

# Thoughts and Memories of an Old Cowhand

Buster Lynde



# From the Author

Dear Readers,

I have entitled the poems in this little book “*Thoughts and Memories of an Old Cowhand*” for they were composed by one who grew up among the sagebrush of Wyoming and lived most of his life in the saddle doing all of the ordinary things that a country boy should do.

I don't claim to be a poet. I am only publishing them with the hopes that they will be worth reading by my old friends, and to preserve some of the common acts, thoughts, and happenings of the horse and wagon days. Days when we made our own amusements with the cook tent for our showhouse, the campfire for our footlights, the cowboys for our actors and coffee for our refreshments. As we sat in the evening telling yarns and stories, we could hear the howl of the old grey wolf mingling in the chorus of our songs.

Buster Lynde



# How Buster Lynde Reached Wyoming

I was born in '87,  
In a sod house on a claim.  
Near the county seat of Thomas County Kansas.  
Buster Lynde is my name.

My mother was left a widow,  
When I was two years old.  
Were it not for her heroic efforts,  
This story could not be told.

In about two years she married,  
And with our new Step Pa,  
Four mules and two covered wagons,  
We headed toward Arkansas.

Many days and miles I traveled  
Without a boot or socks,  
Until we reached our destination  
Not far from Little Rock.

The place had been a battlefield  
Many years ago.  
How we ever came to choose it,  
I will never know.

We ploughed, raked and planted,  
And from that stony field  
We picked more lead than cotton,  
But no silver did it yield.

Two long years we toiled and waited.  
Then having done our best  
Sick with chills and fever,  
We pointed our last team Northwest.

Over the Ozark Mountains,  
Across the big Missou  
Almighty God was our only guide,  
But somehow we made it through.

We finally reached Nebraska.  
For reasons of his own,  
My Step Pa took our team and wagon  
And left us there alone.

The County had to feed us,  
And they did their best  
Until one day there came a letter  
From an uncle in the West.

It read, "Please find enclosed a ticket  
And some money we are sending you.  
Just hand said ticket to the conductor,  
And he will see you through."

So we landed in Gillette,  
In the spring of '95,  
And that is why I'm here today  
Happy, well fed and alive.

# Wyoming

Did you ever ease down in your saddle early in the morn,  
Lean forth and feel your night horse speed away?  
Have you roped a snortin' thousand pounder,  
Felt him jerk your saddle horn  
And proved yourself, at last, a winner in the frey?  
And have you crossed the swirling waters  
When the streams were running high,  
Shared the dangers of the range and stood the test?  
If you have, I know you love Wyoming; the land where sunsets die,  
And the place that ever grips you is the West.

# The Passing Of The Sage

They say the lowly sagebrush, that covers our hills, must go  
To make room for the grass that some people think will grow.  
To me it seems a pity that it must come to pass  
That we give the lives of a million creatures for just a little grass.

The sage is not a thing of beauty. Its color isn't grand,  
But the Good Lord had a purpose when he placed it on the land.  
The rabbit, the sagehen, the partridge and the grouse  
Must have its foliage for their food, its shelter for their house.

If we take it from them, like the elk and buffalo  
They, too, will vanish from the range for they'd have no place to go.  
If I could be a boy again, I would work for any wage  
Just to smell its pungent odor and sleep among the sage.

# The Recluse Store

As I sat here one evening, dreaming of days of yore,  
My memory strayed back to Recluse, and that good old country store.  
I remember those good hearted people we called Nora and Fred.  
They did many kind things for us and no “Thank you” has been said.  
I thought of the wonderful feeling I had as I entered the store,  
And felt the warm air streaming through that register in the floor.  
There was Fred’s good wife, Nora, who delivered our mail and did a million things.  
She closely resembled an angel — we could almost imagine her wings.  
They had many treasures that in my memory mount.  
The one I valued most of all was their generous charge account.  
When the snow was deep in winter and our bank account was red,  
We could struggle up to Recluse and just say, “Charge it, Fred.”  
Sometimes we’d sell a horse or two and get a little dough,  
Then we’d charge the gas at Recluse and on to town we’d go;  
Pay cash for the groceries, and if we forgot the bread,  
We would say, “That’s ok, we can charge the rest with Fred.”  
Then, perhaps on our way home, we’d get stuck in the snow.  
He’d drag us out, and pull us in, and we’d feel ill at ease,  
For we’d have to pile our groceries in the store, or they would freeze.  
When the storm was over, we wouldn’t need the bread,  
We’d all stay there for breakfast and eat Fred’s grub instead.  
How we’d squall and holler when he’d haul our hogs to town,  
Trade them for a slab of bacon for himself, and for us — 2¢ a pound!  
Time has kept a-creepin’ on, Fred and I are older men.  
I’m glad he couldn’t hear the thoughts that I was thinkin’ then.  
For when I went to bed last night, I prayed to God and said,  
“Please, God, if there’s any room in Heaven, hold a place for Fred.”

