



A workshop on stockmanship by Bud Williams

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For a decade and more, Bud Williams has been teaching methods and attitudes about handling livestock that are different from what many people in the livestock industry have grown up with.

Bud was born in 1932 on a dairy and mixed livestock farm in southern Oregon. After he and Eunice married in 1952, they worked on livestock ranches in northern California, where Bud began to get a reputation for bringing in difficult animals. His methods evolved from his powers of observation, his awareness that many things were possible, and his commitment or stubbornness.

After their daughters left home, Bud and Eunice traveled around the continent from the Aleutians to Central America, taking livestock jobs that were difficult and interesting. For the past seven years they have headquartered at Vee Tee Feeders in Lloydminster, Alberta (see <http://managingwholes.com/vt.htm>).

The following has been excerpted from the Stockmanship School that Bud and Eunice Williams taught at Lloydminster, Saskatchewan on April 5–7, 1998. They are excellent teachers and we recommend the School in the strongest terms. Contact Eunice Williams for information (<http://stockmanship.com>).

For practical advice on how to get started with Bud Williams methods, see also Steve Cote's column, which began in our last issue. In the following excerpts, Bud describes the current situation and how it got to be that way, the reasons people resist change, the benefits of the low-stress methods, and some of the beliefs, behaviors, and stockmanship methods that will enable people to learn and change. Next issue we will continue with basic principles of stockmanship and using dogs.

Chapter 1

People have a lousy attitude when it comes to working livestock. We *want* to do this, we *want* to do that. This is not going to get us near as far as if we do what we *need* to do.

Also, we want to *make* animals do things. My whole theory is, I *let* animals do things. Anytime that I need for an animal to do something, if I position myself properly, I can let it do it. It's doing what it wants to do, it's doing what I want it to do, so we can both be happy. Anytime that you go to make an animal do something, you create some problems that you don't need. Anytime that we want to do something that isn't what we need to do, we create problems. If you like problems, that's the perfect way to have all that you want and maybe more.

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What we want is immaterial in getting a job done well. If you go to everything you want, and try to make animals do it, you end with about zero. The farther over here you come to what you need to do, and letting the animal do what you want, you get closer and closer to 100 percent. Whenever you go to make something happen, you create maybe more problems than you can handle. Animals willingly do these things for us if we let them.

If animals would not do this willingly for us, then we could do nothing with them. They're bigger than us, they're stronger than us, there are more of them than us. These domestic animals that we have are so easy to work with that it's absolutely awesome—if you just give them a chance. Our attitude is what is so important.

Almost everything we do in the society we live in is a structured thing and an educated thing. We're educated to do most of the things we do. We go to school for 12 years or longer. In a sense, there is nobody who teaches people how to

work animals. There are people who go around and say this is right, or this is wrong.

This is an art that we had at one time and that we basically lost. This is something that the livestock people have *got* to understand that they had better bring back. It is such an important part of the industry, they better get it back, they better get to learning these things and understanding. It doesn't matter whether you have a feedlot, a cow-calf operation in the mountains, a stocker operation—this can benefit you to no end.

We don't do that good a job in comparison to what I know could be done. When we do it right, it's amazing the results we get. When we do it wrong, it's not very nice, the results we get. So I know that it's us. The problems that the livestock industry has, almost every bit of it goes right back to us. These are the things that we better work on, where people can learn and get it back on track.

We shortcut things and it causes us a lot of trouble. It isn't a life-or-death situation so we shrug it off. It gets to be a very expensive situation.

The way of working animals was kind of developed in the Southwest a long time ago, and the conditions were rough and tough, and we had rough and tough people to do it, and the more sensitive people went on and did something else.

Most of the people that work livestock probably shouldn't. It has been my feeling as I've been around the country, seeing these things, the people who should be working livestock are doing something else, because we've developed a system that they just won't put up with. They don't like the hollering, the yelling, the commotion, the turmoil, so they go on and do something else. The people that have stayed with it and kept that going, and talk about cowboy tradition and all that—those people should probably be doing something else—not doing what they're doing and doing it so poorly.

We need people that are more sensitive to what the animal is asking us to do. If we would be more sensitive to that, then these jobs that we work on would be so much easier to do. I'm not going to see it happen in my lifetime, but that doesn't matter, I still think it should happen thataway.

When I first went [to Vee Tee Feeders in Lloydminster], they would not let the girls work when they were loading fat cattle—it was too dangerous. They do it all the time now, and they do it better than the boys. It doesn't require a big strong rough tough ram 'em jam 'em type guy to work livestock. We need sensitive people in the industry.

You go around any ranch operation, any feedlot, anyplace, and people are yelling instructions to people when they don't have a clue what they're yelling

about. They don't have a clue what they're telling the people to do, whether it's right or wrong, they're just yelling. This should not be.

You go holler at somebody to get out of there. Well, where is out of there? Where do you go to get out of there? And no matter where you go, it's not out of there for them.

We need to have something where we can actually communicate what we mean, what we need for people to do. You want somebody to do something, you should be able to know that if you ask a person to come toward you that that's going to get the job done. If you have somebody say, when I move ahead you move ahead, you should know that that will get the job done. If you tell somebody that they're too close, that should be what you need. If you tell somebody they're pressuring at the wrong angle, you should be able to tell them what the right angle is. These are the things we need to know. And then when you work with people, you can explain to them.

We need to be able to be all on the same page. We're not. You can take a really good cowboy, and another really good cowboy, and they cannot communicate to each other what they want to get a job done because they're each going in a different direction. They may end up getting the job done, but it is so different. In fact, reasonably good guys don't get along too well, because they know how to do it alone, but together they mess each other up. We need to get something to where we understand it well enough that that doesn't happen.

If you can't communicate your ideas of what you're doing, you probably also can't do it. When I first started in working with livestock and doing some of these things, after a few years this good friend of mine wanted me to come and show him how to do something. And I went to show him how, and I could not show him how. I went home and told Eunice I don't know anything. I knew how to do it, but I could not explain it to him, I could not show him. That's when I really set to work, to understand so that I could communicate to other people what is necessary to do.

These animals would like to be a herd. Almost everything that we do to them is to make them not want to be a herd. We gather them up, we jam them too tight, we cram them in the corrals, we chouse them around. So to be with a group of animals is the one place they don't want to be now. All of a sudden we decide that it's nice if they'd be a herd and they should stay where we put them, and we think they should just do that because that would be nice for us. We've got to make it a little nice for them, and then they will, because that's what they want.

We cannot do some of these things because our animals are not to the point where we can do it. There are very few people who can get on a horse that is

unridable and ride it and go do a job. There are very few people who can do much with livestock that is not trained to work. That's why we build smaller and smaller fields, stronger and stronger fences, or with more electricity going through them. We build our corrals stronger and higher because of the difficulty of working our animals. People don't think they have any trouble, because they've got them in a narrow place, high walls, by God they can get them through. But it costs them more money in those chutes and alleyways than they could ever imagine. If they outlawed hotshots tomorrow, the cattle industry would shut down. It's only a matter of time before they're outlawed.

Our instincts are totally wrong to work animals. What we instinctively do is almost 100 percent wrong to get what we say we want. If you have 20 acres, you'll have just as much trouble as the guy who's got 20,000 acres. We always work at a level where we barely get it done. We get as good as we need to get. We've reached a point now where we need to get better. That's why you guys are here. That's why I talk that way. I don't talk that way to other people. They're not ready to get better. They don't particularly want to get better. They're satisfied with where they're at.

We've got to get the right attitude to get better. We can't just get better because we want to. We've got to get better because we go out and do a better job. It's easy to get better than what we are.

Why we resist change

The way that I work animals, people don't want to work animals that way. If people did want to work it the way I do, then we'd all be doing it and I wouldn't have to be up here talking to anybody. We just flat don't want to do it that way.

But we're starting to get into situations now where we need to do it that way. So if we can get to the point where we'll move over to what we need to do, and forget about what we want to do, this will work a lot better.

We even have some people now that are doing a respectable job of this. The thing that's the difficult part, is getting people to believe that they can do it, and getting them to put the effort in that it requires—which is not as much effort as they are putting in to do it wrong.

Our attitude is the whole thing. If we had the right attitude when we go at this, we could learn it without me saying anything or without you coming to this. The only way you're going to change and to get there is to work real hard to do that and to break those habits.

I spent some time with this one rancher. All he said, all day, is “why haven’t we learned this? Why did we have to wait for you to show up?” That’s all he said, all day.

That’s true. Why haven’t we learned these things? The reason we haven’t is because we won’t get better every day. We get so good, but that’s good enough. And then we find out that isn’t good enough, then we got to go get a little better, and that’s good enough. Most of the young people that worked with me, when they got to a certain point, they could get a good job, they didn’t want me showing them any more.

