

April 12, 1973

I had to go to San Angelo every day during the first week of the meat boycott. It's just my luck to have to go to town at times when herders are as popular as a flea circus at a dog show.

Even before the, boycott started, I'd been expecting to hear that cow people were being whipped over the head with tennis shoes or run over by Volkswagens. The parasol set has been in a volatile humor for several months. When word leaked that butchers were wearing break-away aprons like football jerseys, things looked bad for us.

Tempers are bound to have worsened under the strain of the meatless days. Sardine casseroles and soggy fishballs are not the basics for peace food. Cheese fondues and steamed noodles don't cool people's disposition like sirloins do. On that sort of rations, bagpipe music wouldn't be necessary to make folks hunt for a fight. The toodle of a french harp would be all it'd take to make them want to whip every. body who so much as smelled like meat.

In fact, some of the most memorable husband and wife battles have been fought after a dinner of fluffed cheese or warmed over fish. Marital umpires have realized for years that melted cheese supreme or steamed mackerel surprise could bring on a brawl that'd make trench warfare seem like a visit to a Chinese tea house.

However, if the boycott does continue for an extended period, a lot of the fight may go out of the people. Over in India, the land of sacred cattle, the natives are meaner than a swarm of mother octopuses, yet it takes nine of them to get up the strength to double up one fist.

I've read that the cow religion was the reason that India didn't have as many man eating tigers as Africa. Tigers, it's said, don't care for the hindquarter off a man who taste like watercress or peavine. So I guess when it's all added up, people in India are lucky that they do worship cattle. Africa probably never attracted any extra tourist just because they had maneating tigers. Sightseers like things with blood, such as bull fighting and traffic jams.

But back to the reason that I was going to San Angelo so much. On the first business day of the boycott (that was last Monday), I had to take my cousin's sick Shetland pony to the doctor. After I got in the city limits, I was awfully uneasy.

The Sunday papers had featured a story on how popular horse meat was becoming on the West Coast. I didn't know what the situation was in the Wool Capital.

Under that kind of stress, he might attack a sick pony. Shetlands are bound to be better to eat than they are to ride. If one of the San Angeloans had ever unbuckled his seat belt. I'd have run every traffic light in town. I couldn't tell from their expressions whether they thought the short coupled horse was cute or appetizing.

The next trip was worse. This time I had to haul a terminally crippled cow to the packing house to be sold on the rail.

By then, the boycott had been going on for three days. I'd have been more comfortable riding out a hurricane on a surfboard. The cow was bucking and pitching in the trailer; thin residue was splashing through the rails. And every time I stopped, I felt like I was interrupting a session of federal court.

I sure didn't want that old cow and myself to, be the ones who ended the fast. Neither one of us could have outrun the loser of a sack race. It was dreadful, stopping alongside of cars that you knew were driven by the hungry. There wasn't another pickup and trailer on the streets. It was a mighty lonesome ride.

Public figures keep trying to make us believe that the tooth pick manufacturers are going to be the only ones hurt by the flurry of the meat strike.

Oh sure. Sheriffs claim that pistol whippings stimulate the body, and dog trainers highly recommend electric collars, but you never hear prisoners or hounds testifying in behalf of either one of those practices.

Ever since I've known anything about ranching, Betty Crocker could have sifted four grams of flour in the right place and ruined the best market condition even know. So it's going to be hard to believe that this storm won't take its toll.

In the meantime, I'm not freighting any more ponies or cows through any cities.