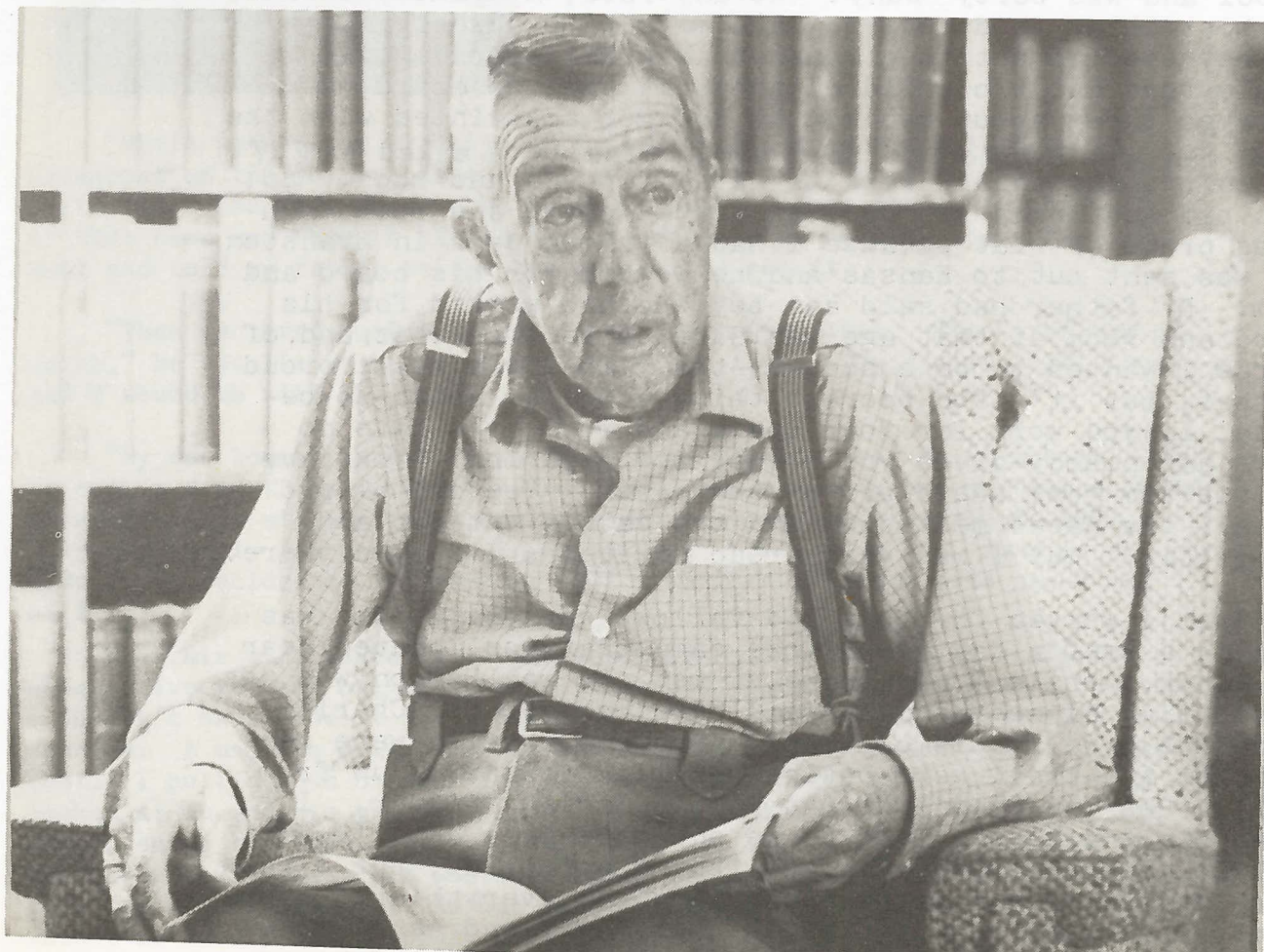


I KNEW I WAS GOING TO BE A CATTLEMAN. THAT WAS EVERYTHING!