If you work a horse, doing this like what I say, it doesn’t take long for the horse to learn. They learn it so much faster than people.

You’re not going to get there overnight. I got there overnight after 40 years of hard work. Do what you can do, be happy with that, and get better and better. Doesn’t matter if you’re in a feedlot situation, cow-calf ranch. The more you work your animals properly, the better they get. Then these things start to fall into place.

What we have is a mentality that’s been bred over the years, is *not* to train cattle—to chase them, to scatter them, to do all of these things. Now all of a sudden we’ve changed it. We decided we’ve got to work with a lower stress type of deal, we’ve got to move our animals better, we don’t even know how. So we’re not going to step from one to the other in 5 minutes. We’ve got to work at it.

The benefits

When you work animals the other way, it’s absolutely awesome how they change. They start to trust you, they’re comfortable where you leave them, they’re comfortable with what you do with them, they work around the corrals better, everything is better.

This is a very learnable thing. It is absolutely awesome the amount of production you can increase if you manage your animals better. [In northern California] I had a standing deal with any rancher that I could increase his production 50 percent and do nothing but change the way he moves his cows.

[At Vee Tee Feeders], when we get new cattle, it doesn’t matter if they are going to the fields, a feedlot pen, replacement heifers, it doesn’t matter. We spend a little time working with these animals, moving from here to there like we would anyway, but doing it properly. And you can do anything with them, and they do it easy and they do it willingly.

We can eliminate so many of the problems when we work our animals better. There's a lot of the things that we would like to do that we can't do just because our animals don't work properly for us. This is something that's so important. These things work, no matter where you're at, what you're doing.

One guy has a single electric wire between his cows and calves. Another guy, he has 800 cow-calf pairs. He separates them 400 at a time, he brings them up to a gate, he stands at the gate and lets the cows go through and turns the calves down the fence, and they're weaned. He says they don't bawl, they don't walk the fence, they just go to grazing. He has no health problems with them.

Whenever you get done sorting cows and calves, your cows should be paying almost no attention and your calves should be paying almost no attention. It should be a non-event.

One of these people wrote us a letter:

Our use of these methods began to establish a herding instinct in our cow herd, allowing us to handle large numbers of cattle with very little help. I handle herds of 400 to 500 with the help of my two dogs. Using Bud's methods helped me tremendously in using dogs to herd stock. I never had a good cattle dog until I began learning this. Now they're all good.

The reestablishment of the herding instinct not only makes it possible to handle cattle without stress, it also facilitates the use of intensive planned grazing on our ranch.

The financial return to our ranch has been phenomenal—though I feel that the greatest benefit has been that it's an absolute joy and pleasure for all the members of our family to work together handling cattle.

Believing that it's possible

Almost anybody that sees something that's possible to do, they can go home and figure out how to do it—if they want to. If you think it isn't possible, if you think that cows are just naturally hard to handle, that fat cattle are just naturally hard to handle, and all of this, then you're not even going to try to do different.

There's people doing things that I really didn't think they'd be able to do. I told them they could. And they go home and do it. And there's other people who couldn't do it if you went and did it for them. It's the people that can do it. You've got to believe you can do it, and you've got to have your cows so that they work

for you. And then it's relatively simple. If you've got your cows so that they work for you, then I would say yes you can easily do that. Now that's assuming that you don't have 15 people helping you who have 15 other ideas of how to do it. You have to have everybody working on the same deal.

Everything that I say pertains to every bit of this. I don't have to talk about feedlots for the feedlot people, I don't have to talk about the mountains for the mountain people, I don't have to talk about cow-calf for the cow-calf people. All of this stuff pertains. When I work one animal, I'm using exactly the same things that I do to work a thousand animals. When I'm working animals in an open field, I'm using exactly the same things that I do to work them in the mountains, or in the brush, or whatever. To me there is absolutely no difference, whether you're in a completely open field that's as flat as a floor, or whether you're in the mountains with trees and brush and all kinds of obstacles.

The only difference is what you put up here. If you decide it's more difficult, it's a lot more difficult. If you decide that it's no different, then it's no different.

Now I go all over the country. For 40 years, I go to a ranch, I go to a feedlot, I go to whatever, they've got a problem—something that they cannot do or have a real difficult time doing—and I can step in and do it. The only reason I can step in and do it, is because these things work. I don't know the place, I've never been there before, I've never worked these animals before. I can't do it because I'm so great and wonderful. I can do it because these things work.

These jobs that we think are difficult, are only difficult because of the way we approach them. We would go up into the Arctic, we would have a herd of reindeer up there, 30 miles from a corral, there's no fences. There's 5 million acres that they run their reindeer on. They would take me out in the helicopter and set me down. If you got within half a mile of these, they'd run for 4 or 5 miles. I worked with these things for 24 hours (there's 24 hours of sunshine up there in the summertime)—I worked with them, walked them into a corral. These things work. They work extremely well. But they won't work if you halfway do them.

You drive a car for ten years and you don't have a wreck. Why can't you drive cattle for ten years without a wreck?

As I go through these things today and tomorrow, just listen to them. They won't hurt you. If you don't want to do them when you get home, they won't bother you, they're not harmful. If you listen to what I say and go home and do those things, you'll find they really work.

This is not about going and getting that one old cow that nobody else could get. It's not to go get a bunch of wild cattle that other people have trouble with, or put them through a gate that people have trouble with. This is about working

your animals in such a way that those things aren't difficult when you get there. So you don't end up with that one old cow out there that's hard to get. You don't end up with a gate that's hard to put animals through.

If we work our animals even close to what I consider properly, they just do these things. We are either teaching our animals to do something good, or we're teaching them to do something bad. Every time we're around our animals, we're teaching them one or the other. If you constantly teach your animals so that they do it well, or do it easy, or do it good, or whatever term you want to use, it isn't going to be long before you can do anything. If every time you go out there you teach them bad habits, you teach them to do things wrong, or to be difficult to work, then every time you work with them it's going to be difficult.

It is no different than having a horse. If you have a horse that's even remotely properly trained, it's a joy to ride it and do things with it. If you have a horse that's totally untrained, or completely spoiled, it is a miserable miserable thing. Until you change that, it continues to be a miserable miserable thing. Well most of our livestock is like an untrained horse, or a badly spoiled horse—most of our livestock.

If you would really grasp this working one animal, and really understand it, then you could go and do all these things. We have to understand what we're doing, we have to understand the effect it has on the animal, and then we have to do the things that gets the job done we want. Nothing else. We don't do something just to be doing something. We don't do something just because we'd like to do it.

We have to get our animals in the proper frame of mind to where they will willingly do these things. Otherwise it will not work as well as you want it to.

Don't try to go from where you're at to perfect. You're not going to get there. Go from where you're at to a little bit better, and you will be absolutely pleased with the results.

Learning from the animal

Now here's one of the things that you want to keep in mind when you're working any kind of animal. They will tell you *exactly* where they want you to be, to get them to go where you want them to go. If you have an opening over there, and you want an animal to go through that opening, he will tell you exactly where you need to be to put him through that opening, assuming you pay attention. When you start getting in too far behind them, they start looking, because they don't want you there. If you go on, they're going to turn around. Now they're not going

to go through that opening, because they're not even looking there, they want to go by you. So then you've got a fight.

The animal will tell you exactly where you need to be to do these things, if you will pay attention. It's really important that you understand that. When you're driving a group of animals or even a single animal, they are very aware of what all the people are doing.

The universities, they won't touch this, because there's not any absolutes in this. They want an absolute. They want to say that you do this, and this will always happen. Then if you do this, then this will always happen. Well, that's not the way it is. If you do this properly, it will happen. It's kind of like driving. If you're driving a car, and you step on the brake, it will stop it. Unless you're on ice, and then it may even speed you up.

If you do these things, they work. But it's how you use them, in other words, how much you use at certain times, is how well they work. Just like your brakes. There's no one that can tell you that anytime you want to stop, all you've got to do is slam on your brakes. Because there are several situations where you better not slam on your brakes. You can still stop it with the brakes. But you got to do it a little bit different than just tromping on them.

All of these things, they work, but they're not absolutes. If you have an animal that is here, and it turns its head toward you, either you're getting in too far behind it, or you're too far away. That's about as close to an absolute as the things that I work with will be.

When you start getting in too far behind that animal for it, it wants to see, so it turns its head. So it has basically told you not to go any farther. If you go any farther, you're going to get a negative reaction.

Always position yourself as best you can, no matter what you're doing, where you can do most of these things from real close to the same spot. Now I've worked with animals as wild as any you'll ever have to work, and from one position I could guide and move these animals. As the animals move, this spot will move. In order for you to find where this spot is at, and to keep this spot, you've got to keep constantly checking. So if you're going along with a group of animals, you're going to have to be moving constantly, testing to make sure where that is, cause otherwise that spot gets away from you, and then maybe you have a tough time finding it again.

