FROM OUR ARCHIVES: Originally published in October 1956

The West I Remember

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ROSS SANTEE

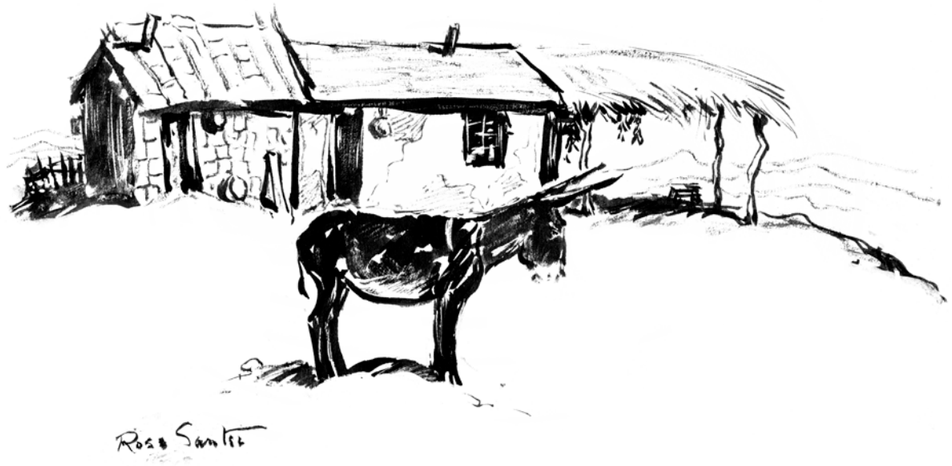
EDITOR'S NOTE: There's an adage about best-laid plans. We experienced it this month when one of our feature stories fell through. Usually when that happens, we have time to make a last-minute assignment and fill the hole. But not this time. So, we went to our archives and found this incredible story, which was first published 60 years ago this month. As you'll see, Mr. Santee was as talented with a pen as he was with a paintbrush. If you'd like to learn more about him, flip back to page 3.

THE COUNTRY ITSELF DWARFED EVERYTHING. The little ranch house in the distance could hardly be defined against the great expanse of country and the great dome of the sky. Later on, the cowboy jogging along on his pony looked like a moving dot; if it wasn't for the dust his pony's feet kicked up he might have been standing still. I was familiar with the Western illustrations of the day. Those I'd seen were mostly close-ups, horses and cowboys in gear detailed at great length. This moving figure in the distance — I didn't know what he wore, but I knew that he belonged.

It was some place west of El Paso in New Mexico. It was the spring of 1915, and it was my first trip west. When the train had pulled into El Paso that morning it was just breaking light. My look at Mexico and the Rio Grande was brief, but I liked the squat adobe huts. There was a Mexican family on the train. He was bullet-headed and cat-whiskered. The woman who sat beside him was sad-eyed yet her whole face lighted like that of a madonna when I gave the youngster an orange. They unloaded further down at a section house that had once been an S.P. box car. There were several small graves hard by that held faded wild flowers in cans and Mason fruit jars; on one, no more than three feet in length, was an artificial rose in a rusty tomato can.

From El Paso to Bowie, Arizona, I not only shared the seat with a narrow-eyed, bronzed man, I also shared his bottle. His high-heeled boots were worn inside his pants. He wore a high-crowned hat with a very narrow rim. He talked and I talked. When I told him I was going to Globe to visit my mother and my sister and her family he 'lowed that Globe was a right nice little town, he expected to be there later himself for he was a cattle buyer. A Texan, he had been as far east as Chicago with livestock, but he didn't get far from the yards. He pointed out distant ranges where different ranches lay, he named names and he named brands that were as so much Greek to me … It had been another wet year, the feed was good, and the cowmen were

ILLUSTRATION: ARIZONA HIGHWAYS ARCHIVES

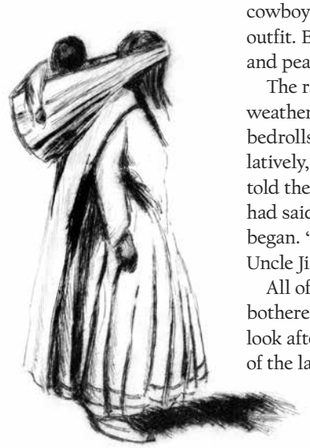


riding high. “But this country can be hell,” he said, “when the rains don’t come an’ she gets droughty an’ dry.” At Bowie a cowboy with a led horse was waiting for the buyer. “So long,” he said. “I hope you find your mother well.”