BY DEBBY SMITH AND GUY STEES

FERRINGTON CARPENTER



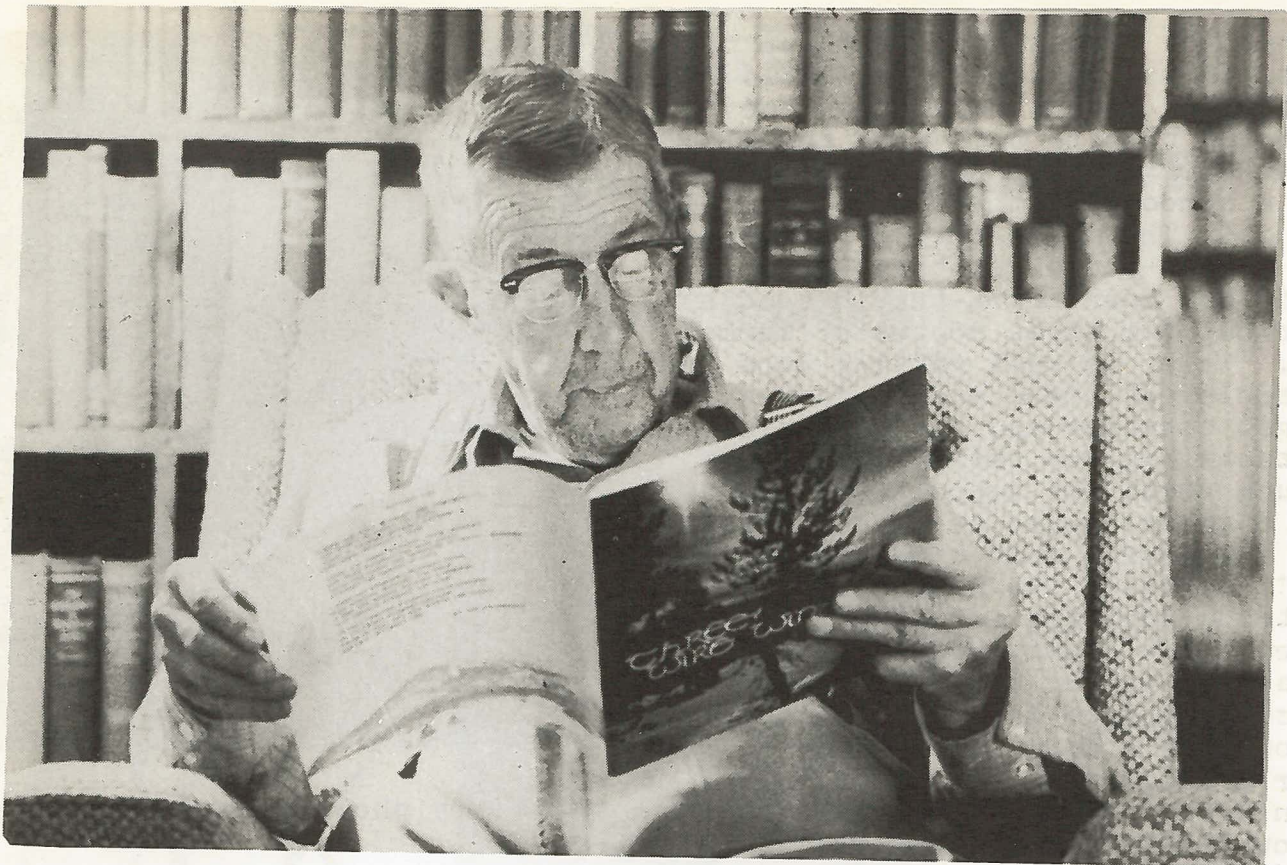


Ferrington Carpenter was born August 10, 1886, really not so long ago, in a town called Evanston, Illinois. He is well known throughout the country as a successful cattleman. We enjoyed being able to listen to a very interesting story and most of all, getting to know a very special man. He tells of some of the people he knew, some of his experiences, and life in Routt County as it was and as it is now:

PART ONE

I got out of the eighth grade back in Evanston, Illinois. I entered high school and when I was a freshman, I played on a hockey team. During one game, some kid stepped on my instep. It was just after Christmas and I was wearing a new pair of socks that'd never been washed and the result was, I got poison in from those new socks. They had to take me out of school and for about two months I lost out on school and was perty puny. At any rate, my family thought the best thing to do was to take me out to a western ranch. So they took me out to a ranch in New Mexico to an old couple that had two children about my age, to board out. I stayed there about two months and got acquainted with the hired man and I tried to help him. Finally I asked him if I wasn't doing enough work to earn my board and room. So, this old gentleman let me work for my board and room. Oh I was proud of that because I had a friend back in Evanston who was sent out to Kansas and he worked for his board and room. My father had said any boy who had worked for his board and room at that age was sure to be a success, and, of course, I wanted to be a success too. So I was right proud of that, but it's the poorest thing a feller could do because, if you work for your board and room, you have no hours and nobody gives you credit for anything. You have all the bum jobs there are on the ranch. You get blamed for all the gates left open and the cattle get out and everything. But I was very proud of it and I stayed there.

Then I worked for this old fellow's son-in-law who was killing a beef a day for a coal camp that was located near the ranch. While I was there, I met old man Dawson who was an old time pioneer and a trail herd partner for Charlie Goodnight. Well this old man Dawson and Charlie were partners in the trail herd business, bringing cattle up from Texas. Charlie Goodnight was an old Indian fighter. I liked him and he was good to me and gave me a job. I went back to school and went ahead with my schooling, but I knew I was going to be a cattleman. That was everything! Every summer I came out and worked on this ranch and we ran cattle in 20-mile park, and then Charlie had a bunch of mares



Ferry looking at the second issue of Three Wire Winter.

and two jacks. We were breeding mules and we had to work with them. Back in 1905, it wasn't customary to artificially breed cattle and horses, but nevertheless an old physician and also a veterinary graduate named Dr. Solandt showed us how to artificially breed cattle. So I did quite a bit of that work for them. I worked for the cow camp and here every summer. In the winter, I'd go back to school.

I kept in school and graduated from law school and when I came to Hayden, we'd never had a lawyer and there wasn't a county seat or courthouse or anything. So, during that time, I practiced law, living half the time on my homestead and half the time in town.

When the railroad came in, they brought a lot of people in and they went and settled up all this range country. They settled the country away from the river valley and it had been our free pasture. Well, these bloody homesteaders came and took up all the water everywhere and we didn't have anyplace to put our cattle. So, I homesteaded there, and we ran some cattle out there. Jack White and I did. Jack White and I were both from Evanston and we ran a little bunch of purebred Hereford cattle together. I had a half interest in these cattle and we went to raising bull calves and selling them. We used to take a bunch of bull calves and sell to one rancher and then the other rancher and just peddle bulls all over. We had a lot of them that were no good, they were leggy and we'd take and drive them down to the Indian reservation west of here, down by Roosevelt, Utah, and sell the poor ones to the Indians.

When the homesteaders took up north of here, they didn't have a school. They were poor and didn't have much money so they couldn't go to town with the kids. So we asked the Hayden school directors to put a school out there and they would not do it. They said they'd furnish the lumber and we could get together and build it and then maybe, they'd send a teacher out for three months of summer school. Well, we kept getting more and more people out there and so Jack White and I got together and about five or six other bachelors out there, (We didn't care much about the school kids but we wanted a school house so we could have dances and have a good time.) but we couldn't persuade the Hayden school board to do anything for us. I went to Mrs. Peck, the County Superintendent and I said I wanted our own school district cut off from Hayden. We thought that would be a new way to educate these settler's children. But she told me you can't form a new school district unless you have at least ten children of school age. Well, there was seven of us bachelors and only one married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, which were quite



