

Ira Perkins--interview 9 July '82, Bynum

3--began sheep in '39, with 130 head for \$100 --"bummers and spoiled bags and everything else." Got 55 lambs from them, weighed 56# that fall.

32--traded job of mowing hay to someone for pasturing his yrlings

34--"underbit" in ear of lambs; tale of neighbor (above) similarly marking lambs and cadging Ira's.

47--Snider from Gilt Edge, nr Lewistown

47+--story of Bill Burnett, Granville Stuart's foreman, and a gambler; wd ride pine ridges at dusk to watch his cattle against rustlers.

99--Ira's mother was cook at DHS ranch

178--buying yrlings from Snider, Ira swore he was going to lie down on his belly as they went past, to insure he wasn't being sold wethers.

244--Snider was "a one-go guy": as soon as he leased land, he was looking for another.

255--other '39 sheepmen: Tommy Larson, maybe 3 bands; Guy Miller, 6; Paul Cropp (?), "maybe 10,000" down east toward Brady; Wheeler-Cole e. of Fairfield, 2; Al Udine (?); McAlester nr F'fld had purebred bucks; nr Choteau, Ellis and Baskett, 3-4 bands; Coffey Bros ran 3000 head; Clark Coffey, Ira's bro-in-law, had 2-3 bands; "the whole country was sheep, from here on." Bynum and north, ranchers inc: Ringum (?); Bartley Bros.; Broadhurst Smith; Sullivan, Jensen; sheep ranch in every coulee, literally.

275--sheep were summered on resvtn; when 1919 killed cattle, rule against sheep grazing was rescinded. LH Taylor of Sage Crk Sheep Co. at Lewistown then moved to Resvtn, the Taylor & Hamilton outfit n. of Dupuyer; ran 12-15 bands.

→ 285--sheep camps all over the hills of the Resvn

288--Ira's sheep 32 yrs on NF--"on the forest" just s. of Browning.

291--current grazing season 60 days; originally was much longer. Broadhurst Smith (later victim of bear) in 1908 herded for Taylors, wd go back into mtns at Dup Crk and go n., in June, herd n. to the park, "come back out Oct. 15".

302--no bear trouble then; some wolves. Ira maintains bear weren't as numerous then.

→ 315--ranger "usually takes our count". Used to have counting corral where Ira's sheep go into mtn; 20 bands went in then there at Palookaville. Rangers raised in big cities might be hard to get along with, but those raised in the West "pretty reasonable."

327--rangers "will get after us" if sheep camped too much on same bedground; reg'n is 1 night per bgnd, herder teepeed with them.

342--if more than 1000-1100 in band, lambs don't do as well

348--Benny Olsen got bonus for 85#+ lambs, got it every yr; heaviest ave was 92#

--351: current herder, "a dogger", keeps sheep together, last yr's lambs 76#.

--357: "if we fired him, we'd be back getting herders every two or three weeks."

362--used to tend camp with 3 pack horses; used pack boxes, for convnce in $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. moves.

374--used cross-buck saddles; horses might buck packs off, scatter stuff

380--pack horse that got pack under his belly "one night up on the mtinside"; Ira's new sleeping bag on top; horse behind reared back while stepping over log, broke breast strap on horse with slpg bag etc., "he began bawling and kicking and tearing around there"; Ira got off to rope him, the horse took him and knocked him down on trail, calk of shoe scraped his jaw and then the end of his shoulder. Finally roped him, he chased Ira again, Ira ran him around a little pine tree and choked him down; tk $1\frac{1}{2}$ hr to get pack off--horse's name was Kicker, long-legged: "he could kick a fly right off the back of his ear." When Ira was breaking him, he was standing "right by his chin" and reached for stirrup, when Kicker kicked him in pit of stomach, *slipped off his hip.*

414--cont'n packhorse story: Ira that night "got across the mtn," had no sleeping bag, no dog, c'dn't find herder; tied horses to trees, tried to sleep; every horse noise, he thought it was bear. Next morn, found bear had torn up herder's camp, he hadn't had anything to eat "3-4 days".

439--horse had strewn kapok of slpg bag all over trail; coming down, abt $\frac{1}{4}$ mi from the place, he began snorting and listening, whistling and snorting; wdn't cross the spot on the trail, went across country around it; did same 6-8 yrs later.

444--went back up with tent for herder, asked abt sheep; herder said he'd left them "right down there"; nowhere around: "All right now, you tell me the truth. When is the last time you saw those sheep?" 8-9 days before. Got airplane, lked 3-4 days; "We really weren't in the sheep business, because we didn't have any." Abt 4 a.m., Ira heard lamb bleat (Ira awake because so ~~xxxx~~ cold and frosty), "followed this up" and found them.