I was still watching the movement of the horses when a girl behind me spoke. She was pretty and in her early teens. “Aren’t you Ross? I just got a wire from Daddy that you were on the train.” She proved to be my cousin, Muriel Rosecrans, better known as “Pete.” She was returning to Globe after taking her grandparents back to Iowa for the summer, we had been on the train together since Iowa though several cars apart.

The line was the old Arizona Eastern that ran from Bowie to Globe and Miami. There was a wait of several hours. I couldn’t get enough of the big alkali flats or the mountains that appeared so close at hand and yet were many miles away. When the train eventually pulled out the dust boiled up in clouds. The windows were up, it was hot, everyone on the train looked gray.

This was Pete’s country … Those were the mighty Graham mountains on the left that towered ten thousand feet; the river was the Gila. The valley had been settled by Mormons. To the right were the Gila mountains that looked so brown against the green of the valley. The peak just beginning to show was Turnbull. Now, along the right of way, Apache dwellings, wickiups or tepees [*sic*], could be seen. Ganted ponies with hanging heads and standing on three legs stood beside many of the dwellings.



Apaches loaded on the train. There were beady-eyed papooses on cradle boards. The little girls were dressed exactly as their mothers who wore bright colored blouses and skirts of a peculiar style I had never seen before. Blue-black hair bobbed to their shoulders framed strong, broad faces. Some of the men, their hair cropped, wore cowboy garb, copper-riveted overalls and faded shirts of blue. Others, their faces a mass of wrinkles, their dark hair streaked with gray and cut at shoulder length, wore a red band about their heads. One woman busied herself with a youngster’s head that was cradled in the mother’s broad lap. At my inquiry Pete stated in a matter of fact way that the mother was picking lice.

We stopped at old San Carlos where Apaches unloaded and others got on the train — more wickiups and tepees and ponies on three legs. Now old San Carlos is covered by the blue waters of the lake. The country became rougher. The blue and purple mountains that lay ahead were the Pinals. The mountain to the northwest was Sleeping Beauty, against a flaming sky her classic head was outlined as was her long, flowing hair. There were more Apache dwellings on the hills to the east, then the train slid through the yards.

I knew Mother would not be at the station, but there was family there. Mother would be waiting at the house. My mother had an aversion to meeting trains as well as watching a train depart. Some people are like that.

It was a day or so later that I went out to the old Bar F Bar ranch at Newt Robinson’s suggestion. Newt was one of the family. He and Hal Young owned the ranch. I went out with Ed Hill, an old Texas cowboy, who was in for a packload of chuck. And Ed insisted that I help him pack the string. Ed showed me how to throw a hitch — I did it after a fashion under the old cowboy’s supervision. It was about a five hour trip with a pack outfit. Ed pointed out various landmarks, distant mountains and peaks.

The ranch house was a long, low-roofed affair made of weathered, unpainted pine boards. Cowboys, their tarps and bedrolls scattered about the yard, looked at me not only speculatively, but with a bilious eye. Uncle Jim, Newt’s dad, had told them I was an artist from New York. After what Uncle Jim had said I knew I had two strikes on me even before the game began. “This is Ross,” Ed said by way of introduction, “that Uncle Jim told you about.”

All of them nodded when Ed spoke but only one little Texan bothered to speak. “We’ve met. You an’ Mr. Hill go in an’ we’ll look after the stuff.” Sam Jones, the cook, was friendly in spite of the late hour and an extra guest. It was later I learned that this was unusual procedure on the part of a roundup cook.

Hal Young, Newt’s pardner, was gracious; he inquired as to any galls or saddle sores I might have acquired on the ride with Ed from town. I slept in Hal’s room. When I woke all the coyotes in Arizona seemed to be celebrating the coming of the dawn. There was the sound of voices and the pop of boot heels on the floor of the room next door and there was the smell of coffee and the odor of frying steak.

That first roundup still comes back not only in what I saw and heard but in simple sounds and smells. When the ponies, over a hundred head, were driven in at daybreak there was the click of their feet on the rocks and the sound of the remuda bells. There was the smell of burnt hair and hide that filled one’s nostrils in the branding corral, the smell of sweaty ponies and men. I had always thought of a cow as a gentle critter and I learned different here. Wild cows, wild steers with great bell-shaped horns and as wild as blacktail deer, came into the holdup that morning. And I saw my first wild horses.