People start to tell me all the things I got to look out for. I just ask them to be quiet, I don't want to hear. Well, you're going to need to know this. Oh no. I don't need to know anything. I don't want any of that stuff. The animals will tell me what I need to know.

We went to one big mountain ranch, the guy that had been there for 30 some years, he said, I'll take a few days and show you where the trails are. I said, I don't want to know where the trails are. He said, the cattle will get away from you. I said, no they won't, they don't live long enough. I didn't want him to show me his trails, because he'd picked out the trails where the wind didn't blow, this and that. I wanted to see where the cattle wanted to go. They're going to want to go on their trail a lot better than they'll want to go on my trail. And I really did not have any trouble.

[After getting some difficult cattle into a corral.] When I got down there, one of the guys come over and he said, "you fell in eight badger holes. But you got the cattle. I wouldn't have fallen into one badger hole, but I wouldn't have got the cattle. I watched you. You never took your eyes off those cattle. You didn't have a clue where you were walking."

He was very aware of the fact that these cattle were very difficult to work. I was working by myself on foot to put animals through a very difficult gate, and I never took my eyes off those cattle. There was no way I could even look at the ground. I had to see everything they were doing. I could not miss any move.

You must see what's going on. You cannot just look at what you're going to do. You must see what's happening. What you're doing is quite irrelevant if everything else is going to pieces.

It really is difficult for people to do this. It's not an easy thing, it's not a natural thing. We want to look at what we're doing. We don't want to look over here. When we go over here to get this animal, we want to see just what he's doing. We shouldn't even care what he's doing. Because it isn't going to matter. It's what these are doing that matters. He isn't going anywhere. We probably shouldn't have gone over there and bothered him, he probably just would have followed on if we left him alone. But we can't do it.

Here and now

I've worked around ranchers all my life. I'm not here to criticize. But every cowboy, every rancher I ever worked with will do just that. They'll go over here to do something, and they'll just about half get it done, and they see something over there, and they run over to do that. Here's what I tell people. If you go over here, then go and do it. Don't even worry about that over there. If you're worried about this, then stay and do it, don't go over there.

We just can't leave things alone. We've got to go fool with it. We've got to make a mess on both sides. This is what really destroys us. We'll say that our animals

have started to go a little bit the wrong way. And we just *have* to go get these. Okay, those are going the wrong way, so now we're going to drive these the wrong way too. Why would we want to do that? Why not just leave those alone, get these back to going the right way, and then go let those go with them?

You can't drive animals thataway and not have problems. Stay here and do this right, and *then* go over there. If you go over here and you think you've done this right and then you start to leave, and they tell you no, don't leave, then don't leave yet. Don't worry about that over there. And you won't find anybody that works stock that pays a bit of attention to what I just said, but you should.

When we're driving animals, our mind is on what happened in the past or what might happen in the future, instead of what's happening right now. What an animal does is very obvious, but we're not looking for that.

When you're driving in rush-hour traffic in any city at all, you've got to be watching what the car is doing alongside of you, in front of you, behind you, cars coming in from the side—you've got to be watching all those things. You don't have to ask somebody else what you watch for. Now it's a heck of a lot simpler to see what the cows are telling you than it is what all these cars are doing. We've never learned to pay attention.

We're so busy shoving this one or going over to get that one that we don't pay attention. One of the more important things I try to get across to people is, open your eyes.

I can stand here and see what everybody here is doing—or I can look at this person over here and see *nothing* but what that person's doing. This is what we do. When we're driving animals and go over here to move this animal up, we see absolutely nothing but that. We don't see what these others are doing. Then when we turn to go over here, we don't see what that animal is telling us.

That's what you got to learn to do. It's easy to do. But you've got to do it. The only thing that matters is what's happening right now. Not what happened last week, or what might happen.

Everybody in this room will work stock better when they're alone. Of course. But yet, that should not change, just because there's other people there. The reason it changes when other people are there, is because you can blame them. And we do love to do that.

[At one place] the way the gate was, they'd go on the inside of the pasture, and he had a terrible time, so he wanted me to help him. So I go over there, and as soon as I go into the field, why, "Do you want the gate open or closed?"

"No, I'm not talking about gates, I'm just here to work your cattle." So then we start to go across the field and I'm driving them away from the gate.

And he said, Bud, the gate's back here.

I said, look, if you want to talk about gates, let's go up to the house and talk about gates.

He said, Bud why are you being like this?

I say, as long as your mind is on that gate, you ain't never going to get these cattle.

If we go out here and get these cattle working for us, we can put them anywhere. When you go to put that bull in the trailer, that's what your mind is on. Your mind is not on working the bull, it's on the trailer. So he goes to the pond.

Your mind should only be on one thing. And that is to work with that animal until it will work for you. The only thing that's important is how you work that animal, and how you get him to working for you, that's what you got to get through up here. Where you park your trailer is irrelevant. If you're not going to work the animal right, you're not going to get him in anyway, so don't even bother to take your trailer up there, it's a nuisance to drag an empty trailer up and back.

Straight lines

One thing that animals like is a straight line. They like us to move in a straight line. They do not like for you to go like this, curving around.

We went out in the Aleutian Islands and gathered some cattle that may never have seen a man in their lifetime, a bunch that hadn't been worked for 20 years. If you started curving, around like this, you just didn't get them, it was that simple. When you worked with the reindeer, it was the same thing. When you worked with elk, it was the same thing. If you want to get a job done, and do it properly, you better go in straight lines with them. Our domestic animals let us get away with murder, you can get away with almost anything. You don't get a very good job, but you can get away with it.

I like for things to go in a straight line around animals. Because that's what they like. It doesn't matter whether you're afoot or horseback. Whichever way you're moving, just go straight until you're ready to turn, and then go straight again.

When you start to curve, you're going around it. Every sense in it changes immediately. It doesn't like it. So whenever you're working animals, do not try to curve. They also don't like us pressuring them out of a straight line.

When I first started teaching people, I never even thought about the straight line, because I just knew that that's what you should do. Then I realized that this is a very important thing.

Some will fight it for three weeks, some will fight it for three years, some will fight it for 30 years. These are simple things, but that it doesn't mean that it's simple to do.

Chapter 2

In the first day, Bud Williams outlined the situation in livestock handling today, the difficulties of change, the benefits of change, and the attitudes and beliefs that are involved in shifting from a high-stress, forceful approach to low-stress, non-violent methods. He also began to describe the principles of good stockmanship, beginning with the need to move in straight lines.

The principle of pressure/release

Every single person I've ever been around does this (to me) backwards. Whenever you pressure an animal (or a group of animals) enough to move it, then you can move it with less pressure, so you should release that pressure a little bit, and get to a point where it's comfortable with you pressuring it the amount you are to keep it moving.

If you're doing it properly it should take more pressure to start it than it does to keep it moving. Because of the way we work animals, we keep pushing and pushing, pretty soon we're right up there shoving on them all the time. When we started them, we may have been 100 feet away, and before we get to where we're going, we're right up shove shove shove. It's because we don't release that pressure.

We were in Wyoming, and this guy had 700 cow-calf pairs. They wanted to move these quite a little ways. We drove them for 6 or 7 hours after we gathered them up. When we were gathering these up, they told me that there were 700 black cows, and one black baldy. They had missed her when they shipped, because they were breeding to Hereford bulls, but they did end up with one black baldy. They said she's the most miserable thing, we kind of raised her around, and you can't drive her, you're just pushing on her all the time.

So we gathered these up, and there's 6 or 8 people there with me, and I'm pretty well doing the work, trying to show them things. Here's this black baldy

right on the back end. So I go over, and I just pressure and she starts going, and I turn. She goes a couple steps, I go over here, and she stops. They say, well you see what you got. I said, yeah, but that's because of what I did. I said I want to show you something.

So now I'm over here and I move these, and I aim right at the side of this cow. I'm just riding a horse right toward her. When she moves ahead, I just stop the instant she takes a couple steps. I move over here. She goes up a ways, and she stops. I turn toward her, and now I'm 50 foot away, she starts moving. I turn back. We drove those cows for 6 hours and never was she on the back. That's what I'm talking about.

Were you increasing her flight zone?

You're increasing her flight zone, but what you did, you made her realize that you were not going to pressure her and keep that on. What happens with a cow like that, is, you train them to be hard to drive. You push this cow, and then you go to get these so she can stop. Every time you go to leave her, she stops. She realizes that she can wait till you come back to push her again.

