

Dead ahead (Best of)



One of the unwritten rules that city people live by is that if you haven't heard a rumor by ten o'clock in the morning, then you are supposed to start one. Ordinarily I don't care about such gossipy town talk, unless it's about me of course, but years ago my wife and I were the victim of a very damaging rumor. And it was started by none other than the local police in the town where we leased a ranch.

My wife is always complaining to me that she never gets to go anywhere. She thinks that traveling around like I used to do for a living is actually fun. But there was a very good reason why I didn't take her with me to the sales, speeches and conventions that I used to attend and that was that somebody had to stay home and look after all the animals. This was especially true during bull sale selling season in the fall, which just so happened to be when we calved. Or at least our cows did.

All the good books and learned professors on the subject of calving will tell you to stay out of sight and a far distance away from a calving cow and let her attempt to have the baby on her own, which is exactly what I did. In fact, I liked to stay about 500 miles away. But my wife was always right there to intervene should anything go awry.

I was feeling a little guilty about leaving my wife behind to cope with all the problems at the ranch so I told her that we could take a little holiday together. Actually, I had to attend a bull sale and I needed her to drive, but I didn't tell her that.

We shared a nice relaxing 600 mile drive but by the time we arrived at the sale, I was feeling a little nervous about leaving everything unattended back home. So I called my answering machine and found three very disturbing messages on it. The first was from an unidentified caller who was very difficult to understand because he slurred his words.

It seems that he was calling from the saloon across the freeway from a ranch that we leased. As

best as I could make out, this is what he said; “Big white dead cow ... hiccup ... middle of road.”

I had visions of one of the Charolais cows I'd just bought getting through the fence and getting run over and I gave my wife heck for not being home to take care of things. “Now you see why I always leave you home?”

The second message made things a little more plain. It was the local police department and their message was much more clear: “We have had several reports of a dead or dying animal along the freeway adjoining your property.”

The third message on my machine was from my landlord who asked simply, “What the #@!%&* is going on up there?”

So we cut short our “vacation,” got in the car and drove the 600 miles home as fast as we could legally go, and then some. We arrived back at the ranch at half past dark. Our worst fears were confirmed as we approached the scene of the accident. A half mile dead ahead we could see a huge white mass in a heap alongside the road. Our hearts sank in unison at the prospect of losing a good cow and wondering what kind of damage the vehicle must have sustained. Just to make sure my wife learned her lesson, I drove home the point. “See what happens when you insist on taking a vacation?”

With great trepidation we drove right up to the accident site and there laying on the ground, badly bruised but still recognizable, was one very dead white mattress. I couldn't tell in the dark if it was a Serta Sleeper®, or a Beautyrest®, but I do know that it was definitely dead and definitely not a Charolais or any derivative thereof.

Needless to say, we were quite relieved that no one was hurt, but we aren't quite out of the doghouse yet with the police. In the accident not only had the stuffing been knocked out of the mattress, but the tag that says, “Do not remove under penalty of law,” had been viciously ripped off on impact.

It's the Pitts

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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