Ed had told me there were as many wild horses as cattle on the range, and the Bar F Bar at that time ran around five thou-

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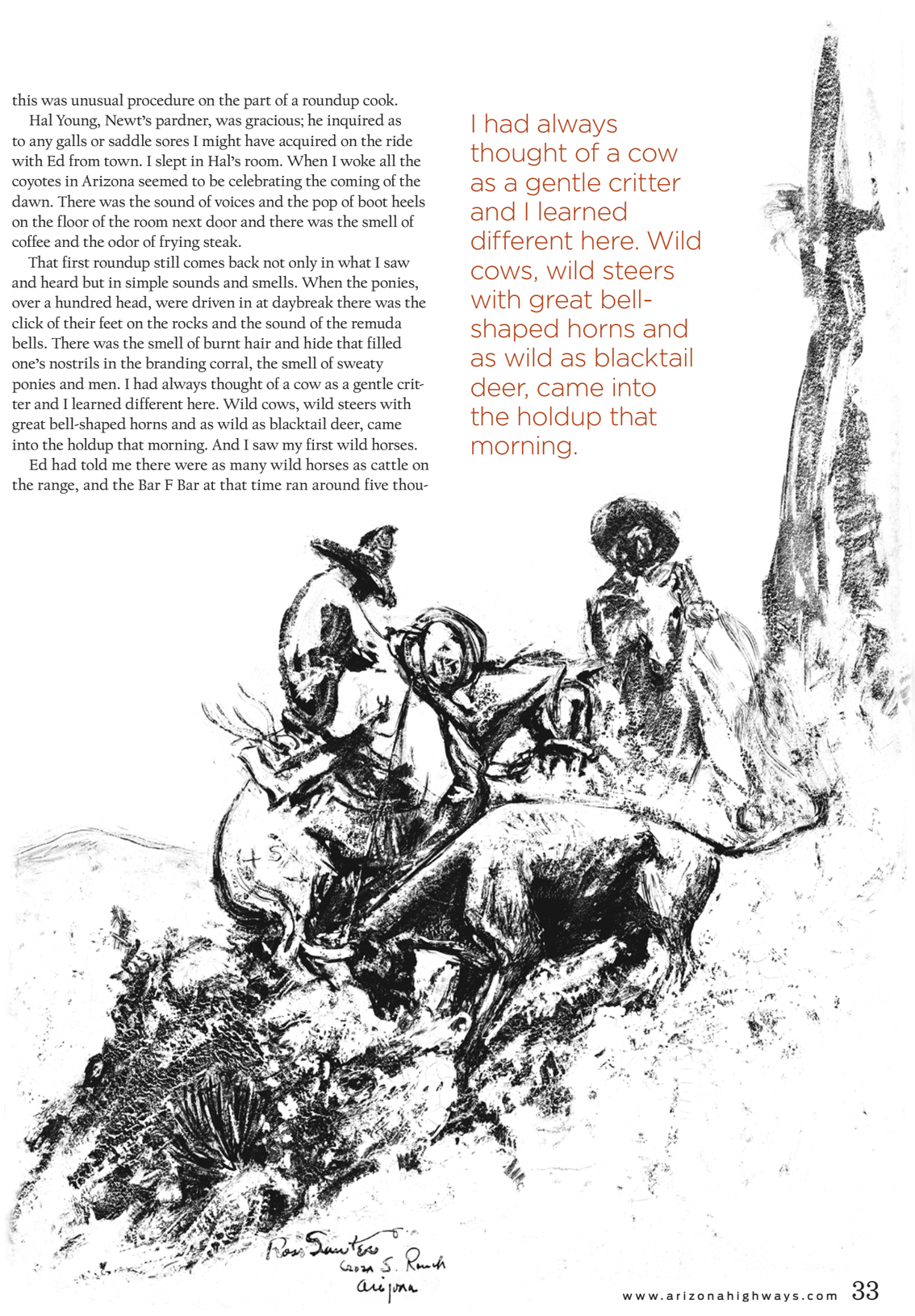


ILLUSTRATIONS: **ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

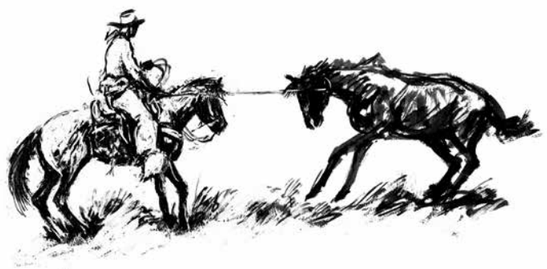
sand head. The dust was boiling now. I don't know how many wild mares came out of the dust, I made no count for I had eyes only for the stud. If my pony had not wheeled of his own accord the stud would have run us down. His red nostrils flared as he fought for his breath that came in a great sobbing sound; his eyes burned like live coals; his black mane and tail streamed in the wind; his neck, his withers, his flanks were dark with sweat that stained his buckskin hide; and there was the thud of drumming hoofs. A split second — and he was gone.