When you can pressure her to where she has to move, and then you take that pressure off, now when you start from over here, pretty soon when you're 100 feet away and you start toward her, she just knows to move.

Eunice: Then her mind is on seeing those other cattle going and she wants to follow them. So you haven't distracted her, and made her try to fight you.

Bud: Many many times we get a group of cows going. We're in the mountains, to keep them from going on trails, we're maybe in front of them to turn them at a fork of the road or something like that. Then there's nothing bringing them. Their movement will keep them going. You start pushing on them, and then you got to push them all the way. This is what I'm trying to get at. It's because we won't release that pressure.

Whenever you pressure an animal to move, you should release that pressure. You can release it by hesitating for an instant and letting it move on. You can go on across to take it off, or you can go back. Once you reward that animal, by taking the pressure off, they will willingly go where you want. If you keep that pressure on and keep increasing it, they will fight you every step of the way.

We were at this one place and they were moving their cows every five or six days. They had 400 cow-calf pairs in this group. Their pastures were thousand-acre pastures, it was rough country and very sparse grass, and they were just moving them along like this. The bulls were staying behind.

The cowboys said, there's this one bull, he'll just back into the brush and you can't do anything with him. Is there anything you can do? Well, yeah, sure. You

can handle any of these situations. We loaded a couple horses in a horse trailer and we drive to this place. And we're going down this kind of a jeep trail, and this guy says, there's one of the bulls. Now he's four pastures behind. Usually your cows don't get bred up if your bulls are four pastures behind, they're trying to get him up to where the cows are at.

We start riding over there. This bull is just grazing out there, and when I ride across—we'll say that table there is the bull—we ride across like this. I don't know the cattle, I've never been there before, so I'm probably 100 or 150 foot away, and I'm paying attention. I just turn back like that [not moving directly at the bull]. Pretty soon we get in to about 50 feet. And he turns and just starts to wander off. And I just stop. And I let him go for about 8 or 10 steps. And then I start coming on. There's areas there where you've got to be in behind, there's brush and a lot of trail. Where I could, I'd be out a little bit to the side. If he stopped, I'd stop instantly. Then I'd let him have a few seconds, then I'd start going like this, and he'd start going again. We drove that bull for almost 3 miles, and not once did he go in the brush, or do any of those things. We never crowded him. He walked right along. It didn't take very long to get him there. The thing of it was, the minute you started to push that thing, he went in the brush and whirled around and said come on.

You're driving a cow herd, you're going to get the same reaction, in a sense. We teach them to be hard to drive. You must release that pressure. You pressure an animal, you must release that pressure—either by letting that animal move away, or by you moving away.

Usually a cow herd that I never worked with, within two or three hours they are working for me to where they're just a dream to handle. They respond very fast. If I'm going to go to somebody's place and sort some cows and calves or something, I might spend five minutes working with those cows before I go to sort them. That's enough for me to get to where they'll work for me.

It's like the guys who are really good with horses, the Ray Hunts, they can do things with horses so fast, because they do the right thing always. When you learn to do the right thing, and very little of the wrong thing, you'll find out that cows that you've never seen before, never worked with before, still respond very positively, very quickly.

If you were in this room, and these walls started to come in, at some point everybody in this room would panic. Absolutely. We'll say that those walls start to come in, and at some point a person said, well they just come in so far and then they stop. When they started getting close to that you'd still be a little bit nervous, but then when they stopped you could kind of relax. What you have learned is

to take the pressure of those walls coming in, knowing that they're only going to come so far.

We take an animal and it's out in a big pasture. We start driving that animal in. Alright, we're pressuring that animal to bring it in. It comes in to a corral—these walls are coming in. It goes to a smaller corral—they're coming in pretty fast. It goes into a smaller pen, people are crowding it. It goes into that single file chute, and by that time it's in such a panic it probably doesn't even know if that chute's coming or what.

But when you take that animal out in a pasture, and you drive it what I consider properly, you teach that animal to take pressure, and you move away, it's a pressure release, you get into the corral, it has been taught to take pressure. The walls have come in. You move them to the next corral from the front, you move them where they can see you, they go into that, the walls have come in but they're starting to trust you, or they trust you already. By the time they go into that chute, it's not a big deal.

An animal's pain tolerance is so high, that the shots we give them and those things, really doesn't hurt them. I have seen animals with a broken leg, and grazing, just like it didn't even hurt.

That is not why animals don't go through a chute, because they're afraid of what's happened to them. Animals don't go through a chute because of what we do to them before they get to that chute. It isn't that they remember what was done to them at the squeeze chute. They remember this pressure they got. They're already crazy before they get to the squeeze chute.

Everybody that I work with seems to think that what you do in a corral has no relation to what you do out here.

We've taken a herd animal, and over the years we've made a herd a bad place to be. Every time they got bunched up, they were jammed into a corral, things done to them, harassed, and it go so they didn't particularly want to be in a herd, even though they're a herd animal. We've got to create that herd to where that's a good place to be, a safe place to be. You've not going to do that if you keep jamming them in and doing this to them all day.

One of the big problems we have is we go out into a field and we start driving some animals. They're going nice for us, and we get up close to a gate or something like that and it all falls apart. The reason it falls apart? We didn't teach them to take pressure before we got there, and so that pressure is too much.

I'll come to a bluff or a river or something that they don't want to cross. Now I've got something to teach them to take pressure. Say I just come up to a big bluff. They move up toward that bluff, they start to feel pressure between me and

this here. As soon as they start to feel that pressure, I turn and walk away. Then I come right back. I don't just leave the country. Now they're moving along, I pressure them against this again. As soon as they start to give any indication that this is starting to bother them I turn and walk away. Now I've taught them that when they get pressure, I will release it.

Now they will move in an orderly manner. I can control the direction. I can walk them right into a corral. This is what we need to do with our animals. When you are driving animals to go someplace, they must be taught these things before you get there. It's easy to do.

You turn animals by changing the angle that you work, and let those animals turn, instead of trying to ride up there and make them turn. Don't try to make them go just in the direction you want them to go to start them. Get a good movement going, then teach your animals to turn for you.

My dad told me when I was a little kid, you follow animals in the mountains until they're going in the direction you want before you start to drive them.

Pressure your animal, take the pressure off. Teach your animals to work for you. Don't ride along visiting with somebody about something that's got nothing to do with what you're doing, and finally wake up to the fact that they're not doing what you want.

If you got your cows going someplace, and they're going really good, and there's five riders, have four of them go back there and visit and one guy drive them—he'll pay attention. Don't have any more people doing it than what is paying attention. The minute you get more people than you need, they start visiting, and nobody's paying attention.

We're so keen to get those animals going, and get them strung out. We almost love for those in the lead to take off, because that's a help to us. We don't realize that pretty soon it's going to be hurting us. It's really crazy what we'll do to ourselves, personally, as long as we don't feel the pain until tomorrow, or next week. If we're driving a bunch of cows, the only thing we care is if we get them going fast. And then, damn, they're going too fast, what do we do with them. *Don't do that.*

If you start out in the front, you don't need to stay there forever. If you start out in the back, you don't have to be there for the rest of your life. In other words, you can have two people driving a good-sized herd of cattle. You can have one person in the lead and one person in the back. Or you can have both people in the lead, and a mutt dog in the back. Or you can have both people in the back, because you don't need anybody in the lead. If your animals are moving so good you need somebody in the lead, you sure don't need much behind.

Another big mistake people make is when they try to push the slow ones fast enough to keep up with the fast ones. That is a terrible mistake, and if you're going to do that, you're going to have problems as long as you have the cattle. When you have animals that are in the lead and going too fast, let them go in a big arc and come back to the ones in the back. Don't try to shove the back ones to keep up with the lead, ever. Because whenever you do that, you're going to have two bunches that are miserable. The ones in the back are going to get harder and harder to push, and the ones in the lead are going to go faster and faster to get away from them.

We've had situations where there's 500 animals and there's 50 that want to take off. We just take them in a big loop and circle and let them come back to the herd. We don't chase them, we don't head them off, we don't run them. We just let them come back to the herd. If you're not willing to do that, you're going to get to fight them forever.

The flight zone

Around an animal there's a flight zone. Now I almost hate to even bring this up. People come to one of these [schools], and then when I talk to them later, they talk flight zone about everything. Well, all you have to do is be aware of it. It's kind of like the weather. You can talk about it all day, or you can just go do things, and realize that you have it.

The flight zone is important to understand when you initially approach animals. After you've approached animals, and got them going, then that flight zone is so changeable. You can change it. The animal can change it.

Once you've started animals, then work on a pressure release. Whenever you pressure animals then you must release that pressure. Either by letting them move away from it, or you moving off. If you're working on pressure release, then you're working around the edge of the flight zone.

