

Shortgrass herders are as fond of hats as herders anywhere else on the continent. Old boys that'd disgrace a pair of wrinkled suspenders wear sleek styled felts and straws, creased to perfection.

I keep in style by watching car salesmen in San Angelo. Car peddlers go mighty string for the range boss image. Models for cigarette ads or movie scenes are apt to be seen any day with a boot heel hooked on a Volkswagon bumper or a hat pulled down to cut of the glare of a Buick's hood.

Truck drivers and college kids go in high style, also. On the campuses or around the truck terminals, rolled-brim colored hats flourish in scores of shapes and styles. Some awful fancy shadows are cut stepping from diesels or out on the sidewalks. I see floral designs in shirts that are never seen in the drab world of sheep and cow people.

I'd like to see the boys out at the auction ring be more careful of their dress. As a whole they look all right, but strangers to the trade would think a lot more of us if we'd add a silver concho or two, or maybe wear plaited rawhide neck ties to work.

Seems like everything I see on cow sale days dates back to 1973. Even the pickups on the parking lot are the same age. I figure that the last big calf money must have mounted and outfitted the cattle fraternity. It does appear, however, that everyone has a wrist watch left from the boom days.

I didn't realize that buying clothes in San Angelo was a much trouble until this fall. Over on the west side of town, an outfit was advertising ling tailed denim jackets. We'd been gathering cattle in cold weather. The jacket that I had was designed by a fellow who thought all that needed covering were the shoulder blades and the collar bone. It was letting in cold air at the bottom without exhausting at the neckline.

So after the calves were shipped, I went by the store for a jacket. I kind of think the lady clerk had been doing mercenary fighting on the domestic front or reading too many was stories. She was jerking coats off the rack like coats were the enemy. I was so concerned about her disposition that I didn't turn my back for the fittings.

At the settling, she demanded to see a driver's license. You judge my words. This is a direct quote. I said, "Lady, I'm not going to drive in the coat. It's to wear when I ride horseback."

Never in my unmarried or married life did I ever see a woman so mad. Paper split on the wrappings and she broke the tie on her string twice before she finished the job.

I don't care what those San Angelo sales ladies think of the power of a driver's license. As far as I'm concerned, they can believe Dun and Bradstreet have to approve permits to drive. No smart mouthed clerk is going to run my life. She'd have been a mighty disappointed old sister if she'd tried to cash a check in Mertzon just because she knew the traffic laws.

I think out clothes are going to outlast the cattle wreck. It's going to be nice to go to a boot shop for something besides a pair of new heels or a half sole. As it turned out, the long tail jacked wasn't any warmer than the old one, so the laugh and the tab were on me.