

[M. C. De La Flor]

1

FOLKSTUFF - RANGELORE

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore (Spanish)

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [87?]

Page #1

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M. C. De La Flor, 47, residing at 907 Valley St., Ft. Worth, Tex., was born in Eagle Pass, Tex. His mother remarried when he was but eight months, and his stepfather, who was a cowboy, took the family to the Madero Ranch in [Coahuila?] State, Mex. De La Flor was taught to ride and rope at an early age, and was used as a regular cowboy before he was 12. His step-father took the family away from the ranch and into Texas in 1902, but returned in 1906. When he was 23, he left the Madero place to work on the William ranch near [Langdry?] in Texas. Two years later, he left the Williams ranch and the range, and has never returned. His story:

"Sure, I worked the [ranggein?] both Texas and Mexico. Did you ever know how many different ways there are that the American cow poke and the Mexican vacquero work cattle, and their habits. Americans whirl their ropes to the right, then overhead, then casts. Mexicans whirl to the left and cast in an unbroken circle. That is, no what you call a 'flourish.'

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Mexicans pull a knife to fight, but Americans jerk a gun out to fight with. I don't mean just to hit with, either. I've seen a whole lot more fights with a knife than I have a gun because I was with the Mexicans more. Then, Americans mount a hoss on the right side while a Mexican mounts on the left. Sure causes trouble when a feller tries to mount one a different way than they're used to, too. Well, I wouldn't say that an American really mounts a hoss because they put their hands on the saddle horn, then while holding to that and pulling up, they jump up with their feet and light in the saddle. The Mexican aint so ambish. He just climbs on.

“Now to get back to me. I wasn't born right on a ranch, but was born in Eagle Pass, Texas, on March 14, 1890. My dad died some few weeks before I was born, and my mother married a Mexican cow puncher when I wasn't but eight years old. C12 - Texas 2 She and my dad were both Spanish, but he was a Mex'. His name was Campo, and he had a boy two years older than I. His name was Guadalupe, Campo, and a tougher cow puncher than he never lived. He wasn't so mean he just couldn't get along with people, but he was mean to his hosses and cattle, and tough with men. Why, after he was 16 or 17 years old, the Maderos put him on the payroll as a gunman, or, as a watchman. That was what they called their gunmen.

“My step-dad had been used to the range life so long that he wanted Guadalupe and I to grow up, litterally 'In the saddle.' Soon's I was old enough, I was taught to sit a hoss. Soon's I was big enough to climb up into the saddle, I was given a little old pony to ride, the same as all the rest of the kids on the ranch. All the Mex' kids on the Madero were treated like that, and were punching cows at an age when kids of nowadays would run from a cow, and be scared to death of a hoss.

“The Madero, where my step-dad took us when he went to Mexico, ran around 40,000 head in the 'MMM' iron. You make it like this: . It's crazy looking, but you just try and make it into some other brand. Those Maderos knew their onions when it came to ranching and brands. While their neighbors were as a rule, honest, the Madero was forced to keep

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about 10 watchmen to keep those who weren't honest, honest where the Madero beef was concerned. The rustlers from other places were what made it hard.

“The Madero was close to Parras, in Coahuila State, and Leonardo Santos ran the big Santos Ranch near Patos, Coahuila. I don't know anything else about the ranch, but let me tell you. One day, along in the evening when the Mex'es liked to take a sort 3 of a nap, one of the watchman was taking his in the shade of a tree, where he figured he'd be out of sight if one of the foremen happened along. Well, a big roar of moving cattle woke him up. Then he got into a position where he could see the herd, he saw a bunch of the Santos men driving off a herd of Madero cattle. While Santos had bought Madero cattle before, and the watchman knew it, he figured he'd better get to headquarters and let the boss know about it.

“I was hanging around the bunk house when he got there, and his hoss was a lather from one end to the other. I knew some thing unusual was up, and I knew too that if there was, none of the kids would get in on it so I just stayed out of sight. Pretty soon, the foreman come out and hollered the crew up. They all mounted their hosses, some of them barebacked. Then they rode off as hard as they could. Well, I had my pony with me, and as long as I could keep them in sight, I follered. Pretty soon, they got out of sight and I had to trail.