# The Long Jerk Line

Near the Punkin Buttes,  
In the spring of 1909,  
I learned to drive a string team  
And use a long jerk line.

When I was a lad about twenty,  
Brother Bill was twenty-four.  
We took a contract freighting wool  
Some sixty miles or more.

Our power then was horses.  
We rounded up a lot.  
Took broncs to use while breaking them,  
For money we had not.

The day had faded into night,  
Stars shone all about.  
We penned the broncs at the Frank Smith ranch,  
And rolled our bed tarps out.

Several hectic days were spent  
Dragging out and tying in.  
At last we had them all hooked up,  
Then the fun begin.

I was green and nervous.  
Brother knew no fear.  
He said, "I'll drive your team around a bit,  
While you watch from here."

Then he climbed up on my lazy board,  
And gave a little shout.  
Like they were shot from a cannon,  
The broncs went plunging out.

Bill was having trouble.  
Then to my dismay,  
Brother dropped the jerkline.  
We had a runaway.

They headed toward a canyon  
That was narrow, rough and deep.  
When the ten broncs hit the bottom,  
They landed in a heap.

Soon we had them back on their feet.  
Then Bill looked about,  
And said, "I'll man the lazy brake,  
While you ride the line horse out."

I climbed up on his middle,  
Up the bank we went.  
When we reached the upland  
Buster's nerve was spent.  
On his head among the sage brush,  
Was where Bill's brother went.

Around the sloping side hill  
I could see the string team run.  
Bill hung onto the lazy brake,  
And had a lot of fun.

After several bouncing circles,  
It was plain to see  
Brother had them winded,  
And headed back toward me.

I was standing on the canyon rim  
Shaking at the knees,  
When Bill pulled up beside me  
And stopped the broncs with ease.

I saw a grin on his face.  
Then I wished he wasn't boss  
For he said, "Buster, stop your shakin',  
And get back on that hoss!"

When I leaped on his withers  
He gave his tall a toss.  
I hung onto the back band.  
We made it back across.

I shook with fear and trembled  
When Brother said to me,  
"Now you drive the string team,  
It's easy as can be."

"All you do is watch your left front wheel.  
When to the right you want to be  
You simply give the line a jerk,  
Then you holler gee!"

Of all the thrills I've ever had,  
The big one came to me  
When I first gave the line a jerk  
And saw my string team go gee.

# The Rider At The Gate

The sun had kissed the jack pine tips, the coyote was calling his mate  
When a rider stepped off a little brown horse to open a barbwire gate.

He had come from The Little Powder through the hills on a winding trail —  
All his wordly goods on a packhorse with a bronco tied to its tail.

He was headed for the homestead where he intended to stay.  
AJI he owned was three miles of barbwire fence on a little creek called S.A.

He rode on down through a prairie dog town till he came to a little knoll. There he  
unpacked, hobbled his horse and shook out a dusty bed roll.

His mess kit contained no silver, so by the light of the moon  
He pulled out a jack knife and whittled a cottonwood spoon.

When the campfire had started, to a spring in the creek bed he ran.  
The cattle had been there before him and Nature had favored no man,  
But the water he dipped from a cow track filled the coffee can.

When the bacon and flapjacks were finished, he lay down in the blankets to rest.  
Under the lowly sage brush he was sheltered from the West.