Since I was supposed to be an artist the cowboys waited for me to break out in a rash of drawings at any time. I was so swamped by the country itself and the life about me I couldn't have drawn what I saw and felt had my life hung on the deal. And since I didn't ride with a pencil and sketch pad the cowboys were disappointed. One day a puncher asked point-blank, "Made any pittures yet?" I shook my head. Later he was overheard as he passed the word along, "The New Yorker ain't made no pittures yet an' furthermore he don't pack any tools."

On that work the outfit shipped eight hundred head. On the drive to the pens I spent more time on my hands and knees than I did on the back of a horse, "boogering" calves out of brush thickets that lined the creek for miles.

At the Cutter pens the Coburn Brothers, who owned the Cross S outfit at the time, were shipping twenty-nine hundred head, mostly old "Mexicos" — dry stuff and big steers. Thirty-seven hundred head of cattle covered the flats — cattle were everywhere. And there was the little black-headed waddie with steel-blue eyes who spoke to me out of the dust when the cattle were running, and they rattled their hocks at intervals that day. It was my first meeting with Shorty Caraway, who was later to be my friend.

Back at the ranch as swamper for Ed we packed out salt, mended water gaps and fence. After the roundup the saddle horses not in use, their shoes pulled, had been turned out on the range. With Ed I learned where each horse ran and I learned each pony's name. Aside from Martin Dodson, the foreman, John Lovelace and Jake Griner who camped down at the bronc corral, the roundup crew had been laid off and gone their separate ways.



A little later another gather was made and another small crew put on. The cattle were delivered at Kelvin on the Gila; on this work I wrangled horses while Ed rustled the pots an' pans. It was on this trip that I, light-heartedly — my mind on other things, rode into a hornets' nest where I was promptly unloaded by the hammerhead I rode. And while the hornets stayed with the pony and I wasn't stung it was during this brief interlude I made contact with a loose and flying stirrup, coming up with two black eyes and a broken nose.

And there was the trip to the Aravaipa with Martin and John to bring back cattle that had been gathered for the outfit. There were wild cows, wild steers with mossy horns, some gentle cows with calves and a pot-bellied dogie calf. Then a calf complicated matters by being born that night. Knowing it would be impossible to take a calf only a few hours old on a week's drive the cowboys who made the gather took for granted we'd leave the cow and calf. But Martin rode to the store; from a big packing box he made a stout crate, and the calf not only traveled at ease he traveled in style for Martin lashed the crate on top of Johnnie, his little white pack mule's back. When another calf gave out next day Martin also put him in the crate and Johnnie packed the pair. The cowboys helped us get started, rode with us a few miles.

After the second day out the wild ones had quieted down, at least to the extent they didn't roll their tails and head for the tules without some provocation. So I helped John with the cattle and Martin took over the "calf wagon." Each day's drive was timed to reach a certain corral, each evening the cattle were penned. On the drive down Deer Creek the cattle became sorefooted. After soaking a beef hide in the creek all night Martin and John made rawhide boots and each sorefooted critter was roped and tied down while the footgear was tied on. Since rawhide dries in the sun it was necessary later to throw each critter and cut the footgear off.

We ran out of chuck the third day and for the next several days we scrounged and lived on the country. We had been boiling the coffee grounds for several days, we were back on the Gila when Martin finally dumped the grounds as they would no longer color the water. Fortunately, our supply of Bull Durham held. And while somewhat ganted we made it back to the Bar F Bar range without the loss of a head. On that drive I came to know each mark and fly speck on every critter's rump. Two years later when the outfit was working that end of the range I was on the drive when we jumped some wild ones out. In the bunch was a small steer and I knew him at a glance, it was our pot-bellied dogie calf gone as wild as a blacktail buck.

Aside from a year at Camp Bowie, Texas, in what was later to be known as the First World War, the next several years were spent on the range and at the smelter in Globe.

