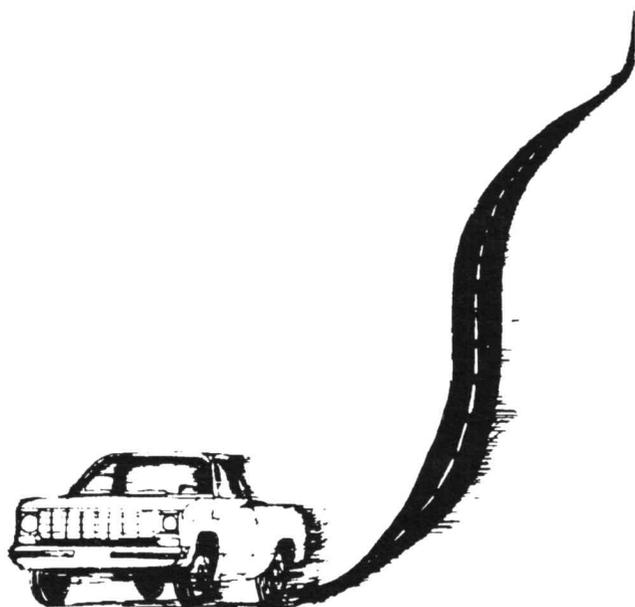


The Truck

A friend drove up in a brand new rig
 I'll tell, ya' boys, that truck was big
 A stretched out diesel dually 4-by-4.
 It had more chrome than a limosine
 And the biggest gooseneck I'd ever seen
 Why he could haul his whole herd and a couple more.
 It had captains chairs that would tilt six ways
 And lots of little fold out trays
 For holding smokes, and drinks, and spare change too
 It had more dials than a DC-8,
 And the leather interior was sure first rate
 And the plush-pile carpet on the floor was baby blue.
 Now, I'm not envious, but I must confess,
 That my old pickup's sure a mess
 And I'd like to drive something that still had a floor board
 But with a hundred cows in this economy,
 And even used pickups sure aren't free
 Don't guess you'll see me in a brand new Ford.
 I got to thinkin' 'bout this friend of mine
 And I'm happy for him, his new trucks fine
 But I think it might be just a bid absurd.
 That a feller can ride around all day
 Doctorin' calves and haulin' hay
 In a truck that's worth more than his whole herd.

Steve Lucas
 Mountain View Farm
 Louisa, Virginia



BOOK REVIEW

by Larry D. Butler

Grazing Lands Technology Institute, Natural Resources
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The Prairie Keepers by Marcy Houle, 1995
 Published by Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

Several of us in the NRCS Grazing Lands Technology Institute have recently read ***The Prairie Keepers*** by Marcy Houle. It is outstanding! Marcy Houle has brought the story together concerning range management, wildlife management, private grazing lands values and interests, agency differences in philosophy, ecology, and peoples' biases.

I have seldom read a book from cover to cover in one day, in fact I can't ever remember doing so; however, this book won't let you put it down if you have a love for rangelands and an admiration for the people who own and manage them. The subtitle of this book is "Secrets of the Grasslands". Those of us who have worked areas like the Zumwalt Prairie, with ranchers like those who live and make their livelihood there, know many of these secrets but are not always able to express them to others in a way that transfers those secrets. Marcy Houle tells these "secrets" to the reader in an understandable and especially personal way that opens the secrets for all to understand.

Houle is a wildlife biologist and ecological consultant who, at the time of this book, was conducting research on the raptor population of the Zumwalt Prairie in northeastern Oregon. This area covers about 200 square miles and is mostly privately-owned. Her study documents the densest concentration of Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks, and ferruginous hawks in the lower forty-eight states and why this area supports it. As you can guess, the answer is good range management. However, as important as the answer is, the road to that answer is an enlightening tale in itself. It is filled with personal insights, personality conflicts, agency and personal biases, adversity and conflict surrounding an objective with near impossible odds of completing in the time allowed. Time constraints were dictated by the climate, the timing of plant growth, and behavior of the hawks and timing of nesting, along with the greatest challenge of bringing diverse opinions and biases together. A ***buteo*** ***rodeo*** becomes the rallying point for coordination of conflicting personalities, ideas, philosophies, and biases. What is a ***buteo*** ***rodeo***? You will have to read the book to find out.