“That trailing business was the money because the Madero gang ran into a trap and Jose Torres got killed. You see, the Santos men had a back watch, and when the Maderos ran into it, they had a devil of a time. The Santos men were no match for the Maderos, though, and they soon had to run for it. I was just a kid, and I never knew how many of the Santos men bit the dust, but I imagine several must have. Nothing was ever done to Santos in the courts around Parras. Might have been at Patos, but I never heard of it.

“I said before that all the kids were put to work. Well, when corn planting time came, I planted corn. Had a sack slung over my shoulder, filled with corn, and I kept my left hand

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spilling it in the row while my right reached into the sack for more corn. 4 While I wasn't [planting?] something, I was hunting lost calves. My job was to bring them in on my little old pony, and put them into the feeder lot. There was a regular man to handle the calves. He was an old hoss buster that had ruined himself on wild hosses.

“That was a dangerous business. That busting wild hosses. And yet, I wanted to do that worse than anything else under the sun, and since my step-dad was all for it, he helped train me. I first trained oxen to the plow. You wouldn't think that was very dangerous, but it was. The main reason was because you couldn't tell when one of them might get mad and try to kill you.

“Next thing, I set about training mules. The mules the Maderos had, must have been the stubbornest in the world because I sure had a hard time with them. By the time I was 11, though, I was ready for the hosses. I'd already had a little experience with pitching, because my step-dad changed my little pony for one of the Spanish hosses when I went to handling the mules so's I could outrun them when they took a mind to run. This Spanish hoss would pitch a little every morning, and I got used to that.

“Spanish hosses were about all there was in that part of Mexico, and the only kind there was on the Madero hoss ranch. I say hoss ranch because that was what it was called, but it was a part of the main Madero itself. The men on the hoss ranch just worked around where the hosses liked to run wild. round the hills. The man that took me over to teach, while on the hoss ranch, was Juan De La Torre. Just about the time he'd taught me pretty good, he had a little trouble. He was pretty mean to them, and one day while riding one, it reared way up high. Juan pulled hard on the 5 reigns, and the hoss fell over backwards. He'd taught me how to leave the saddle, and always keep myself in a position where I could leave, but he never left, and was crushed to death when the hoss fell on him. That was one of the best lessons I ever had because I saw what could happen when a man was too mean to his hoss. I never did like to mistreat them, and never liked to see others,

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but you had to keep your lip around the cow punchers, or they'd give you a lesson in keeping quiet.

“While on the hoss ranch, I saw [Gregorio?] Segovia bust a wild hoss, that turned out to be a race hoss. He was named 'Alazan Postado.' The Alazan was his name, and the Postado meant 'A little dark,' in Mexican. Alazan won a lot of money for Gregorio. I didn't see many of his races because we moved to Texas pretty soon after, but I did see Gregorio do a lot of riding. He was about the best rider on the place, and I've seen him rope many a coyote or deer.

“You know, a deer can outruna hoss if you give him room, but if Gregorio could get close to him before he knew anybody was around, Gregorio could catch him and rope him. The Spanish hoss is noted for his first burst of speed, and can outrun many breeds in the short run.

“When I was about 12, my step-dad decided to go to El Paso to give Guadalupe and myself a little schooling. He got a job in an El Paso slaughter house, moving cattle into the killing floor and knocking them out. I went to school, alright, but Guadalupe run off and went back to the ranch. That seemed to be alright with my step-dad, because he stayed on and didn't send for Guadalupe. I went on to school 'til he decided to go back in 1905. 6
“This time, when I got to the Madero, I was hired as a bronc buster, and put on the hoss ranch to stay. Of course, I didn't bust hosses all the time, because the Maderos only broke enough to keep the riders in riding stock. They figured when each man had eight in his string, he had enough. Then too, some of them broke their own mounts. They liked to do that, figuring their hosses would do better if they only had one rider to get used to.

“I stayed on the hoss ranch 'til I was 23, but the rest of it was all the same. When I wasn't busting hosses, I was in the shade of some tree. A man could sure got lazy in that part of the country. One day, after we'd rounded up a sizable herd, and had it in some brand new corrals that we'd just built, I laid down and was pounding my off-ear when I heard a

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roar and felt the ground shaking. I was over a small rise from the corrals to get away from the smell and racket, and when I heard this roar, I knew a stomp was coming right at me. I knew it, but there shouldn't of been one on that day because it was one of the prettiest days a man could want. Not even a cloud moving anywhere, and the sun just pouring down.