Ferry showing Debby the ranch.



elderly, so chances for ten children of school age was very slim. So we went on a couple of years and nothing happened at all until one day. I came into town horseback and there was this man sitting in the livery barn by the saddle room. He looked kind of disconsolate and I just nodded to him as I took my saddle off. He asked if I lived on the north side of the road and I said I was. Then he asked me if there was any good land over there to homestead. I told him, 'Gosh, no! It's the roughest place you ever saw.' We didn't want the around taking up all the water and every thing. He was real discouraged and he said, "I was sold out in Michigan and I came out here to get some new land and I have a big family." I asked him how big his family and he told me he had eleven children. 'Oh,' I said, 'Then you're just who we want! Here comes a new school district!' So I told him we were waiting to get someone with children and we'd saved a little piece of land over here on Calf Creek, about 15 miles from town and I said, 'We've been saving it just for you! You'll bring enough kids here for a school district and we'll set up and

build a new school and do all kinds of great things.' But, I told him he'd have to go out and look at it before he'd file on it. I said I'd take him out there the next day and I'd bring a horse in. He told me he couldn't ride a horse because he had a double hernia. Well, I didn't know what a double hernia was, but he couldn't ride a horse anyway. So, then I phoned out to my pardner, Jack White (we had rigged up a mutual telephone using the top wire on the fences.) and I finally got him on the telephone so I said 'The Lord has answered our prayers. I got a feller here with eleven head!' So he drove a team in and we took the feller out in a buggy, turned over a time or two, there wasn't a road, but he filed on it. So then we had an election and of course we voted unanimously!

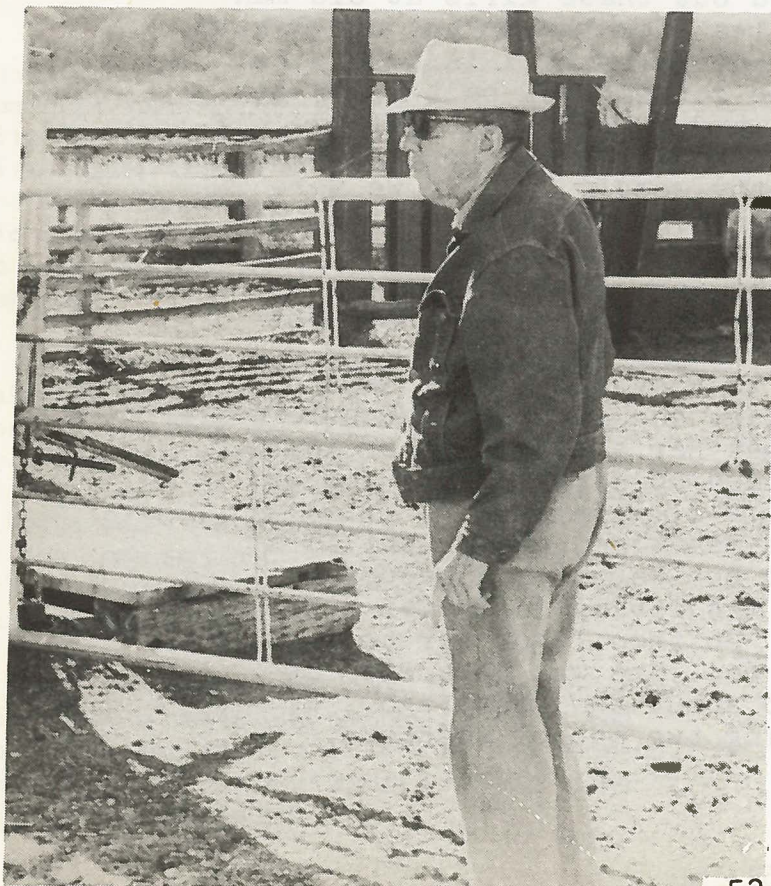
Then I was president of the school board and Jack White was secretary-treasurer. We put an advertisement in the paper in Denver. It said-Wanted: Two school teachers in a new country where the teacher can take up a homestead. Very attractive location and we payed \$10 a month more than they paid in Hayden or Steamboat. We paid \$70 dollars, and they only paid \$60 dollars a month. We got a lot of answers from girls in Denver, but some friends of Bob Perry's got some girls from New York to apply and so we hired two of those girls. Of course these girls didn't know anything about this kind of pioneer life that we were living, but they came out as a kind of stunt and they liked it. They got here in August and course it created a big sensation on Elk Head. I have a birthday on August 10th and we always had a big party. We'd have a dance and we invited all the county to come up and I invited these girls.