The Portland Oregonian—"Houle's heart is not with just the wildlife, but also with the way of life - a big picture view that fits with a writer of such thoughtfulness and clarity."

Read it, you won't be disappointed!



The Wise and Follish Masters A Rangeland Parable

Steve Nelle

Three masters each had a crew of strong and dedicated men doing labor for them.

The first master worked his crew continuously and hard, giving them little or no rest and inadequate food. In ignorance, the master worked his strongest men the hardest. Since the men were overworked, they eventually began to loose vigor and strength. The master had no pity nor respect for his crew and drove the workers until they collapsed from weakness. In the days ahead, the master continued to work the men still more until they slowly began to die one by one. When most had died, the foolish master recognized he had suffered great loss and watched his business die.

The second master was like the first, overworking his crew until they became weakened and exhausted. After his strongest workers died and the others near death, the master had pity on the men and allowed them rest and nourishment. Following a prolonged rest and recovery, the remaining crew regained strength and were once again able to work, but at a reduced level. The master foolishly lost his best workers, but wisely spared the rest of the crew. Although not as profitable as in the past, the master was at least able to stay in business.

The third master worked his crew hard and expected much, but fed them well and allowed them rest as needed. He gained years of dependable labor from the men who worked willingly for the wise master. With proper respect and treatment, the crew remained strong and healthy all their lives. The sons and grandsons worked for the wise master and his family for many generations making them a thriving and profitable business.

The first master overstocked his range continuously year after year, weakening the grasses. Not understanding how grass grows or how animals graze, he gradually lost the best grasses, first and then the lesser ones. What he ended up with was poor grass, poor livestock, bare ground and erosion.

The second master also overstocked his range and demanded too much from the grass. After many years, he noticed the best grasses were gone, and the others unproductive. He gave the pastures prolonged rest and reduced his stocking rate but damage had been done. The remaining grasses responded, but the range was never as productive again.

The Third master understood how plants grow and how animals graze. He knew his grasses, properly stocked and provided rest periods. He had fewer livestock, but they remained productive like the range they grazed. The master profited from his range and his livestock and was able to enlarge his ranch.

The parable is sad but true; which master are you?

Smokey

In the sandhills of Nebraska lived a cowboy, buildin' dreams
Of a ranch all filled with cattle and with horses near the streams.

He worked from dawn till nightfall and always on the run,
His old slouch hat protectin' his forehead from the sun,
As he worked to build his Sandhill Ranch each day.

Smokey was that cowboy who lived to ride each day,
Just a-countin' cows and horses and singin' on his way.
But that laughin' jokin' cowboy is silent now, you see;
From all his work and struggles he finally is free.
For from these earthly pastures Smokey's gone away.

The horses they all miss him, they're waiting at the gate,
They just don't know the reason why Smokey is so late.
The cattle are so restless, just millin' round the place,
They wander here and there just lookn' for his face.
They don't know that up in Heaven Smokey's watchin'
every stray.

"Cause he's found a finer rangeland, so sunny and so fair,
And it's lots more fun in Heaven, now that Smokey's there.
He'll torment all the angels until they all join in,
Just a-singin' and a-jokin' as they share the happy grin
Of that laughin', singin' cowboy who one day rode away.

Editor's Note:

This poem was found in some writings left by Belle Frasier. Richard Hart provided a review and polish of the poem. Belle Frasier is believed to have authored the poem following the death of her husband Wilber Frasier (known as Smokey to his friends) in 1975 (See "From a Housewife to Range Manager. *Rangelands*, 6(1), February 1984).

