

Ever' Day Things

by Tom McBeth

Some people just seem to go against the grain

Earl is past 80 and always ends up helping some friends of mine gather cattle. I met him the other day when we went to see about a grass fire on his place. You know how we have been in a drought, and all the grass is dry as tinder? Anyhow, someone evidently threw out a cigarette and started his pasture to burn. The local fire district got there and put it out pretty quick, so it wasn't a big emergency. But the guy I was workin' with started to tell me some "Earl" stories.

Earl has owned several bars and has made enough over the years to buy some pastures and to have some cattle. He's retired, and his wife, "Weanie," passed away a few years ago. So Earl is alone now, except for his cronies and helpin' in the pasture and havin' some of his own cattle. He can't hear hardly at all, and he don't see too good either.

It's typical for Earl to arrive at a pasture at 4:30 a.m. to start gathering cattle. A while back, being the first to get to the pasture, he was the first one to pull his pickup and trailer up to the pens to form the wing to funnel cattle into them. When ever'body got ready to go to the next pasture, Earl started to back out with his rig. Ever'body was screamin' and tryin' to get him to stop 'cause nobody else had moved their pickups and trailers. Not being able to hear, Earl continued to back up his rig. He tore about three mirrors off the pickups behind him.

When they finally got him stopped, he had dented and scratched several trailers, and his response was, "Well, why in the @#%* don't they get in gear? We have two more pastures to gather 'fore it gets hot! Dad-gummed kids anyway. You'd think they'd learn after a while." Then he pulled away, nearly hitting the semi pullin' into the pasture to load the cattle.

It usually takes Earl about four to 12 loops to rope anything. A few months ago he asked a friend of mine to help catch a couple of foot-rot steers in his pastures. Earl was waiting at the pasture gate at the appointed time. My friend was hopin' Earl would not bring his horse, but he was not that lucky. They got Earl's cattle doctored, then my

friend made the mistake of sayin' he also had some cattle to doctor that day. Earl told him, "Why @#%*, since I'm all saddled up, I'll just go along and help." That was not what my friend wanted to hear, but he didn't want to hurt Earl's feelin's, so they loaded up his horse, and off they went.

It started to get hot, and Earl found another steer while the other two guys were doctorin' one, and he took off to catch him. It took a while for the guys to come to the steer's rescue. Earl had caught him and choked him down — plum to death — after a lengthy chase. Needless to say, my friend was a little upset that the steer was dead and accused Earl of killing the steer (it had gotten to be about 102° F). Earl's response was, "Why @#%*! I did not. The @#%* steer probably had a heart attack."

Recently he was out helpin' a couple of friends of mine and saw a big heifer that needed to be caught, so Earl dispatched himself to do the job. Earl had forgotten to tighten up his cinch, and his horse did not weigh much more than the heifer. Earl took off to lace it on her. The two guys he had gone to the pasture with were yellin' for him not to rope her (he was tied on, hard and fast, and of course Earl did not hear them).

Anyway, Ol' Earl laced it on like Fred Whitfield and Blair Burke. Needless to say, the saddle slipped over to the side and jerked Earl's horse down. It did not kill Earl — matter of fact, he escaped without much more than several cuts and bruises, which was probably a miracle from the Lord. Within a few days, he was back in the pasture helpin' out anybody that needed a dose of excitement.

More about the "Epics of Earl" later. Hope it rains soon 'cause it's gettin' pretty dry. Matter of fact, we have to make the little kids wear a 4-foot 2-by-4 strapped to their waists so they won't fall in the cracks in the ground when they go out to play.

Take care, and pray for rain. God bless you.