As for the town, its one main, unpaved and slightly twisting street followed the course of Pinal Creek. The town itself spread over the hills and up the many side canyons. The Cornish miners or "Cousin Jacks" as they were called had a hill of their own known as Cousin Jack or Pastie Hill, the latter a tribute to their delicious meat an' potato pie. The miners from the Balkans, Serbs, Croats and Dalmatians — all labeled "Bohunks" — lived in the lower part of town as did the Italians. The colorful 'dobie Mexican huts filtered up various side canyons although there was a sizable Mexican village on the hill to the west above the railroad yards and another in Ruiz canyon. And there was an Apache village in East Globe not far from the town's better dwellings.

On Broad Street, Globe's main thoroughfare, a few buildings were quite ornate and made of brick. As the county seat for Gila County the court house and county jail were made of stone. The many wide and ample steps that led to the court house served as a grandstand for the street below. They gathered the old-timers who had known the West when it was young; cowboys, miners, old prospectors with bleached blue eyes, faded blue shirts and overalls — in from the hills for a packload of chuck or to pick up another grub stake. Apaches favored the steps, usually mothers, the papoose on a cradle board and other little ones at the mother's side. Mexican burro trains that supplied the town with wood from the Pinals plodded down the street.

Across the street was the Lodge saloon, that locally famous old cowboy hangout, with both poker and pool tables to serve the boys from the range. Beneath the saloon was a Chinese restaurant, on the opposite corner were the White House rooms where cowboys "shook down," and another Chinese restaurant. At each place an ample steak was served for a dollar with a baked potato and fried frijoles, the standard side dish.

Most of Broad Street's buildings were weathered with false fronts. Below the bridge over Pinal Creek one heard not only various dialects but the pidgin English of the Chinese. There was a group of frame buildings that housed quite a number of Chinese and a few of these celestials wore cues. And it was here a cowboy I later rode with won considerable notoriety among his kind by riding a cow pony across the narrow suspension bridge into the red light district. From the street this district of adobes and wooden cribs, shaded by cottonwoods and sycamores, might easily have been mistaken for a quiet and sylvan retreat.

The tall smoke stack at the Old Dominion Smelter and Mine to the north, while dwarfed by the surrounding red-brown hills and the mountains in the distance, dominated the town itself. The war was on in Europe. Copper was on the rise, the blast furnaces at the smelter boomed; in fact, the whole district was booming. Yet there were no copper pennies in circulation until after the First World War. And it was at the smelter while riding a motor that pushed six small dump cars from the great bins to the furnaces I came to eat my share of sulphur smoke and dust.

While I never acquired a taste for dust and sulphur smoke it was at the smelter I did acquire a taste for Mexican food; I made a deal with a Mexican friend to pack an extra bucket of lunch for me. Of the three shifts — day, three o'clock and graveyard — I liked the last shift best. With no company brass at hand we made coffee at all hours. The copper poured into the three-hundred pound ingots at the convertor looked more like gold than gold itself. The great slag pots were drawn by a little donkey engine. When the slag was dumped the hills were lighted, the houses for a brief interval seen in miniature. Often I'd go to my little room at the Kinney House and try to put it down but then and even to this day the drawings would not come off.

The job could be dull at times but it always held its moments. There was the night when the furnaces were slow and Pablo went down the hill to visit his girlfriend. Finding a rival in the house Pablo shot him dead, not however before Pablo was cut with a knife across the paunch and it was a sizable cut indeed. He was gone no more than a half hour, and Pablo was not missed by our crew. It was not until next day when officers came to question Pablo as a suspect that we learned of the affair.

Not knowing the score we stoutly defended our friend. But the next time Pablo was questioned he not only made a clean breast of the affair he told of the fight in detail. What complicated matters was that Pablo, after the killing, had dragged his rival's body into a deserted mine tunnel. Otherwise, our friend might have gone scot-free; as it was, he served two years. For a killing was not uncommon on the town's main street; three in one week was the highest score I recall, and all the defendants were cleared. Such was the light-hearted manner in which the law was administered during the early days of statehood. It was a few days after the killing when I asked Juan, Pablo's brother, as to Pablo's health and how he fared in the klink. Like his brother, Juan had a disarming smile. "Pablo not guilty any more," said Juan, "Pablo got lawyer now."

ILLUSTRATIONS: **ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Coming off shift in the morning a part of our crew often went hunting. On these forays little Gene Stewart could walk all of us into the ground. Quail was so plentiful we never shot rabbits until we headed for home as it made too heavy a bag to carry.