He envied no man in the city who enjoyed the music 'til late  
For his song was the howl of the coyote that was still calling his mate.

He could hardly wait for day to break — to him the sunrise seemed great  
For the happiest man in the world was he — the one who stepped off at the gate.



# To My Old Boss, J.A. Allison

In the Little Powder Valley, in the fall of nineteen-four,  
A tired, hungry and thirsty boy rapped on a ranch house door.  
Soon appeared in the doorway the man he had come to see;  
He was J.A. Allison, and the boy on the step was me.

I said, "Mr. Allison, I've been told that you're in need of a man.  
"I hope you can use a young one, for I want to make a hand."  
He studied me over slowly, as if he were reading a book.  
I thought I saw a smile on his face, just as he ceased to look.

Then he said, "What can you offer if I add you to my outfit?"  
"I'm willing to work and learn," said I, and then I squeaked, "That's it."  
He looked away for a moment, then he said, "If you're telling the truth,  
"I guess I'll have to give you a chance, though I seldom hire a youth."

Three and a half years I worked for Ad, no better boss a boy ever had;  
He couldn't have treated me better had he been my own Dad!  
Many cattle, horses and sheep he had, his ranch spread far and wide;  
Soon he went on a tour of inspection and took me along at his side.

He started right in to teach me the difference 'tween right and wrong;  
I asked him a thousand questions as together we rode along.  
From camp to camp we traveled while we inspected the sheep;  
Come night in a crowded wagon, with our heads on our boots, we'd sleep.

As time went on he taught me how to rope and to ride;  
When a bronc bucked me off or turned over, he'd always be at my side.  
Early in the spring we'd run horses, the wildest I'd ever seen.  
Maybe next day I'd be in the kitchen, in charge of a washing machine!  
I didn't mind helping the women, for to me they were always kind;  
Soon as the washing was finished, some left-over pie I'd find.

About a year later, one morning, he said, "Buster, catch your best hoss.  
"Your ranch hand days are over, from now on you'll be my range boss!"  
To me that meant hunt grass and water, with nothing to do but ride;  
It also meant a raise in wages, and oh, what a boost to my pride!

I rode the range that winter, but by spring when green grass came through,  
I changed my rope for a slicker and took charge of a lambing crew.  
I'll never forget how proud I was the fall he sent me for feed;  
I had Old Rock and Jim on the wheel, Frank and Prince in the lead.

In the middle of the next winter, a message came out to me.  
"Buster, come to the home ranch, for it's you I want to see."  
As I stepped into his office, he said, "Buster, I'm glad you came,  
"I want to give you this check book, I've marked where to sign your name.

"I'm going West tomorrow to be gone for a month or two;  
"While I'm gone to buy more sheep, boy, I'm trusting the outfit to you."  
"I sure am glad you trust me sit, but I hardly know how to proceed,  
"For some of these older men may resent you putting me in the lead."

"I doubt if they'll cause you trouble, but if any should let you down,  
"Remember you have the check book and you can find more men in town."  
I stayed in charge of the outfit until I decided to roam;  
In the spring of of 1908 I drew my wages and started out on my own.

Fifty-three years have gone by since I left Ad's care,  
But I haven't forgotten the lessons he taught me there;  
A man of his kind is hard to find, I regret he's growing old;  
I used to think his bark was rough, now I know his heart is gold.

# The Old Dutch Oven

Among some things in the basement  
I used when I was a kid  
Sits my old Dutch Oven,  
The one with the crack in the lid.  
More than fifty years I used it,  
It isn't hard to see  
I'm sentimental about it,  
It means so much to me.  
When I removed the cover  
My eyes filled with tears.  
So many fond memories lingered there  
Of the by-gone years.

I hauled it in a wagon,  
Pulled it on a sled,  
Carried it on a pack horse  
Tied on top of my bed.  
I used it when I drove string team  
From Montana to Gillette;  
And oh! the beans I cooked in it  
I almost taste them yet.  
The bacon and fried potatoes  
I ate day after day,  
With now and then a young sage hen  
I bagged along the way.

Those were happy days  
When I camped along the trail.  
My Dutch Oven filled with biscuits,  
And that coffee from a pail.  
I can't forget the sour dough cakes  
They tasted like little gems;  
If they did curl up at the edges  
And squeak when I bit into them.

