

Do not print



















sometimes you may not be able to make the leap on your own. So he does a little hand-holding. And pushing.

[STEER #13, CASTELL, p. 47]

Ah! Now this I love! You lose all the detail. You don't see the iris. You don't see the pupil. You see that dark eye. And if you've ever had to deal with cattle, that's all you really see. Because you take away the personality. You can't have a personality of something you are going to...kill. I mean, that's a commodity, not a pet. You can't think of it as a pet. What's funny is the eye almost looks sympathetic here. Normally that's not the way you see it. But here it looks sympathetic and it actually looks like it has intelligence which is bizarre since these animals have very small intellect. They're very good at finding their feed and going to it—with help. And that's about it.

[BULLS #1, ROUND MOUNTAIN, p. 86]

Orchids! That's what it looks like. It has the same look and feel as orchids because the same way the orchids turn up. Again, this equals the work of Mapplethorpe's—people only think of one thing with Mapplethorpe—but he had such a broad oeuvre that covered everything, and his flowers and still lifes, and even his nudes were incredible. I know! Simmental orchids! Very rare. Hard to find.

I like the tires. The tires are a great touch. Actually that is an incredible pose. Now there's something I don't normally see in Burton's pictures, I just realized. You never see a distinct shadow. And that one has a distinct shadow. Normally the shadows blend in and go as part of the tone. And this one has a distinct shadow of the head particularly—which, considering that's the most prominent part of him. I like the tires too. People've got the tires out there to control erosion. They use 'em to put salt in. They serve a purpose. They're not pretty but they serve a purpose.

[BULL #3, ROUND MOUNTAIN, p. 77]

This is my number one favorite. Part of it is the fact that he is so alone. Obviously he's at the corner of a pasture. You've got fence in front of you and fence running off in the distance. But there's nothing else in the pasture as far as you can tell. And he's backed up in the corner. It's weird because he looks so alone but yet so contented with being alone.

I like it also because that area of the state—to me it perfectly captures that the horizon and sky are all one thing. And up there it is. On a hot summer day the sky disappears and it just goes forever. That, and the fact I love fence. Strangely enough—having built more fence than I ever care to remember—the fence is one of my favorite parts of this picture. The fence goes on forever. And here he is defending this territory that he's got one corner of. And as far as he's concerned he rules it all.

[BULL #6, MARFA, p. 93]

Lumps of clay. That's what this is. Bulls have one purpose in life. To reproduce. They are the most stupid and instinct-driven animals, purely. Purely on instinct and hormones. And these two guys—I think of the cliché of muscle-headed football players, which is not true, being a muscle-headed football player. But that's what they look like. The guys who're standing around. They're basically S & M—stand-and-model. They're posing. You know, looking good. “Look at that heifer over there. Looking good.”

And I love it because it's just like the same thing that you see with the guys that are muscleheads that stand around. You sorta look at 'em and go, “You are nothing but a lump of clay. A good-lookin' lump of clay. But a lump of clay.” And these guys have not a thought in their head. They're

I'd accuse Burt of painting with light and shadow and tone. That's what he does. And it's classic portraiture. Not photographic portraiture but classic painted portraiture where you can then manipulate shadow and tone and all that to get the effect. And he does the same thing with photography which is hard to do. Because light doesn't cooperate. But he has a way of making it do that.

[BULL #1, MARFA, p.131]

I like this one because he uses opposites and the opposites are what attracted me to his photography. The background would either be very light and your subject is very dark OR the background would be very dark and the subject is very light. And that's part of that Obvious and then the Non-Obvious I was talkin' about because the difference in the dark and light makes you look at something. But then all of a sudden you move onto another area of it and you start finding things in it.

[STEER #3, CASTELL, p.83]

[STEER #4, CASTELL, p.119]

I like the carpet. It's a nice hide. The animal disappears and it becomes something else. In this case, a very nice piece of leather. I know, it's awful. But I grew up on a farm and ranch. So I look at 'em and see them for what their potential could be. That's a beautiful hide. My friends in Austin would have *my* hide for saying that. But that's a beautiful, beautiful bull skin.

I love big overstuffed club chairs. He looks like he's already a big overstuffed club chair because at this point when they're standing there, they are the laziest animals in the world. Why? Because they really do nothing more than eat. And breed. So he stands and walks around and he's already got the whole appearance of being a sofa or a club chair. It's easy to see why people decide "Ooh, leather could be good. They look comfy."

