



Decline the coverage

Thirty years ago everyone in the purebred cattle business wasn't in it to improve the genetics of range bulls, or even to make a profit! I wondered if some even liked cattle at all!

All they were after were the generous tax write-offs. Mostly they traded cattle; I'd buy \$500,000 worth of cattle from you and get \$50,000 off my taxes and then you'd buy half a million from me and do the same thing. They traded checks and cattle and in the process created \$100,000 in tax savings. When Congress changed the tax laws, the tax-breeders tripped over each other running for the exits.

Those taking advantage of the tax laws weren't bad people or crooks, they were just good businessmen trying to keep the government from picking their pockets. But some innocent bystanders thought this false cattle economy was for real, and they went to the sales and bought expensive cattle expecting that when it came time to have their first production sale these same tax-dodging cattlemen would return the favor and buy their cattle for the same outrageous prices they paid.

I remember one greenhorn's sale where less than 10 people showed up, and that included the caterer. After the auctioneer failed to receive one bid on the first five head, he said if anyone had an animal they wanted to buy to just yell out the animal's lot number and they'd bring that animal into the auction ring. You could have heard a cow chew her cud.

Times got so tough that when a breeder called to engage the services of an auctioneer or ring man, you wondered if there'd be enough proceeds to cover the porta-potty vendor, let alone your fee. So an auctioneer friend of mine invented an ingenious method to get paid: he would buy an animal in the sale. That way if he didn't get paid he wouldn't pay for his purchase and would sell the animal to recoup his fee. Genius, I say. Pure genius.

I don't know if this "payroll insurance" is legal, but he never went to jail.

I remembered this little trick when three of us were hired to work a charity auction for homeless cats. The British fellow in charge was slimier than a garden snail, and so I told my friends about “payroll insurance,” and we all agreed to buy one lot.

You can imagine our surprise when the minute the auction was over the shyster handed each one of us a check “with a little something extra for our considerable time and talents.” We felt guilty for ever doubting his integrity and went ahead and paid for the auction lot we bought.

To make a long story short, the difference between his check and ours was that ours was good and his wasn't. It bounced higher than my Grandma's pancakes! So we lost not only our fee, but also the money we spent on the auction lot. We were two-time losers!

Making matters worse, we had a hard time dividing up the optional insurance we bought which was a “Luxurious Spa Package.” The auctioneer selected the face peel part of the package, and after he was done, his face looked like it had been attacked by an industrial strength belt sander using 80 grit sandpaper. It still hasn't returned to its normal color now several years later.

My other buddy took the “wrap” part of the spa package and was expecting some sort of bean and meat combination wrapped in a tortilla; not to have his head wrapped in seaweed until he couldn't breathe. To this day he still smells a little fishy.

As for me, I took the large basket of beauty products that were all part of an 18-day makeover to make me and my inner-self more beautiful. But after two weeks my wife wasn't seeing any change, so I gave the rest of the foul smelling creams to someone we didn't like for Christmas.

I don't know what's worse, not having insurance and needing it, or having insurance and never using it. I suppose it depends on the type of insurance. While I'd never buy auction payroll insurance again, I do buy plenty of life insurance.

And hope I'll never have to use it.

It's the Pitts

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Holyoke Enterprise June 21, 2012