I found a place to board out these girls at old man Harrison's. It was three miles from the school and I got them horses to ride. Then, Bob Perry fell in love with one of them and the other one got engaged on the way out here. There was Ruth Fulton and I could name off all different ones. But we kind of populated the country with school teachers. We did pretty good! In 1918 we were still hiring eastern college girls and marrying them off just as fast as they got here.

When I came back from the war, I wasn't on the school board anymore, but they hired me to be their attorney to try and get them school teachers. I met a young lady who was a sister to Floyd Pleasant. She'd been a school teacher in Kansas and she came out here to visit her brother and I met her and talked her into taking the school job. I ended up marrying her and we had three children and we were together for 34 years. Then I lost my wife. In the meantime, one of the first teachers up that had married Bob Perry, had become a widow, Bob had died and she was living in Denver and was a great friend of ours. So then I got her to come and finish up the race with me. She was here with me for 17 years. Then she died about two years ago. So that's how I ended up marrying two school teachers.

We built a teachery on the school so the teachers wouldn't have to travel this three and a half miles up all the time. If you've ever seen the Elk Head stone school, you'll never see another one like it. Boy, that was a school! See we had a big room upstairs and folding partitions that made two rooms. We'd open that folding partition and have a big dance. We had domestic science in the basement and we had a gymnasium for the kids and we had a moving picture show for the school. See we had all this money because we didn't pay taxes. (Homesteaders don't pay taxes because he doesn't have a title to his land.) But there was a rich man in Chicago that had a lot of coal out there and he paid all the taxes and we spent them! We had a good time!

When the First World War came along, I went out in the first draft contingent from Routt County. About twenty of us from Routt County went out to Camp Funston in Kansas. I went out to the camp as a draftee and then I was put in an officer's training camp. Later on I was made lieutenant and was sent around to different camps in the U.S. to train the boys in the army. I never did get active service in France I spent all my time here. I was discharged as a captain of infantry. It was good training and I enjoyed it, but of course I was disappointed that I never saw active service. It did train me, though, and that's why I was able to handle these boy rangers. I gave them military drills. Jack White and I organized the Boy Rangers, ages 8-12, in Hayden. We went camping on horses sometimes and when we played games, then the girl's association would cheer like heck for us! The Boy Rangers then, are now grandfathers. There was the Temple boys, Harry Fricktel, a Yoast boy, Kenneth Whiteman, Melvin Jones, and the editor's son, Smith. Mick Temple herded sheep and thereby disgraced himself with the cattlemen.



In 1928, I was elected district attorney. That's prosecuting attorney for four years. I had worked with the county attorney and that caused me to become interested in county government and I wanted to be elected county commissioner to help reform the county government, particularly in Routt County. But, I ran in a poor year for Republicans. I ran in the first year that Franklin Roosevelt headed the Democratic ticket and they swamped out all the Republican delegates. So I got beat and didn't have anything to do except the cattle here.

Then the Colorado Legislature passed a new law called a Colorado State Department of Revenue putting together all the revenue collection agencies like income tax, sales tax, license tax and all the different taxes under one man. Governor Ralph Carr appointed me the director of revenue. So I put in two years collecting taxes to beat hell and I didn't get very popular. Then when Ralph Carr died and another governor came in and when I sent my name in for reappointment I failed to be confirmed. So I got fired from that job. Every job I ever had I got fired from. But I had a great time at what I was in. Oh yes, I enjoyed it, you know it was a kind of crusade. I didn't mind.