[STEER #1, BLUE MOUNTAIN, p.105]

What's funny is I was raised around cattle and I've never noticed—partly because I try to stay away from the head and the rear—if I'm working with the head we've usually got it clamped down and you're notchin' ears, you're doing something to them—you don't stop and look at the animal. So part of the reason I enjoy his photos is because you actually look at the animals that you've ignored for so long.

[BULL #1, HIGH PLAINS, p.72]

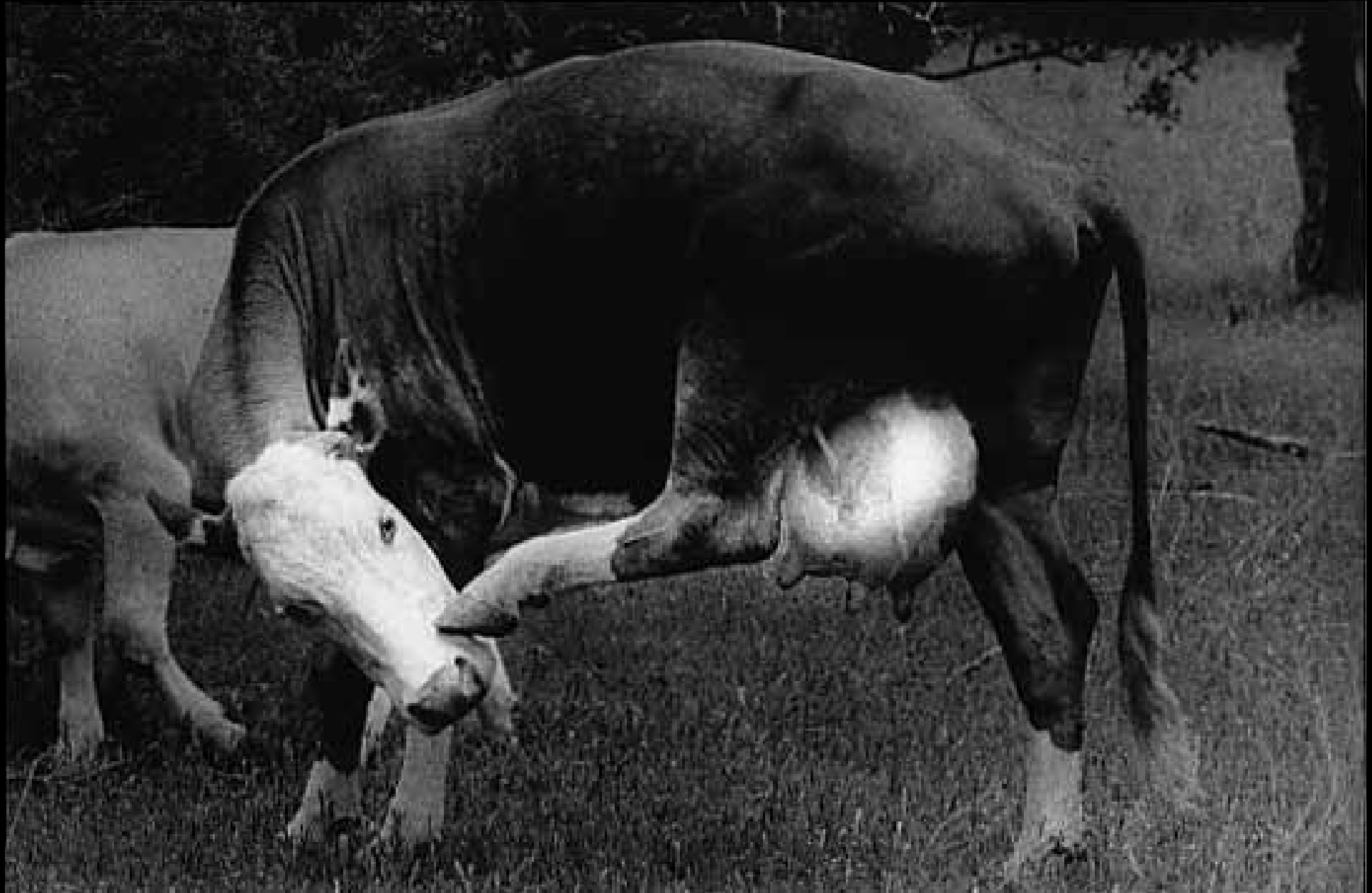
The position of the ear you couldn't of asked for. And you're not quite sure which way to look at it until you find the bob [barb] wire. And you follow the bob wire, and then you sorta realize that you're missing part of him down here. You don't have enough to go ahead and visualize the jaw and all that. So you've got from about the middle of the nose up to the top of the head. There's just something about the black, the white, that is gorgeous.

