

toppin' out

BY TIM O'BYRNE

Coast-to-coast Round of Applause



JOHN FIELDER



A ton of beef cattle-related information gets filtered through the tri-focals on the end of my nose in one form or another every day. Usually it's positive in nature because the vast majority of ranchers, WR readers and others associated to the industry generally have a positive outlook. They're in the biz to support it, assist in its development, and nurture it towards success. Some don't have that sunny outlook. To them, the sky is always falling; we're always one market dollar, one piece of legislation, one vegan propaganda campaign away from total collapse. But that is the human condition. Some like their eggs with salsa and some don't.

In order to bring you a palatable magazine every issue we have to sort through a rodear (oops – 'roundup', sorry my SW cowpunchin' buddies) the size of a Montgomery Gentry concert just to cut out about three dozen pairs worthy of slapping the ol' WR iron on. And that's what I was doing today, sorting through the gather, until this caught my eye causing me to divert directly to this col-

umn energized with inspiration.

The story; you'll find it on page 74, *Forever A Working Ranch*, written by the ever-capable Troy Smith, one of our most respected freelancers (well, he's not actually *free*, I tried to point that out to him a couple years ago, but was soon corrected). The passage in question is at the tail-end of page 76. Colorado rancher Jay Fetcher is explaining to the author how he and

his family decided to assign some of their gorgeous deeded ranchland into a conservation easement **forever** as a way to protect it from subdivision for the benefit of the generations to come. The complexities of these arrangements are further explained in great detail in this and previous installments in WR by Troy. And I'd read them all, obviously, in my role as editor. But this one single passage, these few brief words plucked from thousands

of pages, hit me like the 'in' gate in a fat sort alley.

"Our family felt a commitment to ranching and protecting agricultural lands. And we needed to preserve our ranch as an agricultural unit. Using a conservation easement, we could permanently restrict the value of the ranch, thus lowering the estate value." Jay Fetcher, Colorado rancher

You read that right, folks. **Permanently restrict the value of the ranch ... lowering the estate value.** LOWERING it! Who in these times, on this planet, in our lifetime, would consciously do such a thing? Was it noble? Insanity? Was there an ulterior motive?

I got up from my creaky chair and stepped out into the sunshine on the porch for a breath of fresh air. The impact of that statement washed over me. The Fetchers were one family of many across the country that

had either done it, or were fixin' to. Their story in the humble pages of this magazine represented the heartfelt conviction of hundreds of others that believed in the same personal sacrifice; to protect some of the most beautiful land on the face of the earth deeded to their care, even if that meant locking in the value of that land at a far lower price than what it might go for in the clutches of a redevelopment strategy, thereby waiving any shot at a future financial windfall.

If the average urban-dwelling American really knew what was happening in our ranching world they'd surely offer us a coast-to-coast round of applause.

SADDLE WINNER



We are very pleased to announce the winner of our Cactus Saddle giveaway at the 2nd Annual NCBA Trade Show Working Ranch Booth Extravaganza! The winner of this well-made rig (I know it was a good 'un, I sat in it at the booth for half the time I was there) was 22 year-old Tyler Pieper of Farnam, NE. He snuck in there and entered on the final day of the drawing. Tyler plans to cowboy and rope out of it. Congratulations, Tyler, she's a beau-

Ten things you'll never hear a cowboy say:

#10 "You bet I'll take it, I love the nightshift."

... turn to page 20 for the rest.



KACIE SMITH



"Last year when my daughter won a national rodeo title, we were on the road nearly every weekend with the horses."

"When you have cargo as precious as my family and our horses, you tend to think about safety."

"Thanks for making a hitch I can depend on. The Turnover Ball is one thing I know I don't have to worry about."

-Kate's Dad,
Bob Barker

Kate Barker and Cutter
2005-06 National High School
Rodeo Miss Congeniality

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