If you get into a corral, you may be inside the flight zone all the time, you may not be able to get out of the flight zone and still work the animal. So you work on pressure release and it's not a problem. An animal will stand you inside this, if it's for a very short length of time, and as long as it realizes that you pressure and you will move out.

It's not a thin line. When you approach animals, there's an area, that they start to feel pressure from you being there. As soon as they start to feel pressure from you moving toward them, then they start to react. This here can be 5 feet or 500 feet.

When you initially approach an animal, it does not like for you to go directly at it. If you are out in the mountains, and you're coming up toward a group of animals, if you will just ride in such a way that you would go on by, they will respond in a much more positive way than if you go directly at them. We don't like something coming directly at us.

Now you can come directly at them until you get here. Once you've got to there, then you should either go in this direction, or in this direction, in such a way that you're not going directly at them.

This table right here is the animal. Now I could be over here and as I get up to this animal, where I think I'm getting to it, all I've got to do is start walking this way. I'm getting closer and closer to it, but I'm not going directly at it. At some point I will get into this area right here, it will tell me I'm in there, now I know where to work. Where if I go directly at it, it may let me get way too close and wheel and run, or do all kinds of negative things. Now, you don't have to ride for a mile. You don't have to ride for half a mile. And even to exaggerate it, you could go one step thataway—I'm not going directly toward it. I could go one step thisaway—I'm not going directly toward it. I take one step thataway, and I'm going by it but I'm getting closer to it. All you need to do is just not go directly at it until it starts to move off. Then you could work that animal in a much more positive way.

A group of animals, the same way. You come up over, and there's a group of animals there, and you go directly at them, you tend to get a negative reaction. Sometimes it could be a very harmful negative reaction. If you would just ride across, you will tend to get a positive reaction. I've worked animals as wild as any of you guys will ever have to work with. I've worked in conditions that are as rough as any that you've ever had to work in, and I absolutely know this is so. Do not just go directly at them on the initial approach.

There's an area in here [directly in front] where animals can see you and tell how far away you are. There's an area right here [directly behind] where they can't see you at all. All of our domestic animals can see almost directly behind them. There's a very small area where they cannot see. Now that's the one area where they don't want you for any length of time, when you're exerting pressure on them. Now the only way you're exerting pressure on them is if you're in here.

Now, if you're going to drive animals from any distance, you're going to be behind them a lot. So there isn't any way that I'm saying to not be behind them. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is this: don't be in the pressure area for any length of time. In other words, if you have a group of animals that's going along like this, or an individual animal, or anything like that, once you get in here,

right directly behind them where it cannot see you, then get out of there. Move out, or move back. Stay where it can see you. If you can see its eye, it can see you. Now, some animals don't want you here, and other animals don't mind you being here. Every animal doesn't want you directly behind it for any length of time. Us included. We don't want something pressuring directly behind. You go down the freeway, and let a truck get up ten foot behind you and see how well you like it. You won't like it for very long.

They won't mind for a very short period of time. The wilder the animal, or the less trustful of you, the bigger this area will be. They can still see you, but they still don't trust you, because they see you're going in behind them, they don't want you there.

Movement

The reason that the herds of buffalo, herd of animals in Africa—the reason that they migrate and move like they do, is because of the numbers, not because of the predators and all these other things. The basic reason they move is because of the numbers. You have such large numbers, that that movement creates the movement that moves them. There's a herd of buffalo up here, like 4500 buffalo, and they don't go anywhere. They don't move down into the U.S. or anything like that. But if there were 30,000, they would.

They didn't move because they run out of feed. Cattle won't move just because they run out of feed. They *may* move when they run out of feed, but they won't move just because they do. The numbers is what tends to move them. Whenever you move any larger numbers of animals, then you have to be sure that that movement is gone, or it will start up again. Movement takes movement. Movement creates movement. Movement draws movement. That's what you have to be really paying attention to.

Whenever you go to do anything, even moving them into a corral, be sure that you have good movement. When you have good movement, then that other is not there so much. When you move animals to a place, and you have bad movement to get them there, then they have this burning desire to get away from there, and they create this movement just immediately, even though they're dog tired.

What's driving those animals is that the movement of this one is drawing this one, and that one is shoving this one. If you do anything that breaks that up, you have a problem.

If you go parallel to that movement you'll slow it down. If you go against that movement you'll speed it up.

How do you stop and place a herd?

I tell you what we do to move animals, and then what we do that stops movement. What you want to do is start doing some of these things that stop movement before you get to that place, so that movement starts to disappear. I tell you, if you ride up alongside of animals, you tend to stop that side, slow it down. If you go with movement you tend to slow it down. When you start getting close to this area, maybe a quarter of a mile from it, start riding up alongside of your cattle. Just ride up alongside. Turn out, go back down, ride up alongside again. Let them start slowing down. Don't ride up and then ride from the front to the back, because you'll speed them up again. Tell the people at the back end, or your dog or whatever, just tell them to come on with you. Let's just not drive them any longer. Just let them drift up there. So what if it takes two hours for them to drift that quarter of a mile.

There's two or three things you want to look for. One thing is that they have run out of movement themselves—that you're not stopping them. If you ride up and stop them, then they haven't run out of movement, and that movement will pick up and go someplace else. The other is, you stop and just watch them. If you have calves grazing in this direction, or cows, and when one starts to go, nothing else pulls in and starts running for it. If you do, then that movement's just going to go again. Really it's not that difficult to see it.

Working with dogs

I don't have very good dogs any more. They're very mediocre. I used to have good dogs, I mean excellent dogs. I do very little training. The better dogs I got, I found the less training I did, the better dogs I had. What you want is a dog that learns to work the stock, not a dog that learns a bunch of commands. Now, if you have a dog that learns to work the stock, then you can put a few a commands on, like you're a good boy, if you're tired you can lay down, it's time to eat supper. You can use those. It's okay.

But the others, I would suggest that you try not to use very many of them. I basically start with a young dog, and I use three commands. I tell it when to go—it's usually already gone, so I don't have to use that. I tell it when it's wrong, and I tell it when we're done. After I've worked with a dog for a little while, it knows when to go, so I don't use that one anymore. It doesn't do anything wrong, and it knows when we're done. I'm not joking about this.

Eunice and I worked in northern California in about as rough a mountain country as you'll find anywhere that they run stock. I would always have at least 12 to 15 dogs. We would go out to gather a bunch of cattle. I would start out with 8 or 900 head of yearlings, by myself. I'd have a dog in the back. I might be up in the lead because they're going to go too fast in the lead. I'd have a dog that would work the side. And we would go. We might go 8 or 10 miles, and when we got there we'd have all of them. The dog in the back was behind 8 or 900 head, and I don't see him from the time I leave till I get to the corral. The dog along the side I might see two or three times in all that time. What commands would you give that dog, so that it would keep the cattle in a bunch and going, and the other would bring them, and walking. I don't know. I never learned what commands you'd give them. And what command did you need?

Eunice and I would drive calves that averaged just under 400 pounds, they'd been weaned for probably two or three weeks, and we would drive them over this mountain. We had to drive them 18 or 20 miles. We'd start out first thing in the morning. Eunice would go in the lead. We'd go by road for 7 or 8 miles and then we'd go cross country. I would put a dog behind. I would ride and work the side, keep them from going on side trails, and keep another dog or two with me. I would not see this dog in the back for two hours at a time. When we got to the other side, we always had all the cattle, because we counted them. He never pushed them too much, he never left any. What commands would you have given him?

You don't need to teach a bunch of commands to have excellent working dogs. Now I have judged sheepdog trials. I do know what a sheepdog should do. I know what they expect from a trial dog and all of this. And if you want a trial dog, and you want to tell him every move to make, I couldn't care less. I will drive 100 miles to watch a good trial. I love to watch trial dogs work. I don't *want* one. I don't want one if you offer to give me one, but I love to watch them work.

But if you want a good working dog, a dog that will go out in the mountains and work stock like it should, I do not think that you need to have all of this command stuff on them. I don't think you need to tell a dog what to do.

Everybody that I've ever been around doesn't work stock right anyway. Why should they be telling the dog what to do? The dog should be telling *them* what to do. We've got that reversed.

You take calves that have been in a feedlot, fed a pretty high grain ration, and you put them out in the field, and you go out there with your dog, and you start laying your dog down and telling him to go here, go there, those calves will run him right out of the country. They love to. They'll take turns—30 or 40 will chase

him for a while, and when they get tired, another 30 or 40 will take him. If you don't let that dog just gather them up and bring them, not running, just bring them on—boy they have fun. It doesn't matter how good your dog is.

Eunice: we've never had any trouble taking a cow dog—that has plenty of force—and take it right over and work sheep with it, and it never bites sheep. They learn to only do what is necessary to get the job done. If they have to bite a cow to turn her around, they'll bite her, but if she'll turn around without it, they won't bite. As soon as she turns, they back off.