488--tk herder to town, told him a herder usually has weight of lambs or small loss to be proud of, asked what he had. "Nothing, I guess." Ira told him he'd leave \$125 at sheriff's office, if they found sheep he could get it.

→ 502--8'x6' hole in reef, bottomless; Ira tempted to pull rifle, drill worthless camp tender and drop him down, "do mankind a service."

530--on 1st Ave. S in Gt F, Star Cigar Store was "Lena's place", whorehouse capital of the south side. Ira, dressed in black suit and white shirt, went in determined to stay until he cd get good herder. Lena told him, you wait, we'll get you a good one--Benny Olsen. Abt 9 that night, got him; he herded 7 yrs.

545--take Benny back to GF in fall with \$1600-2000; pattern was, ^{first} he stayed clean, drank whiskey, his women pretty goodlooking; abt wk, beer and women "a little shabby"; after that, "he was on straight wine and squaws," for next 6 wks. It took 3-4 trips to fetch him back; he'd ask for \$10 "to go pay this guy," vanish. Lena wd finally tell him to get out of town. Then he'd repeat just before lambing.

575--once in the mtns, B "wd quit every week" yet stayed on; fought bear, wd stay up all night against them. A moonlight night, ~~me~~ out of shells, he faced bear coming out of thicket; B shouldered rifle like a bat, began cussing, building up until he switched from Eng to Norwegian--"when I switched to Norwegian, that bear just cut..."

593--best mtn herder was catskiner--wanted to get away from noise--"We gave him a horse and a rifle, and he forgot the sheep. What he did was ride the canyon and shoot at everything that was just a little off-color...If it was black, a burnt stump, he'd have to blaze away at it...everything that wiggled! Ira once commented that it looked like a bear on opposite mtn; "Jesus, he jumped for that rifle, and boom, boom. No, I guess it isn't, he said, it didn't run."

508--ranger asked if Ira had herder with sheep (the shooter), the sheep were scattered a couple of miles; Ira said yeah, it's the way he herds. That yr, Ira had no loss, the lambs were beautiful, he just had let the sheep graze.

620--current herder dogs sheep into bunch, watches them; "bear cd be eating out of his back pocket and he'd never notice the bear."

↘ 625--there's a first reef all along the mtns; over that, flat country, then 2nd reef; Ira's range was over the 1st reef, s. of East Glacier (cd see the town); Little Badger Canyon.

650--Ira hired a big guy, 6'6" or so, off st in Dupuyer; never herded before, was wearing size 13 oxfords. Rocks destroyed those in first few days, Ira had to go to ~~town~~ Browning to get him shoes, cdn't, had to go to Cut Bank for them.

672--he was with Ira and Earl during the hunt for lost sheep, they were leaving him to overnight at the camp when he said, Hey, just a minute, you don't suppose I could herd these deer up here, you guys got no sheep.

685--~~It~~ Ira riding top of reef in rain and fog lkg for sheep, horse stopped; Ira walked over abt 15' to have look, there was 6-800' cliff down to Sawmill Creek. (Ira's glasses fogged over with rain, too). Kept vowing, "This is the end of the sheep business for me. If I ever find those damn sheep this time, this is it." Got to camp, started fire in wagon, stripped, draped his clothes around, standing there naked kept vowing--"and we're still in the sheep business."

↘ 735--apprehension in tending camp: "Every time you go, you don't know whether the sucker's gonna quit." "The least little thing" can make a herder quit, such as bringing a wrong item of groceries.

748--Frog Arm Shorty: mystery of how he got on horse.

779--cdn't break his fall when he tripped; wd stick his chin out

783--when he wd start lkg off in other direction from you, he was readying to quit.

↘ 786--Earl: if you cd tend camp and herder didn't quit, you'd had sucfl week, whatever else happened. But immdtly pressure began building toward next wk. Might try find someone else to tend that camp, that wk.

803--Frog Arm story of Texas lynching.

840--Earl's story of Frog Arm delbtly antagonizing McTaggart in Croxdale's cafe..

863--Ira's ~~xxx~~ story of Frog Arm promising not to get drunk in Dup as sheep went thru; next night, camp nr Pendroy, he went off with carload of drunks to Dup, ended up with 3 other guys shackled up with woman in Dup, on 10-day bender on FA's money to come; when FA finally showed up to be paid off, Ira gave him hell abt promising not to get drunk; FA said no, you got that wrong, I just promised not to get drunk while going thru Dup, I waited until next night.

919--Ira complained to sheriff abt Frog Arm and his shackled up buddies coming out and taking a leak in plain view against side of their shack; sheriff told him Hell, I don't know what you're gonna do--did you ever think of building a high board fence?

