

MAY 20, 1982

This morning for the first time in 10 days, the ranch house is empty. Shearing got over late yesterday afternoon; shearers and cowboys turned the pasturelands into a virtual speedway to escape from the long, wet shearing appointment. It'll be a year before I have that much activity again. With a soft rain dripping from the roof, it's hard to imagine that 24 hours ago we needed seating cards to find room for the extra men.

The shutdown time waiting for dry weather wasn't a waste. I spent it planning how to fill the gap in the dull wool market. The wool clip doesn't produce but about 15 percent of the return off a sheep operation; however, the small spurt of cash from the wool check is a mighty welcome item after our long Shortgrass winters.

My new financial strategy is based on a low-capital plan that won't remind the jugkeepers of previous schemes. By that I mean I'm going to develop such a fresh program that at least my bankers are going to have to write a new rejection speech.

To be more specific, I am not going to try bantam chickens or guinea hog raising again to corner the empty feed sack business. Home saddle making and custom frog farming are two more industries that I'm going to skip. Growing mushrooms in the cellar and gardening worms for fish bait are out. Making jelly from cactus apples and plaiting horsehair quirts for a stand at the fat stock show are among some more losers that are going to be dropped.

When I make my comeback this time, I'm going to be so well prepared that my banker is going to want a piece of the action himself I am already practicing the whispering portion of the act. If I say so myself, I am starting sound, as good as one of those actors on the afternoon soap operas.

The best prospect for a new business that's turned up was in the classified section of the daily paper. In the used pickup portion, a fully equipped snowcone truck is being offered for sale. I've discussed it with the boys helping shear. The guy grading wool was the most enthusiastic. He came up with the idea of routing the snowcone truck right in behind a windmill man who serves a big scope of our area.

Like the wool inspector reasoned, any time a mill or pump fails, by the time that it's fixed, demand is way high for a cool, soothing thirst quencher like a snowcone. The boy is right, too. In the case of a married household, when the madam of this house has been out of water for, say a week, anything old, from a snowcone to a big ice pack would be popular to settle the tension.

Why, the very best doctors there are on this earth use ice to treat their patients. Back before Florence Nightingale had designed the first white cap, she knew to treat hangovers and other dread diseases with a cold pack on the temples and forehead. And mankind, as you may know, likes her idea to this day.

Once you learned to balance the time between the windmill man's promises and his actual date of arrival, you could be on the spot to sell plenty of snowcones.

In cases where the old boy was having to sleep at the barn, the kids for sure could tie bribed to bring him a cup of magic ice. I think you'd become a hero of your times. You'd be supplying a tranquilizer and a dessert at the same time. It'd probably help the windmill man, too.

As soon as the wool season ends, I'm going to go into serious session with the wool grader. The pressure to act is growing on my part. I wish I had a sign and a slogan. We need to be in operation before the still summer months. It'd sure be nice to be rich by fall.