"I jumped up and grabbed my hoss, just as the herd mounted the rise. I managed to get out of the way alright, and knowing that I had to have some help to stop the stomp, I rode for the bunk house where most of the men were supposed to be at that time. They were there, and at my yell, they came out like bees out of a hive, Gregorio in front. I yelled what the herd was doing, then turned around and beat it back. Just to show you what Gregorio 7 could do when he had to, and what a good hoss he always kept, he beat me to that herd. There were a number of small hills in that country, and we could hear the herd as it ran. This time, the herd had turned a couple of times to keep from running through some brush, and we were able to catch it by cutting across the country. Gregorio passed me as I reached the tail end of the herd, and by the time I got to the flanks, he had got out in front and turned the leaders into a mill. It takes a little time to do that, of course, because you have to get to the leaders and keep shoeing them 'til they start turning. After the mill gets going good, though, a cow puncher's worries are over because then the herd will run 'til it gets tired, then stop and lay down.

"We had a lot of other stampedes, but none so bad as that one. It took us 14 hours of hard riding to get it back together again. Gregorio made us stay right at it, because he had a contract to have so many head at the border on a certain day, and if he didn't have it, he'd lose money. It was a 350 mile drive to the border to start with, and the men were just resting before getting started. I heard some of the older herds say that they'd found mountain lion tracks around the corral, and that was what started it. [nother?] thing that made it so tough was, when it stampeded, it was inside the corrals, and had to tear them down to get out. That's the way a stampeding herd is. It will tear down anything it can't go

Library of Congress

around. Many a man has lost his life because he [happene?] to get in front of the herd and his hoss lost it's footing.

When I got to be 23, I quit the Madero and went to Texas. 8 There were several reasons. One was that I saw I never would get anywhere on the Madero, and another was that Francisco Madero, who had been President, had been shot. As long as he was President, the Maderos fared right well, but after those [Huorta?] guards shot him, I wouldn't have given a doodly-bob/ (That's a quarter) for the ranch so I left. And, sure enough, The Madero Ranch is now a bunch of homesteads.

"I crossed the border at Langtry, Texas, and hired to A.P Williams as a cow puncher. He ran around 1,000 head near Del Rio, and told me he had to have straight shooters who didn't run every time somebody said 'boo' at him. Well, I was never too brave, but I had to have a job, and I knew it wasn't so bad as all that on a ranch.

"After I got to the outfit, I found out why he wanted gunmen. His place was right on the border, and the Mexican rustlers ran herds across his place into Mexico. While running them across, they'd take a head or so of William's beef. Williams didn't like that, so he was trying to keep about six men with him who'd battle when the time came to battle.

"We never did have any trouble though, but one time. A herd came through one night, when we had gathered a few head on our first day of the Spring roundup. It was along in May, 1914, we figured they seen the small bunch, but never figured why they left it. We went ahead, and about four days later, when we had a little over 200 head gathered, a couple of them came over and drove it off. That happened in the night, and the next morning, we came out to the herd, and it was gone! Well, since we were prepared for any kind of trouble, we just trailed the herd. We came on it near Langtry, where the men were just fixing to drive it across. 9 "We never did see the men, and figured they must have left the herd when they seen us coming. We tracked them down to the water of the Rio Grande, and saw where they'd come out on the other side. After we run the tally. Williams

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said there were 14 head missing, but that we were lucky to get any of it back so just forget it.

“Ranching on the Williams place was just like ranching on the Madero, excepting that Williams had all American cow punchers except me. That was the only difference besides the number of cattle handled. We had stamps, hosses to break, fences to mend, calves to feed, cattle to brand, and everything else was just the same. After two years on the Williams place, I left the range.

“I'm staying with my oldest boy here in Fort Worth now, at 907 Valley Street. If I have time, I might yet enter the hoss busting contests in the rodeo because I figure I'm still as good as I ever was, while I might need a little brushing up. I don't know what I'll do yet, and you can't tell either, because I change my mind with the wind. Once I set my mind on something to do, though, I stay in the saddle 'til I've rode my hoss. Busting hosses taught me that.