I tell you folks that was heaven.  
Oh! what I wouldn't give  
Once more to be a kid,  
And dig into the old Dutch Oven;  
The one with the crack in the lid.

# The Biggest Lie

This happened in Wyoming in the early days.  
The settlers were coming in by the dozens every way;  
When a lonesome, bashful bachelor rode out to look the country o'er,  
And saw a settler's daughter standing by a new log cabin door.  
He said to his pet horse, Baldy, "Do you see what I see?"  
"Isn't that a lovely maiden, it sure looks like one to me."  
He wondered how to meet her, tried to think just what to say;  
Then he had a bright idea and started galloping down the way.

By the time he reached the cabin his voice was choked, his face was red.  
But he summoned all his courage and this is what he said:  
"I beg your pardon, lady, for I have come here with the hope  
That you have seen a big gray horse come by this way, dragging a picket rope."  
"Yes sir, oh, yes sir," she earnestly replied.  
"I saw that horse go down yon hill, and up the other side.  
And if you want to catch him sir, I think you'd better ride."  
He wasn't expecting that one, and when he got his breath  
He said, "My dear lady, if the Good Lord loved a liar, He'd hug you plumb to death."

Then she looked him in the eye, and this he heard her say;  
"Well, Mr. Smart Aleck, who started that big lie anyway?"  
He said, "It must have been old Baldy, for he's a wise old cuss,  
When he thought that I would ride on by, he started in to fuss.  
Said he was tired and hungry and wanted some oats and hay.  
If I would introduce him properly, you might just let us stay."  
"So you're that low down trifler the cowboys told me about,  
They said you'd been in prison, and they shouldn't have let you out!  
For all you do is ride around breaking young girls hearts,  
And the dirty tricks you play on women are well known in these parts.  
How could you take their underwear off the line and fill them with sand?  
They say in the center of the seat they often find your brand.  
I'm grateful to those gentlemen who are so honest, kind and true.  
They rode all the way from the E R Ranch just to tell me the truth about you.  
So there! Mr. Trifler, I just want to say, that there's one dry farmer's daughter  
Whose heart you won't break today."

Then the bachelor smiled, and said to Baldy, "We'd just as well be on our way,  
For those lyin' 'gentlemen' have just out-lied us again, I'd say."

# A Plea For The Old Rock Pile

Dozer, spare those ancient rocks,  
Move not a single stone!  
You have the right to do it, sure,  
But *please* leave them alone!

The old familiar pile has stood,  
Throughout the many years;  
We kids played there for happy hours,  
Sharing hopes and fears.

There was a hole in those old rocks,  
Where we could see right through;  
But often in an emergency,  
Those rocks hid our bareness from view!

If we were riding on a stormy night,  
That hill made our tired hearts pound,  
For we knew when the rock pile came in sight  
We'd soon be safe in town.

Many a rider passing  
Sought its shelter from hall and rain,  
Oh! what a landmark God placed there  
On this land of rolling plains.

Old timers know that human bones  
And secrets lie in that sandy bed!  
Dozer, don't lay the graveyard bare,  
For "Rest in peace" we said.

The many inscriptions carved up there  
Are far more precious than gold,  
For it may be the only record  
Left by some dear friends of old.

You folks of Gillette may someday regret,  
If you let the Rock Pile cease to be,  
For you will have removed the only tombstone  
From where dear old Gillette used to be.

You may look for a good kids' playground,  
But to me, that's the best in the land!  
Yield to progress if you must,  
But let the Old Rock Pile stand!

# Thoughts Of Eventide

If you are tired of travellin',  
And care no more to roam;  
Or like a lot of people,  
Just a-lookin' for a home;  
You can find a lovely place,  
Right here at the edge of town;  
In view of the Big Horn Mountains,  
With Cloud Peak smilin' down;  
There, with a little imagination,  
You can bag a big bull moose;  
Or hook the speckled beauties,  
That abound in Little Goose.