Bud: We are fast losing the ability to have working dogs. Behind every bush there's some guy who's a hotshot dog trainer who's teaching people how to have a trial dog. There are very few trial dogs that I have any use for when you get out to doing stuff. I used to judge the sheepdog trials in northern California. I had one guy who showed his dog, and I knocked off half a point, which is unusual, that's all he lost, the dog was that good.

We went out to his place one day, and just up on the hill, he had 300 sheep in the 80-acre pasture. He sent three of his dogs to pen those sheep. That was the most horrible thing. One of them didn't do anything, the other two went down over the hill and he couldn't find them, and finally it started raining, and he and I put the sheep in the pen, and he said I'll lay my coat down here, I'll come back tonight, they'll be on my coat. We drove down around and looked over, and they had one old ewe bayed up over there, two dogs had her held over there on the hillside. We had 300 sheep out there, and they'd got one stopped down over the hill. They just weren't any good.

I've learned a tremendous amount about working livestock by watching a good dog work stock that wasn't being told how to work them.

Eunice: Watch in a minute. Bud doesn't call the dogs off. He'll walk away and the dogs will just pull off on their own and come.

Bud: Basically I go out with a young dog and I basically say bring them to me. I keep moving around. The only way he's going to get them to me when I keep moving around is by getting those corners. And boy do they learn it fast. If you stop the dog and tell him to get over, and go thither and go yonder—whenever you start using those things, then they don't learn how to work those corners to get them to come to you.

Understand that your first deal is to move around so the job works. This is the way I work a dog. I let them work more than anybody else does, and I let them work. If they're doing it a little bit wrong, I move around until they're right, and then we can go ahead. It's amazing how smart they get and how good they get.

I want to take a young dog out, and what I want to do is to have everything

turn out good for that dog. If he goes out in the field, and I want him to go and bring them to me, and he starts chasing them away. I gallop my horse till I get in front of the cattle, now he's bringing them to me, and I tell him what a good dog he is. Or I can cuss him, rant and rave, and have him confused, and he hasn't got a clue what he's supposed to do.

If he goes out in the middle of the cattle and starts chasing one, when he stops and looks at me, he knows he's wrong. But if he says, didn't I do a good job? Yeah, he did a good job, wasn't what I wanted you to do, but you did it. He'll realize that that's wrong. They're not stupid, they'll figure it out. If I started screaming and yelling at him, ranting and raving, yelling get out of there, I'll never have a good dog.

With a group of cattle or sheep or anything, you're driving these along, and there's some starting to go off to the side. If you send that dog out to bring them back, if he's worth anything at all, he'll go on and bring the others right back over the top of you. If he won't do that, I don't want him anyway.

Chapter 3

Last chapter Bud talked about pressure/release, the flight zone, movement, and working with dogs. Here Bud shares some of what he has learned over the years, and answers a question about labor requirements for herding.

When I first started working on ranches, I had the same problems everybody else has, and a lot more. Because I was so damn stubborn that I'd stay out there all night if I needed to. If I went to get a bunch of cows, I was going to get them. I didn't care if I got in at midnight with them, or I didn't get in till next morning with them—it didn't matter to me, I was going to get them. So I not only made as many mistakes as other people, but I probably made a lot more.

I've been working [at Vee Tee Feeders] for a little over seven years. I've never worked anyplace before in my life for any length of time. I always would go work on a problem. As soon as that problem was satisfied, I moved on to the next one. I never dealt with a crew. I wouldn't even take a job if I couldn't run the owner off. The reason for that was this: If a rancher had a problem, and I went there, he's going to tell me what to do, he's going to continue to have the same problem, because he's already told people to do that in the first place, that's why he had the problem. So in order for me to come work on any job, they had to give me literally the power to tell them, go to town. Leave me alone, let me do it.

When I was so young I was so shy I would never go to any school parties. I spent all the time I wasn't working at the ranch in the mountains. I wasn't interested in people.

I spent 40 or 50 years working with livestock, trying to learn as much as I could about livestock. Then I started working with people, and I ran into a few little problems. I had to change everything about *me* to get along with people. It's very easy to work with livestock, and it's very hard to work with people.

When you're working livestock, and you're doing something, the livestock will tell you what the other people are doing. You can either get mad because they're wrong (or it might be because you are wrong) or you could move to compensate for what they're doing. Then they're not wrong.

When you go home, and you work with other people, don't try to make them copy what you think you've learned. You're going to get nowhere, you're going to antagonize them, you're going to upset yourself. If you have learned anything here, and it's going to help you, then it doesn't matter what they're doing. You should be able to move around to compensate for it, and everything should work. Then when you're all done, you can say, look, you was pushing on that corner, so that forced me to move up here—which was okay, we can handle it fine—but if you had moved over here, we'd have gone on. Most people take that better than the other.

The experts are almost always wrong. If they're any good, they will be always wrong. What I think that you should do is get very good at what you do and do it very well, and you don't need to listen to experts. I'm embarrassed every time I put on one of these schools. I wouldn't go across the road for somebody to tell me how to do something. I'm going to learn how to do it myself.

Other people aren't going to take the time to do that. But you've got to be very careful who you pick as the expert. It is just as hard to find an expert in any of these things, as it is to learn it yourself.

My dad told me when I was a little kid: Do not let the neighbor run your farm. What he was telling me was this: If you want somebody else to give you advice, then listen to them. If you think the neighbor could run your farm better than you, let him come over and run it, and do what he tells you. Don't just get advice from him.

The advantage that I have is I go all over the country and I work on all the farms. I'm not telling you how to run your farm. I'm giving you experiences I've had, knowledge I've accumulated.

What you want to realize is I've learned what I've learned with people telling me I was nuts, telling me it wouldn't work. I was 'Crazy Bud' for years. Now I'm this wonderful guy who knows all of this stuff, gee whiz. But I was Crazy Bud for a long time. I was the most independent, no-good S.O.B. in the country. I had a guy stand and tell people that with me standing right there. But I still learned to do it. Because every day I went out and tried to do a better job.

[When I grew up] we didn't have radios or anything. People told stories in the evening, after we got the work done. In those days they didn't have all the government programs, so older people would stay with whoever they could stay with. We usually had one or two older people who just stayed with us. They weren't relatives. We sometimes hardly knew them. They had no place else to stay so they stayed with us. These were people who had experienced all kinds of things related to livestock. So I got a lot of these stories as I was growing up. These

were people from all over. We had one guy who lived in the Oklahoma Territory before it was a state. We had guys who worked in Texas, New Mexico. My dad herded goats when he was eight or nine years old. These were all the things that were related to me. When I got out into the “world” and people started saying you can’t do this and you can’t do that, it just didn’t sound right to me because I’d been told while I was growing up, stories about all of these things being done. So I started in trying to do some things.

One of the first ranch jobs Eunice and I had—they had about a thousand cows at this ranch. They would split the cows with the heifer calves from the cows with the steer calves. They put the cows with the heifer calves over in this little rougher country that wasn’t quite as good a feed, and the cows with the steer calves went to the best feed for the summer. Those were the ones they were going to sell. They were going to keep the heifers.

Eunice and I were taking care of the cows with the heifer calves. We also had a lot of haying to put up, and irrigating to do. They said you’ll have to ride every day and shove them away from this creek. There was a stream went down through this area for three or four miles, and the range went up from this. There was kind of a jeep road up through there, and they had put out salt.

We didn’t have anything like that to get around in, so the next day I take a packhorse and I go pick up the salt. And I go up on the mountain. This was new to us, we hadn’t been there before. So I hunted out the springs, and places for water, and some of them weren’t any good any more, and we dug them out and put salt up there. Then we started drifting these cattle up there. Now this was before I had learned any of the things that I’ve learned now. The only thing I knew was what I heard people say could be done. We would go up every morning and gather up whatever was along there, and we would move them up to areas where there was feed and water and salt. We’d move the salt around when we needed to.

When the summer was over the cowboys came from the main ranch to gather these cattle. We’re getting ready to go in the morning, before daylight, and one of the guys said this is no trouble, all you do is just ride up the creek, they’ll all be there anyway.

Well, we all rode horseback up the creek, and there wasn’t one animal and the grass was like this. They were all up on the hillside. They just couldn’t believe it. It had never happened before on this ranch. They always ate it off down next to the creek and there was always lots of feed up on the mountain. Well we didn’t know much, but I knew that people had done this in the past, and I thought it could be done, and it worked.

