

Drop em', mister



Some people are just an accident waiting to happen. Take my friend ReRide for example. Getting hurt is ReRide's "achilles heel," which is about the only part of his body he hasn't broken, strained, cut, burned or shattered.

Not that I go around checking out other male's anatomies or anything, but a mere glimpse of ReRide's carcass is enough to make any woman become a nun.

Years ago we were working our calves, and since we had all day to process 100 head, about midmorning we decided to take a well-deserved break. This gave me a little time to nail up a few more boards in the corral, restock the refreshments in the cooler, refill syringes, put my ancient squeeze chute back together and take stock of how much damage my neighbors had done to my cattle empire's infrastructure.

We all grabbed a donut and a soft drink, and to save energy I turned off the propane to my branding iron heater, which was just a short piece of oilfield casing on four legs.

ReRide was telling another big windy to everyone and decided to get comfortable by absent-mindedly sitting down on the branding iron heater, as if it were his favorite bar stool. Now, a physicist could probably tell you how long it takes for an almost red-hot piece of pipe to cool to room temperature, but I'm no physicist and, obviously, neither is ReRide. We all stood with our mouths agape as a strong smell of burning flesh, with just a whiff of Wranglers, wafted into our work space.

Due to ReRide's calloused backside from riding horses all his life, there was a brief disconnect, but when ReRide's nerve synapses delivered the delayed message, he launched from the branding iron heater like a rocket. Two of the better ropers had to head and heel him so we could tie him on the flat bed to haul to the hospital. We stood him up because it was obvious he couldn't sit down, and besides, we figured the air circulation from driving real fast might cool his

tailpipe, so to speak. □ Needless to say, ReRide was walking a little funny as we entered the emergency ward, where I helped him fill out reams of forms and answer all the embarrassing questions. With a soft touch, I removed ReRide's smoking wallet to get his driver's license to hand to the lady at the ER desk. Then she asked ReRide the same question they ask all patients, even if they only have a bleeding hang nail: "Do you have a power of attorney or a living will?"

"Is it that serious?" asked ReRide, still refusing to take a seat. After a most uncomfortable hour-long wait, ReRide finally got to see someone in a white coat. I think her name was Dr. Euthanasia, and she told ReRide to do what all doctors do the very first thing, even if it's head injury. "Drop your drawers partner," she ordered.

Let me just say, it was not what you'd call a clean brand. No, it looked more like a badly blotched lazy D. The doctor did a cursory exam and wrote out two prescriptions, one for an ointment and one for some pain pills. "Time is the best healer," the doc said. And a lot cheaper too, as ReRide discovered when the hospital bill came.

We took ReRide home and put him in bed, bottoms up, of course, and went back to work. ReRide's injury made it difficult to ride a horse or even to perform bodily functions, for that matter, but he survived. Although, he still walks a little funny and refuses to sit down.

About a year later I was helping ReRide reroof his barn with a compressor and an air gun when somehow he managed to staple his Wranglers to his left thigh. Ouch!

So once again I loaded ReRide up and took him to the ER. Wouldn't you know it, Dr. Euthanasia was still on duty. Since ReRide couldn't drop his drawers all the way, Dr. Euthanasia took a pair of scissors and, starting at the top, proceeded to cut a perfectly good pair of Wranglers off him. The second the doctor exposed ReRide's branded bum a light came on in her eyes and she exclaimed, "Oh, I remember you!"

It's the Pitts

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