

DECEMBER 12, 1974

Some crackpot commentator said on the radio the other day that negative thinking was making the economy sound worse than it actually was. He suggested of all things that the 94 percent rate of employment should be quoted instead of the six percent of Unemployment.

He was wise enough to stay off the subject of cattle. Had he drifted into our wreck, his optimism might have turned into being shut off the air for sobbing into the microphone.

Cow depressions are hard for outsiders to understand, if not impossible for them to comprehend. Take for example the recession that we had lasted from 1872 to the late 1940s. In that period thousands upon thousands of fences were strung, countless water wells were drilled, and millions of acres of rangeland were patented and surveyed.

Do you think that was done by looking on the bright side of the balance sheet? Most certainly not. The greybeards knew that \$10 a head yearlings would break them faster than the Apaches could butcher a buffalo to whet their appetites for a fat beef.

Cow people just don't function right without the proper amount of stress. In the short years of the boom, bankers and herders got so flabby minded that their heads wouldn't hold their shape.

In the drouth of the '50s, jugkeepers and cowboys would have made a grey fox think he was suffering from brain spasms. Note-writers were on such constant guard that I used to watch them monitor a change in the winds or the clouds going under the sun. Nobody could have slipped up on those boys. The best storyteller to ever finance a shell game couldn't have penetrated their credibility.

You know, I saw the same thing happen to an old married man about a month ago. His wife is a deputy sheriff over at Mertzon whose main job is running the office.

Last session, the state legislature passed a bill requiring all sheriffs and their deputies to take a law enforcement course last six week. She had to go, even though her job was paper work.

In the last part of the course they taught her a fast draw and how to blow down the side of a corn field with a sawed off shotgun.

After she graduated, I got to studying her husband. His ears started getting pointed on the top. He'd be walking to work and suddenly begin to look over his shoulder or cut a zigzag course down his trail.

Each switch in the wind would make him stop and throw up his nose. After I pointed this out to his boss, he said that the first time the old boy voided himself on a post, or scratched dirt with his hind legs, he was going to recommend medical treatment.

Cowmen have changed, also. I was up looking at some calves on the plains not long ago. We were drinking coffee in the office of a feed yard. That day the fat market had found a new low. Everybody present was holding some losers.

One fellow kept trying to walk his grief off between the table to the coffee pot. An hombre sitting against the window asked in a loud voice, "Where's it going to stop?" The hombre making the circles back and fourth to the coffee pot thought he said, "Where were we going to stop for the night?" He replied, "Amarillo, I guess."

The misunderstanding satisfied everyone. It's possible that the whole match will wind up at Amarillo. It's also logical that a planeload of sick cow herders are apt to sleep

in a cow town. Just nearly any kind of answer will work these days. Who is to say that the last calf or the last cow won't be sold at Amarillo? Lots of them have been sold there before.

Wait and see. About the time it gets so hard that it looks like a tombstone maker couldn't knock a chip from our minor troubles, the light will break through. Cowmen and trouble are synonymous. I wish that it wasn't so.