I never had much law practice after galavanting around with all of the public agencies. My dad was a hard headed businessman in Chicago and quite successful. He told me I never should go into politics unless I had a living independent of the political job, but he wanted me to go into politics as a young lawyer. That's a pretty good rule to live by, because every time they kicked me out, I was happy to come home. I had something to come home to. As I say, I got kicked out of everything I tried.

I put in a lot of time going around talking up this performance testing cattle. We formed an organization called BB Inc. (Better Beef Inc.) and we got a packer from Wyoming who'd buy the beef by the carcass value, which was the right way to do it, but cattle aren't sold that way. I always was suspicious of the cattle business and of the shows because there was so much monkey business there in putting on the ribbons and it was all judged by appearance. So when I found out there was an organization called Performance Registry whereby they judged the cattle by the rate of gain and their measurements and their overall ability to provide beef. Why I thought that was great stuff. I went with the organization and they were all Texas and Oklahoma fellers and they didn't have much money. I offered to work without salary as secretary-treasurer, which I did. A lot of my friends here in Routt County came and said that I was hurting the pure-bred cattle business cause I was talking against the shows as good selectors of good cattle. Which I was, because I thought that this appearance value of an animal didn't tell the story about him. He oughta be weighed and his weight per day of age calculated and verious other tests called performance tests put on him. I didn't head up that movement, but I became quite well known throughout the country. I preached all this performance business and that made me quite unpopular with the registered people and show people. It made me unpopular because the day is gonna come, when the performance means much more than the eye appeal. After that, I got the professor from Texas A&M to give a definition of a good carcass. These beef cattle should be judged by the value of their carcass and not by how well they stand or how their hair is or all that hooey! But it was a battle and people wouldn't give it up.



A good friend of mine came over from Phippsburg and he says, 'Ferry, what has gone wrong with your head? We just had a good type of hereford animal and you go out and knock it and say it was something else. You're just working against all of us and what do you want to do that for?' Well, I told him that I did it because I believed in it. When you believe in things strongly and go around trying to crossline others you don't get very popular. I got kicked out of Performance Registry. Each time I tried to do something, why then finally they'd bunch up on me and give me the door. And so, out I'd go!

Then Congress decided to take the remaining public lands and form them into grazing districts and the forest service had already done that with their land. I was asked to take the job and for four years I travelled all around the eleven western states and I set up grazing districts. I got along well with the stockmen and very poorly with the bureaucrats in Washington because I had advisory committees of stockmen to run it, which they liked that. I thought I was just doing miracles and all of a sudden, the secretary of the interior sent for me and fired me. Well then I was out of that job. But the stockmen protested it and so Franklin Roosevelt put me back. I had differed with my boss, the secretary of the interior, and I had to work with him three years more and that was quite unpleasant. But I enjoyed it and I always got a kick out of everything I got in.



This house is just five log cabins put together. They'd just take another cabin and pull it up. Old man Fisk had homesteaded here and he cooked and heated on that old fireplace. That's all the heat they had.

The only excitement we had here was two years ago when I had a fire here, and it burned my kitchen down but we saved it. We called the Steamboat Spgs. Fire Department by radio and they came down here and had a big tank that went down to the river and pumped water and brought it up here and we saved part of the house. But it was all smoke and black. My books were all black and we had to clean it all up.