So then I read an article in a magazine about a dairy in southern California. They had 28 acres. This was in 1957. They said that they'd taken this pasture and split it into 28 pastures. Each one to an acre. They put their dairy herd into this for one day, the next day it went to this one, and so on like this. These guys were trying to sell a pasture mix, so you'd have the hot season, the cool season grass and all this. But they were explaining the production this dairy got from grazing this way. Hell, I thought, I can do this out here in the mountains. We're on a ranch, 30,000-50,000 acres, no fences, lots of Forest Service in there.

This is when they made you ride and scatter the cows. We'll gather these cows up and we'll put them over here, and then we'll move them over here, and over here, and we're going to get a lot more production.

This particular ranch we were on, this particular guy, he got real cranky that we were doing this. We started moving this one cow herd. We took them to areas they never grazed. We didn't know that much about it, but we knew we could do it. We'd drive these cattle back into these areas. At first they'd all come out.

Finally he came one day and he was quite angry with me. "All you're doing is running the weight off of my calves." I said, I don't think I am. He said you can keep doing it (he knew I wasn't going to quit, and he didn't want me to leave), but you leave the Rock Ranch alone (the steer calves).

The Rock Ranch calves were always the heaviest. They would always be 40 or 50 pounds heavier than on the side I was. That fall when we shipped and weighed them, the calves on my side weighed 50 pounds more than the calves on his side. I chased 50 pounds extra on to them. Because the grass in the lower country was in such good condition, we didn't have to feed much hay that winter.

I don't need for people to believe me. But this is what it could do for you if you will use it. You have to believe that it can be done. The reason I got started on this, is because of the stories that were told to me when I was young. If my dad could go out and herd goats when he was nine years old, and stay out there for a week on a mountain, and it's as rough as any mountain there ever was, it was a brushy, steep, rugged, rocky mountain that they grazed them on—and at the end of a week, one of his brothers (there were five in the family) would come out with a packhorse and supply, and he would stay, and the one who was out there could come back home. If he can do that, then we adults could sure go out and herd some cows.

In response to a question about how many people it should take to herd 1,500 or 3,000 cows:

The minute you're concerned about how many people it takes, you're doomed

to failure. What you should be concerned about is how well a job is done, and whether it's worthwhile.

Most people don't work very hard to make it better. Most of their effort is put into trying to figure out how not to have to do any work. Whenever you're going to work with animals, or have a ranch, there is a certain amount of work that must be done. If you don't do that work, then you're going to find that there's a lot more work to be done because you didn't do it. If you go at it right, it usually is fairly simple. If you don't, if you go to make shortcuts, it not only isn't simple but it ends up a heck of a lot of work.

So in order to say how many people it should take, and how many animals they can herd, the first thing you have to do is to get some people who actually know how, and get some animals that could be worked. But nobody wants to do that. Because what everybody is thinking about is how much they could save if they don't have anybody out there. If you don't have anybody out there, that saves the maximum amount on labor. It doesn't get the job done, but nobody seems concerned about getting the job done. The only thing they are concerned about is how few people you can do it with.

Now we don't have anybody who knows how to do it, and we don't have animals that know how to be worked. We don't have anything to fall back on. We don't have any system, we don't have anything to even start from.

What I've found with the things that I've worked with and the things that I do, is that if you are doing a good job you can actually hire more people, because you get better production, you have less problems, you have happier people, you just get a better job done and you get it done cheaper. You could actually hire more people, and pay them more, and get a better job done. As long as you try to do a job with the fewest number of people, and the most shortcuts that you can take, you're going to get lousy job, your people are going to be upset because you're overworking them. You're not overworking them physically, you're overworking them mentally, because you're asking them to do something that they don't know how to do. And this is almost an impossibility—to get somebody to do something continually that they don't know how to do, and expect them to be happy and stay.

People have to have at least a limited amount of success to be happy. As long as you basically feel that you're failing, or the people that you employ feel that they are failing, or just the fact that the job isn't getting done, that's not being successful. This is what you find when you start to work with anything of this nature. It's very simple.

We've worked on ranches where Eunice and I took care of 3,000 yearlings and

200 first-calf heifers. We moved them every day to new areas. We grazed areas, we knew exactly where we put them, we knew exactly where they'd be. This was a large mountain ranch. It wasn't any problem. It wasn't even that hard a work to do. Most of the time, since Eunice had other things to do, I was doing it by myself. It was a very simple thing to do. But it would have been impossible for somebody who didn't know what they were doing, or to have animals that wouldn't work for them.

Actually, if you could go out there with 10 people, and get a really good job done and get your animals to working, then you could trim it down to what would work. But nobody wants to do that. Everybody wants to start out with a job that they never even considered could be done, didn't even want to do, and overnight you're going to take 1,500 or 3,000 head and one person's going to take care of them. That's not going to happen. That's something that could happen in the future if it was done properly, but it isn't going to happen now, and it will never happen as long as people have the attitude that that's what they're trying to do.

We've been to some big feedlots, and their only comment is, if you can cut out more help, then we're interested in what you've got to show us. They're not interested in better production, they're not interested in less health costs, they're not interested in the fact that it's just done better. The only thing they want to do is get rid of the hired help. They want to use machinery. Well, we've done that now for enough years that we're in the mess we're in.

I've been spouting this for I don't know how many years. It's only in the last two or three years that anybody's even listened to me about herding animals. Now all of a sudden everybody wants to be an expert overnight. If they would have started this 20 or 30 years ago, by now you could do this with one person. You've got to have ranchers who are willing to either work with their cows, or let somebody who knows what they're doing work with their cows, and get them to working.

Somebody comes to one of our two-day schools. They go away with a lot of knowledge, but very little skill improvement. So there's probably nobody who can come to a two-day school, and go back and have the skill level to get cattle to working, and get themselves to working, so that they could handle 1,500 or 3,000 cows by themselves or even with two or three people helping them, and do a job to where they were happy and to where everybody else was happy. This is something you work *toward*.

If you're going to be a doctor, you go to college for four or five years, you work as an intern for another two or three years, you go to be a doctor. It's probably easier to learn to be a doctor in this day and age than it would be to learn how to

actually herd 1,500 or 3,000 cows by yourself.

People think that they can come here, spend two days, and go back and be a total expert on it. All it is, is a basis that starts them out. You work at this, and you get better. You have a goal or something that you're working toward out there, that you get to over a number of years. You don't go from zero to perfection in 15 minutes.

What is so important is that you have people who are learning what to do, and gradually and progressively learn what to do. That's what I've been spouting for years. The reason that I do what I do, is because my feeling is, the only way this could be taught is the same way that you would teach somebody to be a veterinarian, to be a doctor, lawyer, architect, engineer, or whatever. There would have to be an actual course that was set up over a period of time, and people actually started out learning how to work animals, then starting slowly to learn to work groups of animals, until they work their way up. This may take two or three years.

But because this is working animals, people think that everybody knows how work animals, some people are a little better than others, but everybody knows how. You can have someone come out from the city that has never been around animals in their life, and they know how to work animals. Everybody is an expert. They're not.

Whenever you go to teach something that has been totally lost or is that far behind, which our herding or our livestock handling is so far behind that it's absolutely awesome, you're talking about taking time.

When we went up to the Arctic, the guy wanted me to come up there and teach them how to work with the reindeer. I told him it would take somewhere between 10 and 15 years. His comment was, oh we got lots of time. I got up there, I hadn't even got off the plane, and they were telling me to hurry. They wanted it done immediately. Well I could do it. I could go out there and get a bunch of reindeer, 2,500 to 3,000 reindeer that were as wild as the elk or whitetail deer in Idaho, and within three or four days, you could walk up and touch most of them. I could herd them, I could put them where I wanted, they'd stay where I put them. But they couldn't do it. And they never did learn to do it, because they wanted to do it in six months. If they'd let me take the young people, who were trying to learn, and spent 10 or 15 years, they could have herded the reindeer and it would have worked.

As far as I know there is nobody who teaches people how to herd animals. But yet nobody is interested in me doing more than a one- or two-day deal. Nobody is serious enough about this to say look, we're going to set something up to where

people can actually stay with it long enough to learn how to do it.

Training

There's hardly anybody in this group who uses horses who would consider taking a horse that had never ever been handled at all, and just throwing a saddle onto it and going out to gather cattle. They'd want to work with them at least for a couple of minutes.

Anybody who tries to do this without spending a few minutes to train these animals, is not going to succeed very well. Most animals, if you even do it halfway, this really helps and will allow you to succeed.

Almost every thing that is a problem with livestock is correctable if you're willing to teach those animals beforehand. If you want to take them someplace that's difficult, if you teach those animals to work for you, then when you get there it will not be difficult. It is so important that you teach these animals to work for you, just like you would teach a horse, or a dog, or anything else.

You don't have to set up a special training deal. All you have to do is to do these things better than we've been doing them, try to do them as well as you can, and you'll be surprised.