With these photographs, you're starting out and you're looking at the animal as a whole. And suddenly you move in close. And he takes it to its logical conclusion which is you go from out here all the way up to see what changes—and what's different. And can you still tell what it is?

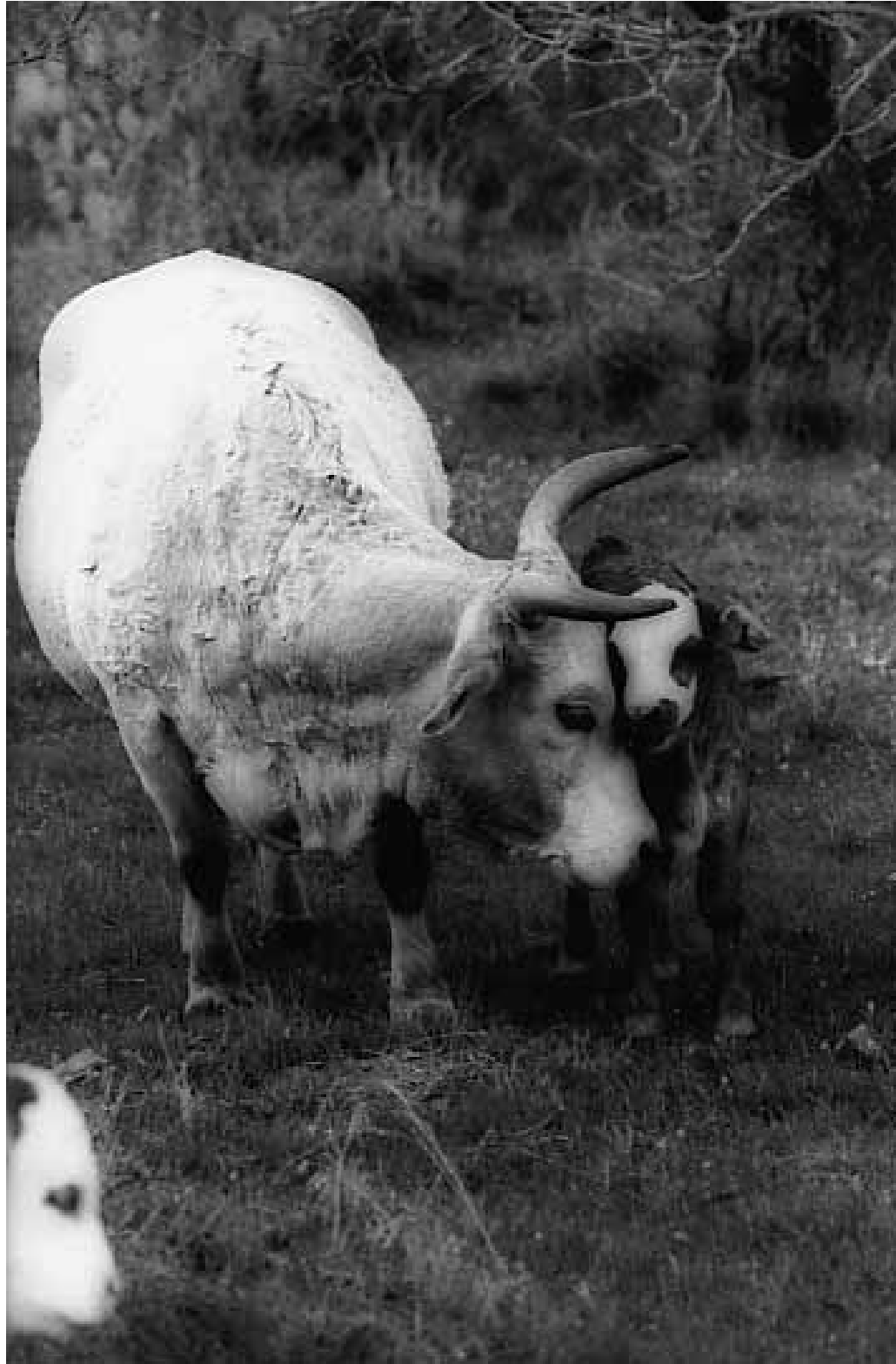
It looks like a geisha with her fan, hiding herself. I've dealt with these animals. There's noooo personality trait the same as a geisha, except for that ear. Not at all—though the Kabuki makeup's the same. To me, his work takes what you know but in a way that you don't know. I had somebody comment to me about some of his photographs, "Well, he got a little too close on one of those." And I thought, "Well, no. Actually, that was the point."

