

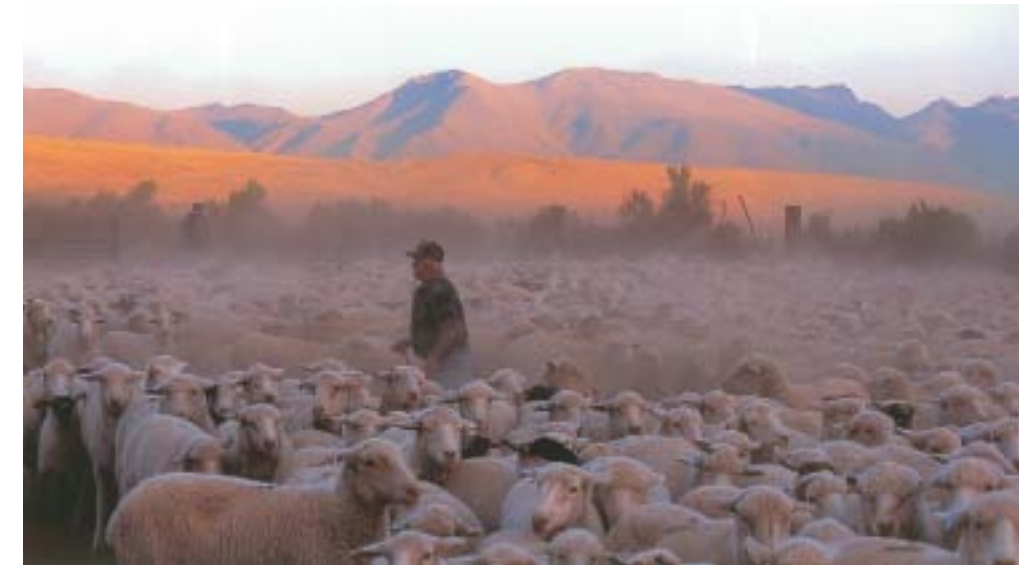
OUT ON THE RANGE

Patience and pride. Living with the sheep in Nevada.

Photos © Linda Dufurrena. Words by Carolyn Dufurrena.



*A roil of sheep from Dufurrena Sheep and Cattle Company seems not to disturb this patient burro which will be ready to serve as a pack animal when the sheep are moved again.
RIGHT: Frank Dendary tends a flock of ewes at Wilder Creek Ranch in northern Nevada.*



Big lambs go to one pen, ewes to another. The big corral below sheep camp in Lovely Valley is filled with racket—dogs barking, kids playing, herders and sheep and the sound of wooden gates clacking open, shut, open, shut: ewe, lamb, ewe, lamb. They run down the long chute, and Grandpa heads them one way or the other. Dust filters through the dry aspens, leaving a fine powder on everything. The children are off in a corner of the big corral where they won't get run over, riding the ancient burro, Pete, the big jack which lives with the sheep.

Two boys and a girl, all under seven, pile one behind the other on Pete's back. They pull his ears, scratch his neck, hammer his galumphing old ribs with their little tennis shoes. He plods around the corral, around and around, for what must seem to him like forever. His patience is infinite. Almost.

The children never seem to tire of the game, but finally Pete comes to a halt in the shade of a big tree. He is immovable. He is the statue of a burro in the dappled corral, waiting for the pestilence on his back to pass. There is one more frantic burst of rib pounding, and the old beast's limit is reached. He unloads. One boy rolls right, one rolls left, and the little girl does a perfect backward somersault over Pete's rump—but he is holding his hocks in check. He knows where her head is, and he does not take advantage. He is only irritated, not really angry. The three come screaming across the corral, their terror already turning into something else. They are puffing with pride and excitement: they have just been bucked off. ■

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