Once, they had what we called the 'great cricket invasion' and it was something. They called them the Mormon crickets. They were kind of a grasshopper business. But they're mean and they travel in great big armies. They started in Utah and came up through Colorado and they just wiped out Maybell as they came. They were coming right up the river here. These crickets travel about 10 or 12 miles a year and they lay their eggs. Then, the next spring, all the little crickets come and they continue the march. Well, when they got up here almost to Hayden, why we realized that everything was gonna disappear as it had in Maybell, so we got organized and got the county commissioner to pay for six miles of tin. They were rolls of tin about 18 inches wide. We made a tin fence from the divide down to Bear River, all tin, and we sloped it this way  and this way  so they couldn't climb over it. Then about every so often we'd dig a hole and when they came and hit this tin, they'd fall into these pits we'd dug. Then, over the pits, we had a tin so they couldn't get out. Then, we'd pour gasoline in the pits and light a fire and burn 'em up. We organized all the farmers and the woman came out and cooked at night. I was there and one of my jobs was to go along and pour the gasoline and burn them up. One time, I came to a pit and there was a rattlesnake in there and the crickets had landed on him and they were eating him alive. It was the only time I ever felt sorry for a rattlesnake! He couldn't get out and the crickets of course couldn't get out and they were hungry so they just lit on his back and ate him alive. We caught a lot of rattlesnakes and crickets, but we finally stopped the invasion.

I wrote the Cricket Invasion up. I got Ray Lyons and some of the people that were interested in it and they helped me get some pictures together and I wrote a book. This fellow that was helping me write it, wanted to call it "Bulls on the Yampa" but it'd really be my autobiography. I'll put in all these things as they come along.

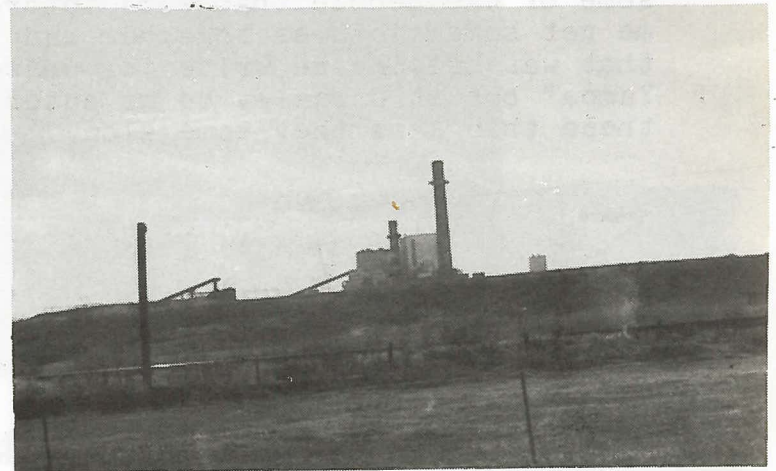
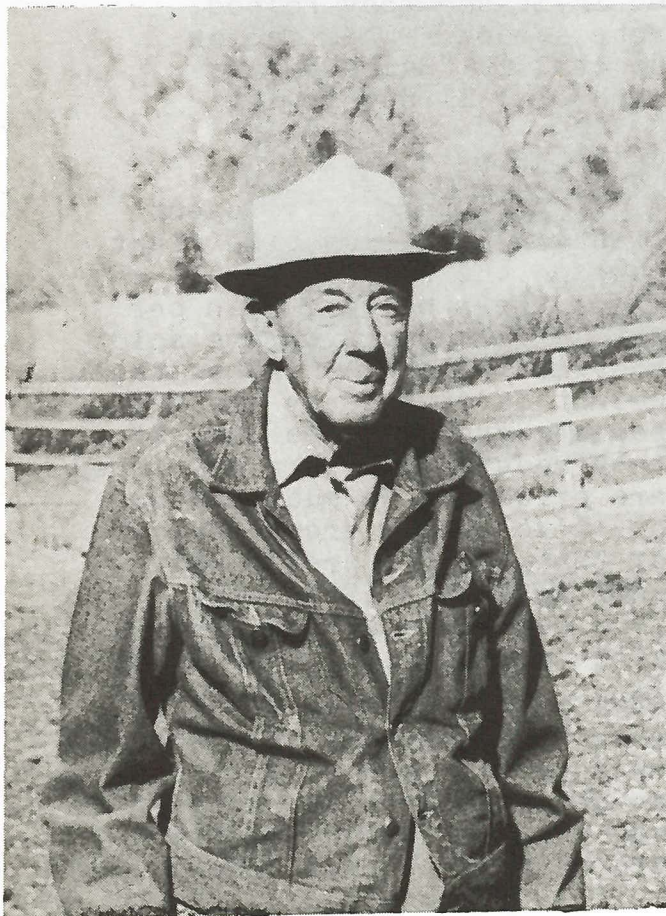
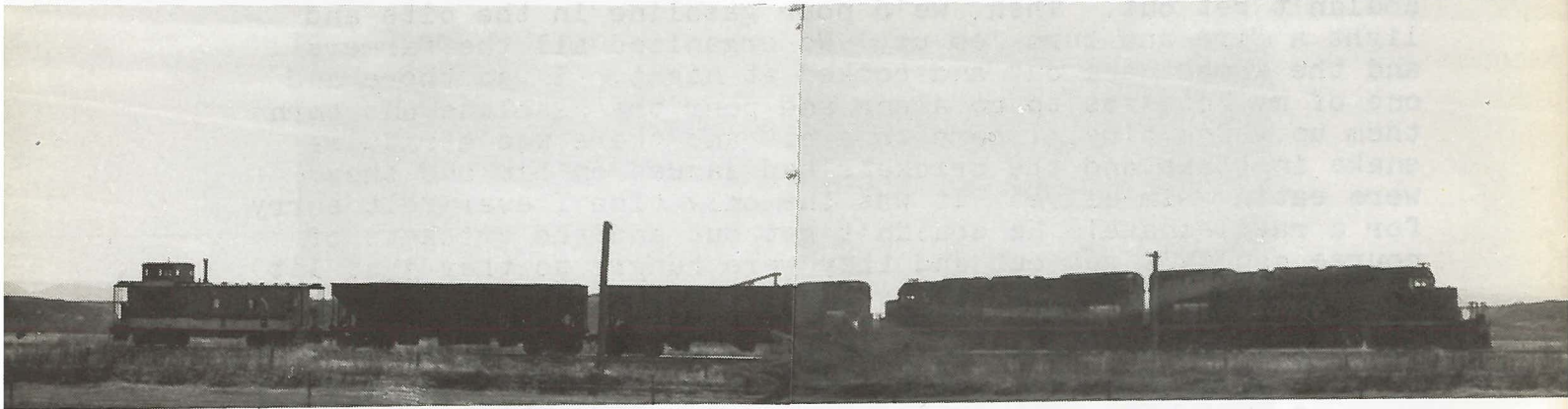