The people there are friendly,  
Honest, kind and true;  
Cleanliness, kindness, and comfort  
Isn't all that they offer you.  
You'll love the gentle nurses,  
Who will care for your every need  
With kind consideration,  
Regardless of your creed.  
And if you ever see the place,  
I'm sure you will decide  
To gather up your toilet articles  
And head for Eventide.

# How To Win A Wife

Of all the sad experiences a cowboy ever had  
Happened to this bachelor, when he was just a lad.  
He was living on the homestead, leading a lonely life,  
When he saddled up one morning to start looking for a wife.

He rode into the village where he met a maiden fair and neat.  
She invited him out to her lovely home, where she cooked a meal complete.  
After the dinner was over, she cleared the dishes away  
And came into the parlor where she began to sing and play.

When his stomach started aching, his face turning gray  
And he kept on getting sicker, 'til he finally had to say,  
"That was a lovely dinner. I enjoyed the music too.  
I'm sorry that it's getting late, and I must say goodnight to you."

And just as he stooped to kiss her (they were standing by the door)  
Up came dill pickles, pie, and chicken all over the parlor floor.  
She said, "My goodness! what has happened? Did you have too much fat?  
Or could it have been my kisses, are they as bad as that?"

"It couldn't have been your kisses, Dear. It must have been something I et."  
"Such an insult to my cooking, now that I can't forget!"  
He made a dash for his saddle horse. He reached him in nothing flat,  
And the forty miles back to the homestead, he went in a little less than that.

That's why they still are strangers, and will be all through life.  
Don't ever let her feed you pickles, boys, if you want to win a wife.

# The Big Parade

Come on, folks! be it sun or shade,  
Let's go and watch the big parade!  
Where the ladies smile as they pass by,  
The boys say, "Howdy" and the girls say "Hi"!

A big crowd gathers on courthouse hill,  
To hear the music and feel the thrill;  
We watch the beautiful floats pass by,  
Loaded with sights that please the eye.

When Old Glory leads the band,  
Hands over hearts, we rise and stand.  
Next comes the miner, whose burros gray  
Drop their cards on the right-of-way.

Here come the prettiest girls we've seen,  
We'll choose just one to be the queen;  
Straight as an arrow on their mounts,  
For grace and beauty and skill all counts.

Now at least the time is spent,  
We head for the hill and the *Big Event*.  
And folks, you too will go  
To the *Sheridan Wyoming Rodeo*!!

# In Memory Of My Operation

It was near the city of Sheridan in the brick house on the hill,  
Where I learned the uses of the enema, the glass stick, the needle and the pin,  
The good doctor said, "Earnest be in bed by eight,  
"For you must have an enema before it is too late."  
In due time the nurse came, and it fairly made me cringe  
When I looked up and saw her holding water bottle, soap suds and syringe.

She said, "Mr. Lynde, turn on your side." Then with careful aiming,  
She taught me the difference between holding and retaining!  
After several painful moments while the water entered slow,  
She said, "Mr. Lynde, I think you'd better go!"  
I made a dash for the toilet, with a pain that made me howl  
While she stood there listening for the rumble of the bowel.  
When the pain had lessened and I staggered back to bed,  
The nurse said, "Successful?" "A big success," I said.

Soon another nurse appeared with a devilish gleam in her eye,  
When she jabbed me with that needle, I knew the reason why.  
Next came the glass stick - it really is the ticket!  
It will take your temperature anywhere, no matter where they stick it.  
First she stuck it in the north end of me when I was headed south,  
But I gagged a little next morning when she stuck it in my mouth!

I got more pills than vittles, and what I'd like to know,  
If they have so many purposes, how do they all know where to go?  
When the final morning came, I hoped to be from pills bereft,  
But the nurse gave me three more to remove residue the other pills had left.  
And still I love those nurses, and that good Doctor Man,  
For it was they who made it possible for me to see again.



# The Rodeo

To Sheridan each year the cowboys go,  
Where the ropers rally at the rodeo.  
Where the “Old Bucks” smoke the pipe of peace,  
And the “Old Squaws” squat in the big teepees.  
Where the cowboy leans over the fence,  
With flashing eyes and muscles tense  
For the big, red roan is rearing to go,  
While the cowboy tightens his latigo.