[BULLS #2, LLANO, p.134]

Now on ones like these he uses the whole range. And it's a way to kind of lead you in because









You tell him this is the

kind-a-picture I like.

No details.

like most of my relationships. The further into them you get, the less attractive they become.

My dad had ranches and we were always around 'em. It's been home to us all these many years. Ranching is not a good way to get rich. It's a wonderful life really, to live out here in the open. The ranchers have a hard time now. Nobody in the world could buy ranchland and ranch it and ever pay for it. Cuz the ranches are being sold and broken up. They're subdivided. Not many big ones left anymore.

[STEER #1, BLUE MOUNTAIN, p. 105]

I s'pose you could make a livin' on a ranch if you had enough land, and had it paid for, and didn't have a bunch of debts. But you wouldn't live very high on the hog. Unless you had a great big one. There're very few large, really large, ranches left.

Most of 'em have their land cuz it's been passed down. It's at the point now to where you can't even inherit land and keep it because the death taxes are so high. They're goin' to change it but it hadn't been changed yet.

[STEER #4, ART, p. 99]

That's the dewlap. The skin under the neck's called the dewlap. I'm surprised this cow's still livin' cuzza that tornado that went through there. Oh yeah, it wiped out a bunch-a-cattle. They reported that cows were in trees—and skinned—and eyes were sucked out. It was terrifying the night that thing happened. We were out at the ranch. We were havin' a round-up. They don't have 'em like that here very often but this was a Category Five tornado.

Where it went through down here is just about a mile on the other side of the river. About halfway you'll see the area. Over to the right, there was an old, old ranch house there that I'm sure was well over a hunnerd years. And you know, for years we've been seein' that house and after that tornado came by, there was not even a rock left of the foundation. Took all the bark off all-a-the mesquite trees. And there was maybe a hunnerd head-a-cattle that were lost.

[STEER #6, ART, p. 41]

This is good how he faded all the rest out except just that dark nose. That's good. Well, this one's been fed very well. Doesn't have any prickly pear in its face. They eat anything. Especially when it's dry and they find anything that's green. Oh gosh, they walk around with their tongue hangin' out, all full of thorns. These look like Brangus. It's a recognized breed now. It's three-eighths Braymer [Brahma] and five-eighths Angus, Black Angus. They're nice, good cattle. A little bit more gentler than the Limmazine [Limousin]. Everybody's goin' with black cows now. You can look at the ground and tell what time of the year these were taken. Look there. See that? Looks like that was taken probably during the drought. There's not much grass. Nothin' on the ground. And all the mesquites don't have any leaves on 'em.

absolutely gorgeous. But they're gorgeous lumps of clay.

[STEER #7, ART, p.40]

These guys are idiots. Again, I'm not relating with animals because, having grown up with them, you no longer do the deal of giving them personality because you don't want to give personality to something you aren't going to keep. But you can't help it.

This is one that has a sculptural quality to it. Just with the white and with the shape and everything else, it looks like it's a statue standing out there. This poor guy looks like he's got some age on him. The amount of wrinkles and just like how people tend to get age spots, animals do too. And he looks like he's been out there awhile. And again, it's the white skin. They show it faster. That's the leather that you get that has character. So... he's got a lot of character.