At the Fourth of July and Christmas the cowboys came in for two weeks to rope and ride. The word rodeo was seldom used in those days, it was called cowboy sports and pastime. And there were miners' drilling contests, both single and double jack. In Turkey-shoot canyon the shoots started at Thanksgiving and ran until the New Year, and a turkey staked out at two hundred yards looked more like a blackbird in size. The shooter stood, shot offhand with no rest of any kind. The tariff was set at three shots for a dollar. And there was the shoot long-remembered when I brought my 30-30 in from the ranch. Tom Turner, an Oklahoma cowboy, and I targeted the place before the shoot, and while neither of us killed three-straight we made so many two-kills in a row we were eventually barred.

On pay-day nights the crap games were sizable indeed. As for poker, one always found a game to fit the purse. The change-in was from as low as five dollars a stack to as high as one could go.

At the Bar F Bar the biggest part of the range was on the San Carlos Reservation. In late fall the women gathered beotoes (acorns) that were ground on a metate into flour, while the men hunted deer and ran wild horses. An Apache wild horse hunt was something to behold. The holdup of wild ones might be fairly well in hand, then a man in pursuit of a mare that carried his brand — usually with a colt at her side — would fog into the holdup, going over and under the pony he rode with the double of his rope. In less time than it takes to write it down the holdup of wild ones would be scattered from hell to breakfast.

Yet it was not until Bill Young bought Hal out and Bill and Newt bought the Cross S outfit that I came to know the Apaches first-hand. And the Cross S was a sizable spread, one year the outfit branded seven thousand calves. Apache cowboys rode on the spring and fall work; called "gut eaters" by most of the outfit they were treated with open contempt. There were a few with the decency to keep their feelings to themselves, however. Invariably on coming to work they were undernourished; after a few weeks' diet of beef and frijole beans their dark skins shone like a piece of bacon rind. Their camp followers carried off the offal when the outfit killed a beef — they appeared to be always hungry, and this on their own reservation. One night two old men with matted iron-gray hair pulled their knives and were ready to fight over a beef paunch until Shorty Caraway, the foreman, intervened.

Some of the Apaches became my friends over the years. Jim Whitehead, and there was not a fleck of gray in his black, straight coarse hair, was one of the best friends I ever had, either Indian or white. Only a few white friends were ever asked to Old Jim's tepee at night. While it was unorthodox procedure among the cowboys I had nothing to lose, the caste system existed in cow camp and the wrangler was held in low esteem. Jim was full of wisdom and kindness. Often when the moon was full and Jim's brother, the coyote, was singing from the ridge we squatted at the fire by Old Jim's tepee. And the "guts" were clean and delicious as we served ourselves, each with a green stick in hand.

As late as 1923 the Tenth Cavalry was garrisoned at Fort Apache. The Tenth was a crack outfit. Those boys were horsemen and proud of the service too, when they went through a drill it was with a snap often missing among white troops. Strung out on a hike they became soldiers in miniature against the great expanse of country and sky.

And there were Apache ceremonials and dances. It seemed to me they had a ceremony for almost everything. When old R 14, the wealthiest cowman on either reservation, threw a party at Cibicue the old boy put it on big. Many beeves were killed, there was meat hanging in the cedars and from wagon bows. Even the dogs were full as ticks. For days Apaches in wagons and on horseback headed that way, and occasionally white cowboys as well. Old R 14, seated in front of his tepee like a great bronze Buddha, welcomed all who came.

Set in a great natural bowl, the red of the soil, the green of the cedars and the blue of the sky made a setting long-remembered. At dark the fires were lighted. Apaches from their little family camps moved in and became part of the pageant. There was the social dance, the famous Apache Devil dance — all color and pageantry. And there was always the beat of the drum. A four-day affair; I never did see the finale when the pollen was sprinkled at the ceremonial wickiup and the pile of blankets was torn apart and thrown to the four winds. I could usually get through three nights without sleep but the fourth one got me down.

Like the "Man Who Came to Dinner" mine proved to be quite a stay. I have been away at long intervals over the years from the land of my choosing, and most of my old friends — Mexicans, Apaches and whites — are gone. The cowboys speak of it as that long one-way ride where legend says the old black burro with his pack waits at the river to guide each rider across that dark and unknown stream. But it was a privilege indeed to work or ride the range with them and come to know a little of this land from the back of a jogging horse. AH

ILLUSTRATIONS: **ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**