2nd side

2--~~Jxxx~~ Earl: 1 herder wanted to quit because shoes kept coming off his horse

5--Earl: story of pre-empting Benny Olsen's quitting by saying The hell you do, I fired you y'day, I just came to get you. Earl tk him to ranch, B wanted to go back to camp, "I hauled him right back up the road." "And I got along good with him for quite awhile then, you know." "He had to throw his fit."

28--Ira's story of going to Lena's for Benny: cigar counter toward front, long bar down side, Ira settled to wait. Lena: "He's around here somewhere, Perkins, you just wait, he'll blow in here." Somebody evidently tipped B, Ira had to try wait him out. Ira leaning elbow on cigar cnter, waiting and waiting. Patrons began looking at him, in his suit, wondering if he was cop. Prostitutes were there: Big Tit Lou, and Bouncing Betty, and Nora Buffalo...B Betty had 1st table, wd smile at man coming in. It was rr pay night, crowd boozed up. 1 young whore, 20ish, goodlooking, but 4-5 mos pregnant; didn't seem to make much diffce, guys patted her, put arms arnd her, bought booze. The whore--well-dressed, in gray suit--finally wet her pants: "big wet splob (sic) in back of her skirt"; guy patting her there. Ira, irked at long wait amid all this

Perkins/9

GF whorehse story cont, 62--pretty soon was sidled up to by Bouncing Betty, who said: "Perkins, I think you need some fun." Ira thought, "By God, she is about 100% right ~~IM~~ I think Perkins does need some fun."

071--~~07~~ Cigar Store was on Main St., not 1st S. (check city directory)

75--story of herder who had his throat cut in alley behind cigar store; descptn of terrible GF paupers' hospital.

95--Earl: uncanny network wd alert Benny

125--2 great shepherders of al time: King David and Gilfillan

140--early herders were 'breeds. Cruz, herded for Tom Larson, for ex; gd dependable herder.

148--in 1880's, Clark ranch was surprisingly modern sheep outfit: 12,000 sheep, lambd in circus tents. Ira saw descptive piece in Ft. Benton River Press. Ranch was between Pendroy and the mtns, on S. Fork of the Muddy. Clark Bros came out of Columbia U., were sent w. to run the outfit.

222--in 1880s, probably sold just wool; shipping point in '90s was Collins, where Canada-GF line ran thru. Clarks likely wagoned wool to Ft. Benton

243--Ira started in Dillon in 1931, with James Short of WSS

sub ends 266

➤ "The closer to the tit you stay, the better off you are" in running sheep--i.e.,
run young sheep. (Perkins, 1st side, 19)

Ira Perkins

120--Snider poisoned by bootleg booze: Ira found him in bunkhouse moaning and groaning, naked atop tarp on bunk: skin was blotched, as if stained by chokecherry juice, purplish, and he was blind. Asked Ira to pour water on him, Ira did with bucket and dipper. S was convulsing and rolling around, Ira got scared and left; but by night S was up and around, in white shirt.

155--This was in 1921. Trying to deal with S in sheep deal in probably fall of '56, Ira told him: "I should have let you die."

158--S was poisoned with Fusel oil in moonshine

237 - curing whiskey in wood takes out fusel oil

Ira Perkins interview:

add: in the peak years of the sheep business, a band of sheep a day would go thru Bynum, on the way to the reservation; spaced that way so they wouldn't get mixed.

possible use: use for Gros V

Ira Perkins interview--

add: in 1919 drought, only the bottoms of coulees ever greened up that spring.

possible use: Dep'n drought detail

Bill Rappold mentioned at class reunion: cattle were lost in Sweetgrass Hills area in '82 Memorial Day blizzard because coulees are sharp ~~up~~ there, instead of more rounded bottoms as in this region: here cattle can't pile up as easily.

Ira Perkins interview:

add: his memory of 1919 winter in the Judith country was that winter came in Oct., immediately was a killer--big snowdrifts he and other kids would sled on beside the house; about Thanksgiving, his grandfather (?) shot half their horses, in attempt to save the better half of them (and about half of that remnant eventually survived; but by Jan. 15, the winter was over, his grandfather was doing road work on contract.

--people attempted to feed russian thistles to cattle that winter; before long, the cattle had a runny discharge from their mouths down their briskets and began dying.

Ira Perkins interview

add: he played for dances in Dupuyer's old log upstairs dance hall, recalls fights erupting, dancers trying to go on around the brawl. A knocked-out brawler once was dragged out by his heels and on down the stairs, head whacking every step.

--P's dance band included a tin-eared young saxophonist who also had a wooden leg; he'd get out of tune with the rest, guy next to him would tap him on the leg to try get his attention--to no avail.