Since then, I've spent practically all my time right here on the ranch. I sell cattle their rate of gain per day. When the calves are sold, they are weighed and then their weight is divided by the number of days they are old. If they made 21 pounds a day, they are priced at so much and so on. I've been a great advocate of that. We did pretty well until 1974 and 1975, which were bad years and we weren't able to sell. Last year I had

twenty bull calves I couldn't sell, and I raised them up to yearlings, and I still couldn't sell them, so we either had to eat them, and we couldn't eat them all, so I took them down and sold them for beef at Rifle. That's what you can do with purebred cattle, if you can't sell them for breeding, you can eat them. We raised plenty of potatoes and had lots of beef, so we kept right on:



Ferry has covered about a century here. Out his window he can see five changes in the development of this area, and he's lived them all. There is a stack of deer horns with a buffalo skull on top, which tells of the era when game were hunted for food. Then, the field with the livestock tells of the grazing. Next he can see the railroad with the trains as another one of the changes. Above the railroad, he sees the highway and the automotive age that we live in today. Then the power plant up on the hill above tells of the fast-paced industrial era. Ferry Carpenter has seen it all and he tells his story well. He said that he had a great time at what he was in and he enjoyed it all.



Ferry Carpenter's ranch is located east of Hayden, Colorado on Highway 40. Here, he raises Hereford cattle and watches the changes over the years. Look in a future issue of Three Wire Winter for more on this successful cattleman.