eventually either gone deaf or crazy. But she wouldn't listen.

So here I am, away off from the Shortgrass County with nothing to do but wait until a big-shot uptown doctor gets through poking around in my ears.

As you may know, this is the worst possible time to be away from the ranch. The feed run has to be made every day. Lamb marking is close at hand. Besides that, as it says in the book titled "How to Mark Time in the Ranch Business," the world's most successful herders were never once seen hanging around doctor's offices.

There's no use crying now; what's done is done. To keep down stall fever, I guess I could go downstairs and make 44 more laps around the hotel lobby. But that wouldn't tell me whether the bobcats had finished my kid crop, or if the old boy feeding my stock had grown confused and closed the gate to the water lot instead of locking the bar door.

Earlier this morning I tried walking around town to relieve the strain on my worrying gland. That made matters worse. It seemed that every corner had at least one citizen using wire or batteries for hearing support. For a time, I couldn't figure out why these hombres hadn't dropped by to see the same doctor I was going to. Then, after picking up a pretty fair sample of the noise of the streets, it became obvious that Melvin Belli would have difficulty talking a sane man into missing an opportunity to be deaf in this place.

One thing working in my behalf is the noted business ability of my ear specialist. He's supposed to know all about different trades and professions. According to the clerk at the hotel, he even understands the ranching game. Therefore, the odds are good that he won't yank out his ear-carving knife right away; he knows that getting money out of a rancher in March is harder than making a bill collector cry.

Anyway, this is a temporary dateline. With or without my hearing, I plan to wind this deal up by tomorrow morning. I'm just biding my time, hoping to get back home before the place blows away in the March dust.