If you have a situation where you have animals in a field or a corral, that you're going through every day, once a day, if you go through those animals and you teach 5 animals to go straight, at the end of 100 days, you've taught 500 animals. If you go through that same deal and you teach 5 animals every day to spin around, because you went and pressured their hip and they spun around, at the end of 100 days you've taught 500 animals to spin around. Then when you try to drive those animals, they're spinning around, trying to cut by you, because you taught them to.

Whenever you go to do anything with your animals, the previous handling determines a lot how well it goes. A lot of people say, well I just don't have time to do this. It doesn't matter how much time you have. It means that every time you work your animals, if you work them more like what I'm talking about, they will get better and better even if you only work them a couple of times a year. It isn't how many times you work them. It's how well you work them when you do. It isn't whether you run them through the chute and give them shots. It's how you put them through the chute to give them shots.

When you have animals that are in a situation where you're going through them, whatever the reason, it's really important that you pressure so that they

will walk off straight. If you have animals that are taught to go straight, you can drive them anywhere.

If you're showing registered cattle and you have to lead them, you're going to spend a couple of minutes teaching those animals to lead. You're not going to wait until the sale date and put a halter on them and try to lead them through that show ring. Yet we try to do things driving animals that we have not trained them at all for.

It's like if you were to go out to do a job with a totally untrained horse. You'd have a tough time. But every hour you get to ride him, it's going to get easier and easier to do that job. If you give up on the first hour, or start thrashing around because it isn't a perfect horse, you're never going to have a good horse. It's the same way with this.

Driving

Animals must have what I call good movement. That's when they are moving freely, moving at a comfortable pace, and going straight, going to the direction that you want them to go. Not going thisaway.

When you go to start a group of animals, when you push here, they go thisaway to get away from you. They can't go thataway because it's full of cattle. And you go out here to stop them, then you go out here to stop them, and that's when you get this type of deal. You're not supposed to go across like this, then turn and shove them. I've watched hundreds of people do it, and any ranch horse that you get on in the U.S. or Canada, you ride him across, and when he gets to this cow, he turns to shove it. If you make him go on by, he thinks you're absolutely nuts. So I know people do that.

When I'm working cattle around other people, I never stop telling, Quit shoving on them. Quit shoving on them. When they come over here they have to give that little bit of a shove.

So whenever you got an animal that's going up to a place where they need to kind of hesitate—it's different, it's open now and it wasn't open before—and you're shoving here, they're not going. They're not going to go without a fight. That stays with them. They don't trust you. They try to get away from you. They don't want to stay in the spot where you left them.

Whenever you turn and shove animals, you create a problem that stays with you and stays with you. It isn't even over with when you leave, because you stress those animals to a point where you pay for it for days or weeks later. You wouldn't like if somebody walked along shoving you from behind. They wouldn't have

to shove you very hard. They could just put their finger in the middle of your back, and just pressure about that much, and pretty soon you'd say enough is enough. Let's say you come to a place where you had to step down. You'd say it even quicker.

So when you go across to drive these animals, it is so important that you're looking up here [ahead to the lead]. When those animals start off from the direction just the tiniest bit, then you must come back and straighten it out. *Then* you can go on across.

You have tremendous ability to guide animals from back here if you will use it. Now you can't wait till they turn and go the wrong way, and then do it from back there. You can only do it when they very first start. The sooner you correct a mistake, the easier it is. Mistakes are learning experiences. You've got to be wrong before you can be right.

We're so concerned that we're going to be wrong, we never do it right. What you anticipate, you create.

Anytime you're exerting pressure, it should be in a straight line with what the other people are doing. You've got to work with your pressure in a reasonably straight line in a T to the direction you need to go.

When cattle stall out, only one person should be pressuring. With one person pressuring and three people watching, they can help correct mistakes. When three people make a mistake, you have a problem.

Sorting

You should send the "stars" to town to get something you don't need. You'll sort a lot better.

If you want to sort an animal out of a group, you do what you *wouldn't do* to drive them. When you're driving an animal, I want people to move across like this and back like this. When you're sorting animals, I want you to move ahead to let an animal come out, and you move back to stop the others. When you go in like this toward animals, it creates a pressure for them to come out. Doesn't matter if their rear is toward you or what, it still creates a pressure for them to come out. That's why when you are shoving animals like this you have ones breaking out. You go parallel movement you tend to stop it. This is not near as difficult for people, than going back and forth.

Whenever you want an animal to turn, you do these things that you don't want to do when you want them to go straight. It's that simple. If you want an animal to turn, get in behind it.

I don't like to sort in an alleyways. I don't mind if other people use them. I'm not a big fan of alleyways. I feel that when you put animals into an alleyway, and you more or less force them to go by you, you're crowding them and stressing them way more than you need to. Almost everybody does it.

We were at one place, and I was sorting some cattle and showing these people. Somebody said, can one of us come out there. Well, yeah, but nobody would come out. So finally there was this kid who was about 9 or 10 years old. He said, could I come out? I said, well sure. He came out there. Within about five minutes he could sort those cattle better than anybody there, because he was doing what I asked. There was nobody else who could do it as well as that kid by the time the day was over, and he learned it in five minutes—because he didn't have any preconceived ideas, he just wanted to do it like I showed him. It was very easy for him, but it was very difficult for the other people. They kept wanting to do it the way they've always done, and of course it didn't work very well for them. This little boy could do it as good as I could do it, because he did it the way that worked. They were trying to do it in a way that did not work very well, and they would not change. They would change a little bit, as soon as something started, they went right back to the old way. That isn't something that we need to do—it's something that we want to do.

Security and stress

Every time we have to correct motion, we create a stress we don't need. We create the sick cattle. Animals don't perform well when we don't handle them right.

Animals stay where they feel secure. If you take an animal from over here, and you chase it over here, this place may be the last place in the world that animal wants to be.

If you take that animal and move it properly, this is where it wants to be. There's better feed, it's very comfortable there. This isn't something that takes forever to teach animals.

Stress doesn't hurt people and it doesn't hurt animals, as long as it isn't too much stress, and on for too long. The thing that hurts animals is when you stress animals and it stays there for a long period of time. If you stress animals, and you take that stress right off, then not only does it not do any damage, it may even be helpful. They've done lot of studies and say that a certain amount of stress is good for people. Where you get into trouble with stress is if there's too much and it stays too long. Even a small amount of stress, for a long period of time, is more harmful than a lot of stress that's there for a short period of time.

If we could only change one thing that would do the most good, it would be to cut out loud noise. It is one of the most detrimental things, and probably in most cases does no good at all, and only does harm. There's almost never a case where a loud noise is beneficial.

If you get around a place where people are yelling, it's contagious. It's almost like a yappy dog. They don't know when to shut up so everybody does it. If you have a crew that is quiet, somebody comes and will start to yell, and it's just like 'why am I doing this?' and they will quit. I don't know why people do it, and it does not help.

Low noise is no problem. If you talk in a normal tone of voice around livestock, it will probably create no problem at all.

Don't do anything with livestock when you're in a hurry. If you're in a hurry, go do whatever important thing, like going to the coffee shop or whatever it is, get that out of you. Then come back and take time to move your animals-it will take you less time.

The first thing I did when I came to [Vee Tee Feeders], is I said nobody will run. I am not against running. What I am against is creating a situation where you needed to run. What I tell people is, if you get that urge to run your horse, go over the ridge and run for a ways. And then come back and drive your cattle properly. Animals don't respond well to speed. They like steady. They don't like this herky jerky. And they don't like speed.

If you have a calf break back, sure it's all right to outrun it. But when you outrun it, *then* is when you must start doing things right. Now you had to do some things wrong for it to take off in the first place. But when you outrun a calf, as soon as you pass that calf, you must turn and come across straight in front of it. You don't have to be a long ways in front of it, in fact you don't want be too far in front of it. You want to come across, and turn and come right back like this. And that calf will turn and walk back.

Teaching and learning

Don't ever predetermine where you'd be. Let the animals tell you.

The reason that I show and teach people on foot, more than on horseback, is because people learn better when they're walking than when they're riding a horse. It's kind of fun to gallop over here and correct a mistake when you're on a horse, but it's not much fun to walk over here for 2 or 3 miles to correct a mistake when you're on foot, so you pay attention.

If you're going to go to somebody's place to actually learn something, don't worry about what they do wrong. Watch what they do that maybe is better than what you do. Then you can go home and improve what you do. If you only go to somebody else's place, and the only thing you're looking for is what they do worse than you, you will benefit not at all. You may go home feeling good about the fact that you can do something that maybe they can't do, but it won't help you. There isn't any operation in the country that doesn't do some things good and some things bad. If they do everything bad, they'd be out of business.