If he rides that horse he'll be in luck,  
For when he leaves the chute you can hear him buck.  
If he stays in his middle 'til the timer counts ten,  
He has earned the right to ride again.  
If his heels go up and his head goes down,  
He's lost the chance at the riders crown.  
They'll pick him up, carry him in,  
Call the doctor if he don't grin  
And if tomorrow he don't die,  
He'll get another horse to try.

Here goes the “dogger” in swift pursuit  
Of a long-horned steer as he leaves the chute.  
He grabs a horn as he leaps from his mount,  
For to win the money it's time that counts.  
Steers belly turns up as cowboy swings under;  
Cowboy'umps up and steer goes yonder.

There sits the roper proud and straight.  
As he waits for his calf at the barrier gate.  
His silk manilla hangs straight and free  
With a four foot loop tied to his tree.  
The time is short, less than a minute.  
A quick dash, a cast, and the calf is in it.  
We hear the blat and the mustard flies,  
While the cowboy ties him where he lies.

To ride the Brahma is no pickin'.  
He's bad about buntin' as well as kickin'.  
He goes buckin' and whirlin' around and around  
Until the cowboy hits the ground.  
When he slips from his back he knows there's a chance  
He'll feel the bull snort in the seat of his pants.

Now we come to a lovely scene,  
For it's time to crown the rodeo queen.  
Here she comes in buckskin gay  
Sitting astride a long, keen bay.  
Just hear 'em cheer as she rides by!  
With her pointed breast and her tapered thigh.  
The toes of her boots point up and her heels point down  
As she presses her seat to the cantle crown.  
Some cowboys stretch and others lean  
To get a look at the lovely queen.

Last we come to the wild horse race.  
Cowboys, broncs, and saddles all over the place.  
Some kick, some strike, some rear, some fall;  
While they saddle and mount them through it all.  
They go buckin' and dartin' around the track,  
'Til we wonder if they'll ever get back.  
But the first one around gets the dough;  
Then the rodeo is over and back to camp we go.

# What I Am And What I Am Not

Oh give me a horse, a rope and a gun.  
Show me a trail where buck deer run.  
Let me find a spring on the side of a hill.  
Let me lie on my stomach and drink my fill.  
I want to pitch my camp on the bank of a stream,  
Where the speckled beauties leap and gleam.  
Drop the diamond hitch from around my pack,  
And hobble my horse with a gunny sack.

I'm not the best roper you ever saw,  
But I can catch a calf in a flat bottom draw.  
Among the top fishermen, I don't rank  
But I can dangle a worm under a bank,  
And when the line tightens, give it a yank.  
I'm not a cook of great renown,  
But I can roll trout in corn meal and fry it brown.

When they hunt for gun men, I won't go.  
I'd rather be a live coward than a dead hero.

# When The Bee Stung Billy Blue

It was early in the the morning out on the I-U.  
The meadow larks were singing, and the bees were humming too,  
When I tightened up the riggin' on my pet horse, Billy Blue.  
We were jogging up the canyon, darting here and there,  
Hunting for the horses, looking everywhere.  
When I heard a noise like canvas ripping,  
The saddle horn I was gripping when Billy Blue shot six feet in the air.  
I heard him say, "I wancha," then the ground flew up and hit me  
And I saw stars gleaming everywhere.  
Finally I came to, looked around  
And there with ears a-waggin', bridle reins a-draggin'  
Comin'back toward me was good old Billy Blue.  
Then I heard him nicker — it sounded like a snicker,  
I said, "OK, old boy, no more oats for you."  
Then he sidled over to me and gave me a little nudge or two  
As if to say, "I'm sorry, Boss, I thought that bee stingin' me  
Was you!"

# Memories Of An Old Cowhand

Down on Powder River is where I long to be,  
Drifting through the sage brush with a good horse under me.  
Reppin' with the wagon Johnny Harrell used to run,  
Where we ate stray beef with sourdough biscuits, and rode from sun to sun.

How I'd like to find the round-up where I did long years ago,  
Camped at the mouth of Bitter Creek or a little way below.  
Ride up to the old bed wagon, pen my string in the cavvy yard,  
Unpack and catch my night horse 'cause they'd sure put me on guard.

