

When to Yodel, and When Not To

I wish this story had a happy ending.

By Bill Jones

Some folks think yodeling is a lost art. Others say yodeling is just the result of tight shorts.

I have been known to warble a cowboy song or two, but I never could yodel. Well, I take that back. I did cut loose with a fine yodel several years ago. I was riding my bicycle real fast and my feet slipped off the pedals. Folks, I let out a yodel that would have made Eddie Arnold plumb chartreuse with envy. Ernie Sites, Don Edwards and Gary McMahan can all yodel. I, under normal circumstances, cannot yodel on a bet.

Several years ago I get an invite down to Arizona to recite some cowboy poetry for the snowbirds. It is the middle of a Wyoming winter and I jump at the chance. When I arrive, the night before the show, I notice a poster in the hotel lobby. It announces the cowboy poetry show featuring “Bill Jones—World Class Yodeler.”

What a coincidence! Another guy with my name is a famous cowboy yodeler and he is right here in Arizona! I call the gal in charge of the show and let her know I am in town. She says folks are really looking forward to hearing me yodel. What?

I panic. Those nice Arizona folks some-

how got the idea I can yodel. I tell the lady I simply am unable to yodel—even on the threat of being lynched. This is all a horrible mistake. At first, she thinks I am just joking. Then she commences to get a little riled. Obviously, there has been a catastrophic mix-up. “The advertising has already been done,” she says, “and the show is tomorrow. A lot of people are coming and it is too late to change anything.”

She simply will not listen to reason. It is like arguing with a stump. Then she says something that makes my blood freeze. (I ain’t, by the way, making any of this up.) She says—and these are her exact words—“Well, you just get up there and do the best you can.”

That is what she says, folks... “Do the best you can.” At that moment time stands still. My emotions are much like the time I receive my draft notice in the mail during Vietnam.

There ain’t but one thing to do. Packing up and heading back to Wyoming (checkless) is not an option so I need to “cowboy up” and learn to yodel in less than 24 hours.

I stay up all night practicing with my guitar and perfecting my yodel. I think I am making some progress, but about three in the morning people in the next room call the

local gestapo. There is an ugly scene about a report of “someone torturing a bunch of house cats.” After the cops determine no felines are being held against their will, I continue to practice yodeling, but turn down the volume.

I wish this story has a happy ending. The show goes on. I do the best I can with my yodeling. The crowd response is...well, less than enthusiastic. Although this happened quite a few years ago, the memories are still painful—for all concerned.

But, as with all traumatic and unpleasant experiences, I learn a valuable lesson in the unlikely event I am ever invited back to Arizona to do some cowboy yodeling. Next time, I am going to take my bicycle. ■

Bill Jones continues to submit questionable and unsubstantiated articles to RANGE. He maintains that he has given up trying to yodel, with the exceptions of some half-hearted, involuntary attempts when subjected to medical procedures common to old men in the throes of the aging process. As a favor to RANGE and the readers of his politically incorrect musings, he promises to never write about any of them. Editors at RANGE will strive to hold him to their high journalistic standards.



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