This one pretty well hooked me because it's all the elements I need to identify what it is, what orientation it should be, I know what's up, what's down, and yet if I cut out any one element, it's tough to identify anymore. And I like that. I like something that challenges me to look at and figure out, "Am I looking at it correctly? Is there something I'm missing?" And, all I have to do is mask out part of it. If I take out the horns, now I'm not sure if I've got the eye in the right orientation. If I take out the eye, I wonder if I'm looking at the horn right or maybe that's not a horizontal horn, maybe it goes up, and I need to look at it differently. And it has the most incredible tone.

[STEER #1, CASTELL, p.126]

Obviously that's a horn over his shoulder. But where is it coming from? Is it his horn? If it's not his horn, what's over there? Jackson Pollock did a series, and I think there's only five in the series, and it's called *Night*. I think it was more an experiment to find out how black and non-reflective you can make something. But it's fun. The whole point is "How dark is it?" The part you normally would think of as black is now considered the light part. It makes you look at it differently.

This reminds me of that. I mean, you've got one distinct area of light up here besides the horn. And the horns are the light part. Everything else just disappears. And there is no detail. I know where everything is. I know the neck. I know the head. I know the ear. But other than that, black on black.

If you're looking at just the shoulder and the back, this looks like the Mariner pictures of Mars. You've got this whole foreign surface, this whirlaway crater. And the horn is the only part that brings it back. It's got a very alien surface. And it looks like some of the great shots of the surface of the moon. Especially if you take out just the horn and you look at it—"and now we have proof of non-intelligent life on Mars." I mean, it looks like cloud formations and the water.

[STEER #4, CASTELL, p.119]

And then the rancher in me comes out. "Boy, it's a beautiful hide." What's interesting is knowing, in color, that hide is not going to be as pretty. See because, color variations can be what make or break when you're buying leather. You know, it's too much of a color variation or not enough of a color variation. This one has an absolutely gorgeous hide.

But I'll bet you, because I can see the differences in color and tone in black-and-white, that it wouldn't be that pretty in color. Which sometimes you have to take away all that detail to see what's really pretty. Since the more detail you have, the less attractive something is. It's kind of









I guess maybe you would say we're on the edge-a-the desert because when we have rains the country rebounds very fast. In a big hurry. You can look out there and right now there's not a square inch where isn't sumpin' growin'. And in a drought year, it's like I said so many times, there's nothin' for the cattle except rocks to suck on. That's all they got. Everything they eat you have to give it to 'em out of a sack. Or sell 'em. One or the other. But now it's just a Garden of Eden. It's really beautiful here. My place here is just small. I just have a couple hunnerd acres here. Right now, I don't even have any cattle here. I'm gonna bring some down from the ranch.

But I'm a pretty typical example of what's happening to the ranch country. I have two children. My daughter is now a widow and she's got other interests. My son is in the city. And he hardly even comes up any more for the round-ups. He's just busy all the time. And neither one of 'em had children so that takes care of that. The generation stops here. And I'm eighty-two years old, so there's no way for me to keep it myself. That's right. Eighty-two. What we have out there is about three sections—about two thousand acres. We've had so many people look at it. And they want to take it, subdivide it, cut it up which I don't want to put up with and I'm not going to. But it's just the way things are goin' now. This place I have now is all I need. I live here to be away. I don't have close neighbors.

[BULL #5, MARFA, p. 141]

I think that that hump is a reserve of fat for hard times. I love to be around cattle. Well, I just love all animals. I've always loved to be around 'em. I grew up around 'em, you know. We have round-ups and the vet comes out with some help and keeps records on all the stock, so that's the easy way to do it. And we usually have our round-ups to coincide with times that we want to sell stock—calves and yearlings and things—and take them to market. 'Course there's a lotta pen work that you have to do. Cuttin' the cattle up. Separating the cows and the calves. And the calves that need to be worked—need branding and castrating and all that stuff. And pregnancy testing of the heifers to get a feel how old the calf is in the inside. That's what our vet does. Takes a long plastic glove and runs it through there and then checks the fetus in there—how old it is.

When I was a kid growing up we had problems ranching you don't have now. For example, they had the screw worm problem. They eradicated that. That was all over this country and, you know, all of your ranching activities at that time, before they eradicated those awful things, worked around that.

See, after you've had a freeze the screw worm flies are dead and they don't infect the sores, and raw places, and the brands and all that. So then you usually worked your cattle after the first frost in October, November, see. And then you always wanna be through with all that before you worked them in the spring. Because of that brand, you brand 'em and turn 'em loose and believe me, a hunnerd percent of 'em would get infected with screw worms. The fly comes along and any open wound—and this is also true for little baby stock—when a little animal is born in summer months, it has that damp wet navel attachment—they'll get screw worm in that. And they kill 'em.