I want to pop a loop on a bed wagon horse in the morn,  
And smell the burning leather, when the dallies start slippin' round my saddle horn.

Did you ever stand guard on a herd of snuffy longhorn in a storm at night?  
Scratch the match that started a wild stampede, and try to stop them in their flight?  
Have you seen the lightning rip the sky while you waited for the morn?  
Have you watched the balls of fire as they leaped from horn to horn?  
If you have, I know you'll understand and believe me when I say  
That wasn't rain water in my pants that made my hair turn gray.

I'd love to lead the circle round the Bitter Creek Divide  
And hear the cowpokes yarns and stories as they galloped by my side.  
And see the clouds of dust rising as the cattle come drifting down,  
And hear cows and calves a-bawling as we near the round-up ground.  
There's that saucy prairie dog, he lopes from knoll to knoll.  
I can hear him bark and see his tail fly up as he scampers down the hole.

When the whirling and darting are finished, Johnny rides out to smoke and rest.  
Then the day herders take over and they point the longhorns West.

My cowboy days are over now, I'm so crippled up and old.  
I couldn't punch a cow chip down a prairie dog hole.  
My old saddle hangs there on the peg, my horses have all died,  
So I guess I'll leave it hangin' there and just tell 'em how I *used* to ride.

# A Tribute To Cow-Buyer Bill

In Gillette lives a cowbuyer we ranchers call Bill,  
He covers Campbell County and tops every hill.  
When he comes to our place he brings good cheer,  
And tells us the news from far and near.  
He'll taste our meat and never yelp.  
We depend on Bill when in need of help.  
If snake bites man a Doctor we need  
So we call on Bill when we want speed.

He'll ride the horse that we're scared of,  
And bring our fence crawlers home from the neighbor's above.  
If we want to sell 'em he'll buy our stuff  
Pay a fair price — almost enough.  
Young or old, skinny or fat,  
If he says he'll take 'em, he'll do just that.  
We need no contract to sign or fill.  
We just say, "You've bought 'em Bill."

When he says, "I'll meet you," be it early or late,  
We'll find Bill at the pasture gate.  
If we need a horse or two, he'll scout around, pick up a few,  
And we'll be pleased when he gets through.  
For if those he brought us should slip their pack,  
He'll split with laughter and take them back.  
Or if some cattle we want to buy  
We call Gillette, give Bill a try.

He'll take us out, show us around  
Bring us back safe and sound.  
Oh! we might lose a little skin,  
Or feel a sore spot on a shin;  
For if in the top a cow might be,  
He can make that Chevy climb a tree.  
But a bigger hearted guy we'll never hope to see  
Than Big Bill Harrod - believe you me.

# When Mother Got The Bird

All was well at our house 'til Dickey came to stay,  
Then in just a day or two Dad was in the way.  
How his dear wife, who had always been so grand,  
Could change her love to a bunch of feathers,  
He couldn't understand.

Early in the morning Dickey must be fed.  
While hungry and forgotten, Dad waits alone in bed.  
When she finally gets his breakfast, still he has to wait  
For he doesn't dare shoo Dickey off his plate.  
And when he ventures near the bird cage,  
She comes croonin' by, "I love little Dickey bird,"  
Dad steps back with a sigh.

Time was when Daddy got the tidbits and other little sweets,  
Now he eats leftovers while Dickey gets the cuttlebone and treats.  
She used to use our money for things the family needs,  
Now it all goes to the dime store for gravel, gilts and seeds.  
And from the bedroom late at night,  
Now and then a sob is heard,  
For she lets old Dad shiver and wait,  
While she cuddles Dickey bird.

# My Brother Bill

These are the thoughts that came to me  
As I stood there on the hill,  
And watched them pile the flowers around  
My brother Bill.

I remember how he cared for me,  
As down lifes' trail we tread,  
Why didn't I pin my flowers on him then  
And not wait until he's dead.

Then my heart filled with gratitude,  
As I gazed up at the sky  
And thanked God for the presence  
Of the good folk standing by.

He doesn't have a lot of money  
As his journey ends,  
But he does have something precious -  
A million dollars worth of friends.

# Colophon

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