



## Up Front

*An interesting offer.*  
By C.J. Hadley

Long ago, Don Coops said, “Producing an issue of *RANGE* is like giving birth to a Brahma calf backwards.” Coops was a rancher on the Black Rock Desert in northwestern Nevada and chairman of the board for the Range Conservation Foundation. He died in his 90s after a life well lived. As a former Brit, then New York liberal, when I got confused about the realities of food production and the unwarranted pressures thrown in the trails of ranchers by the people in charge, he would push back his hat and say, “CJ, they don’t know they don’t know.”

Chet Mercer, a sheepman from Hyattville, Wyo., heard me give a speech in Casper in the early ’90s on a program with Reagan’s Secretary of Interior James Watt and Wyoming Gov. Mike Sullivan. Within days Chet mailed me a handful of Ulysses S. Grants in a plain white envelope. A month later I got a second stash of cash and called to urge him to stop, because his generosity was overwhelming—even though it was paying for *RANGE* gas, my food and Great Dane fodder. He said, “I sold the ranch and invested it well and enjoy giving money to conservative causes.”

Chet also had a long life well lived as a sheep rancher and coyote hunter and his gift to *RANGE* and other ranchers who needed predator control went on for decades. I visited him in a Greybull hospital just weeks before he died and found him partly paralyzed by a stroke and wearing a bright blue *RANGE* T-shirt. We shared pureed liver, oatmeal and thick drinks for a couple of days until I had to return to Carson City.

Those two old westerners shared what became my real American West. They touched my heart, taught me more than I deserved, and introduced me to their ranching and logging brethren out in wide-open country. Out here in the West I discovered patriots and producers and honor in work. Many became my heroes.

After 32 years, this magazine is still birthing Brahmas. We have climbed into the trenches and tried to make sense of the expensive, arbitrary and inconsistent rules and regu-

lations that are put on some but not others. Ranchers have suffered devastating cuts on multigenerational grazing allotments, takings of their private-property rights, expensive court battles thanks to serial green litigants who sue federal agencies and usually win thanks to judges lacking constitutional integrity, and the capricious nature of some “well-educated college” folks who are in charge of management but seem to find it difficult to prevent megafires or tell the difference between a road apple and a real one.

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You might have noticed that our beautiful country is committing national suicide while real producers are getting spindled and mutilated. At the same time (with more liberty being lost daily), elite corporate bosses, predatory social-media outfits, rabid greens, dishonest politicians and arrogant bureaucrats are sharing fancy cocktails while spouting

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inaneities. Which reminds me that I just received a beautiful full-color brochure asking me to subscribe to a cowboy magazine with this extraordinary offer from its publisher:

“You are one of a select few who is receiving this exclusive invitation to enjoy a FREE PREVIEW of the very next issue. Why you? Because you are the type of person we feel would enjoy the magazine most...a person of style and sophistication. With a passionate appreciation and an abiding love for the American West and the luxury Western lifestyle.”

The magazine’s editor was equally encouraging: “Imagine stepping into an exclusive get-together at a friend’s ranch out West. You find a warm and welcoming gathering of people who, like you, share a love of the West and the luxury Western lifestyle. You hear about stunning new dream homes and look at gorgeous photos. You see the latest styles in Western fashion and Native American jewelry. You meet noted Western artists and photographers. You chat with friends just back from little-known resorts and getaways. And you speak with celebrities like Tom Selleck or Kevin Costner about their deeply rooted ties

to the West.”

*Forbes* magazine called this high-class publication “a version of *Town & Country* combined with *Architectural Digest* and a dash of *American Heritage*.”

They must have made a typo with my zip code because that made me think of the big and burly Basque sheepman Buster Dufur-rena, who spent a lifetime of sweat, toil and talent to build a ranch and improve his range north of Winnemucca...to remember the time spent with cowboy Don Coops showing me his arid winter range on the Forty Mile Desert east of Fallon and the good condition of the resource and his cattle...of riding shotgun with Hank Vogler of needmoresheepco as he camp tended for his herders in the mountains north of Ely...and being put on my first horse by Tom and Rosita Marvel south of Battle Mountain back in 1972 to brand calves out on a vast and fenceless desert with their talented children. (I was greeted back at the ranch after a long and dusty day by Rosita waving a box of Epsom Salts.)

I also thought of too many other productive ranchers who sometimes—due to conditions beyond their control—have to sell out to the ones who have little clue as to how to keep the resource healthy but enjoy “exclusive get-togethers” and have the money to buy open spaces and build “stunning new dream homes...and see the latest styles in Western fashion.”

The back page of the brochure showed handsome people wearing interesting western garb with these words: “Stunning jewelry. To-die-for styles. Bask in the finest outfittings of the luxury Western lifestyle. Every issue is like an insider’s guide to the best the West has to offer, from dressing in style to decorating with flair. We’ll keep you in step with options as plentiful as the grass on the plains.”

The promotion piece was excellent, the products exquisite, and there are probably multitudes who yearn to join this group. Me? I was definitely out of step, loitering on the fringes of a world I didn’t fancy so my choice was easy. I’ll stick with the cowboys, sheepherders and real producers who care for critters and country. People like Buster, Coops, Chet, Hank, the Marvels and like-minded Americans who labor long and hard while offering people here and abroad what they need the most—safe, high-protein food.

I won’t regret missing the exclusive get-togethers, finally understand “they don’t know they don’t know,” and will never feel bad about that Brahma calf. ■