The female fly lays the eggs right on the wound. They hatch there into little worms and those worms eat right into the flesh. That's another reason that we didn't have as big a deer population in those days as we have now. Because little deer fawns are all born in the spring like May and June. And those ol' flies'd get on 'em and a big percentage of 'em would die of the screw worm. How they eradicated them is an interesting story in itself. See, the screw worms infected lands all the way from here down through Mexico, Central America, South America. So they discovered—this was pretty scientific work done on this—the female blowfly—blowfly they call 'em, they laid their blows on there, that's what they called the eggs—they discovered that she breeds only once in her lifetime. So they got to raising 'em in the laboratory and all the male flies they would use radiation on and sterilize them. Then they would take millions of these male flies that they had raised in the lab and sterilized. And they'd put 'em in little small cages—delicate little cages—and they'd go by in airplanes and drop 'em all over the country. And when it hit the ground, the cages'd fly open and those flies went out and since the female would only breed once, all these sterile flies were goin' out and breedin' the females and they didn't lay fertile eggs.

And they started on the southern part of the country. And they went right on through the country and they completely eradicated that. The program is still in effect because just on rare occasions somebody'll find one. Everybody watches closely. Believe me, the ranchers watch that. And if anybody finds an infected animal they go in and just saturate the whole countryside with those sterilized flies. Idn't that amazing? Instead of tryin' to kill it with chemicals. Or with a flyswatter.

Now that would take a long time.

There's a lotta hardships to ranching. There really is. You got the droughts to go through. You got floods. Right now, I'm concerned because this year we have so much vegetation. There is a big, big crop of pea vine—that's a little plant that grows all over the country. It looks like a regular garden pea a whole lot. Has pretty little lavender-white flowers on it. When the cows eat too much-a-that—it don't affect a whole lotta your cattle usually, but in the last few years I've lost several head to it.

The cattle eat it and it infects their nerves. Unfortunately, there's nothin' you can do about it. You can't eradicate it because it's a wild plant and you can't do anything about it. You can't go and try to get it all. If you use poisons or chemicals, you'll kill everything. You don't wanna do that. And to pull it up, you'd be there forever and ever. I'm namin' that as just one. There are other noxious weeds too, a-course, that we all know about.

But I just had one of my bulls die from eatin' pea vine. And I paid two thousand dollars for him. He was gettin' kinda lethargic and one day I found him out in the pasture, just dead. So we dug a hole and buried him. Gosh, a big ol' twenty-five-hunnerd pound bull, it takes a big hole to bury him in.

And I had a little bunch of heifers down here I was weaning to keep for replacement cows. And we had a pretty good storm one night and I said to my wife the next day, "I







then at that time they go to McDonald's—and the other places that use hamburger primarily.

Cows calf every year. A cow misses a year she goes to the slaughterhouse. The gestation period is nine months. And they usually have their first baby when they're two years old. 'Course you want 'em to breed early. Earlier they breed, the sooner you get a calf out of 'em. If they miss one year, if they miss one calf, see, that's a whole year gone to waste. Takes as much almost to feed a cow without a calf as it does to feed her with one.

Another thing that they discovered in the last few years—I bet you didn't know this—that the circumference of the bull's testicle affects the time that his daughters will come in heat the first time. Nowadays, when you go to a bull sale, they'll give you the circumference and the centimeters of the bull's testicles at a certain date. Because you want your heifers to come into heat as early a date as possible so you can get a calf out of 'em. So, the bigger around, the quicker. Now that took a lotta research to figure that out.

They love to scratch themselves. That's a neat picture where he got the picture of that cow right now. That's good. Well, you know photographers spend a lotta hours not gettin' anything. And then all at once they'll get somethin' that su'prises the heck out of 'em. It takes a good one to just see that. And be ready to snap it. Good picture.

We call them Black Baldies. This is one of the drawbacks of the Hereford cattle. They had that white face with no pigment around their eyes. And oh my gosh, cancer eyes are a very common thing among Hereford cows. The cancer eye is bad. When they get that, you're gonna lose a cow. But there again, if you get 'em rather early you can go ahead and send 'em to the butcher cuz that meat's perfectly good to eat. I guess they mostly use it for pet food anyway. They're all good to eat if they don't have a bad disease or something like that, or crippled. But what they usually do, you send anything to market that has a bad leg or is crippled, or even if they're all healed up, they usually send those for pet food.

Now there's a pose. I thought his head was down grazing but his head's up, idn't it? Isn't this his head and neck? No. This is his neck. He's grazing. I don't know. So this has to be his head down here. But this dudn't look right. I don't know what this is.

look at these photographs and I think about what part cattle play in my life. I'm no rancher. I own no land. Just a couple houses—one in the city, one in a little town in the Hill Country. But I drive by cattle all the time as I go from city to country and back. They've become landmarks and pausing points for me. Sometimes they stand solidly—hefty statues in a rocky expanse. Sometimes you can barely see 'em, black and curled among the dry brush, resting in the

haven't seen those heifers. Come get in the truck with me and we'll drive over and look." And by golly, I saw one heifer and she was not where she was s'posed to be. She was on the other side-a-the fence. And I said, "Let's go down there and look." We went down t h e r e and lightning had struck. Apparently it had hit that fence line. And five big ol' beautiful big fat heifers were layin' there dead in one pile. Apparently—during a storm they'll kinda bunch up sometimes—and I think they had backed up against that fence and maybe they were all touching.

[COW #3, MASON, p. 125]

'Course another thing that you always have to contend with, especially on larger ranches, is varmits—a baby calf or any baby animal is prey for a varmit. For wolves or coyotes. And I talk to some friends who have a place down the river from town there. The coyotes were so bad down there he finally got to the point where he only kept Brahma cows cuz they would fight the coyotes off better than the other breeds.

[COW & CALF #18, MASON, p. 80]

In this country, I guess probably the primary, foremost, and most numbers of any breeds w e r e the Herefords they started with over here. First, in the early days, the stuff they brought over was that Spanish stuff. That was the background of your Longhorns. There weren't native cattle here, see. They were brought over from Europe. And the Spanish, of course, were the first people over here primarily and I guess they brought the forerunners of the Longhorns and the Mexican cattle they have. And then the Herefords. And that was the prevailing breed of beef cattle in this country for years. I 'member when I was a growin'-up-kid, there was a Red Durham cattle that were here for awhile. Then they started bringin' in some of the black cattle. They brought in the B l a c k

[BULL #7, STREETER, p. 135]

Angus. Then they did a lotta cross breeding. Then they got to infusing the Brahma blood with English breeds.

I take a lotta these cattle magazines. They're interesting. Oh, fifteen, twenty years ago I started using Limmazine [Limousin] bulls, a French breed. And my herd is mostly Limmazine now. They're good cattle. I like 'em. They're red cattle.

We raise our cattle for beef. We usually sell our calves when they're about six to eight months old or keep 'em until they're a little heavier. When the cows leave here, they usually go to the wheat fields. When the buyers buy 'em, they put 'em on the wheat fields and, on good years, they can put as much as three calves to an acre or more. They put fast gain on 'em that way. And then they put 'em in the feedlots. So that's the story of where most of ours end up.

Usually you sell a cow when she's about ten or eleven. A good cow will make a good mama cow past that. I've seen cows fourteen, fifteen years old still producin' good. But they start breakin' down. Sometimes they'll have bad teeth or somethin' like that. And

shadows at midday. During the thick of August, there'll be dozens of cows crowded together under the shade of one solitary oak tree.

Doesn't matter I'm driving by at fifty, sixty, or seventy miles an hour. I see them. I look for them. In my heart, I'm with them. Walking the land. Or riding it on the horse I don't own. Goin' down to the creek, watchin' out for prickly pear. Turkey scramblin' in the brush, deer takin' off through the trees, dove flyin' everywhere. The smell of agarita in the air. There's a wonder to it all.

That expanse of earth—without cars, asphalt, or neighbors ten feet away—is something I feel inside myself. There's this constant yearning to be in a place where there are no visible boundaries. And that's what's out there. That, to me, is Texas.











What's funny is I was raised around cattle and I've never noticed—partly because I try to stay away from the head and the rear—if I'm working with the head we've usually got it clamped down and you're

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