

[Richard C. Phillips]

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[Life history?]

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

[Tarrant?] Co., Dist. #7 [98?]

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Richard C. Phillips, 63, was born on his father's ranch near Banders, Tex. His father taught him to ride a horse, then died a few mouths before Phillips was five Yrs. of age. His mother's death when he was 12, left him an orphan. He was still 12 Yrs old when he was employed as a cowboy on the Western Union Beef Co. Ranch, which owned a large no. of sections of land, and a large No. of cattle. After eight Yrs, the W.U. Beef Co. sold their holdings to John T. McElroy, a Pecos city financier who immediately resold the cattle to Segal Saunders, a Kansas City Comm. Co. Segal Saunders shipped a train load of beef to Terre [?], Ind., and Phillips went with the load. When he returned to Texas, he quit the range and now resides in Springtown, Texas. His story:

“Well, now to begin with, my name's Richard C. Phillips, and I was born on my dad's XX Ranch near Bandera, Texas, on Dec. 17, 1864. Reckon as how that'd make me 63, wouldn't it? You asked if I ever worked on the range, and I'll answer by saying that I rode hosses when I wasn't but four yours old. You see, my dad's spread wasn't much shakes,

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and he couldn't hire much help because he didn't have so much money, and so he started me out to learning to ride just as soon's he figured I was able to sit a hull.

“And, the tough part about it was, he died just after I'd learnt to ride pretty good, and could climb up by myself. After he died, that left nobody but me and my mother, so I had to learn to tend to the 100 odd head of stuff we had. She'd talk to me, and try to make me feel my responsibility so's I'd go out there and do my dead level best to take my dad's place. I'd never have made it, though, if it [hadn't?] have been for the good neighbors we all had around there. They done a marvelous lot for us, and took the load in the roundups. I went on the roundups, alright, and slept out away from home during them roundups. [C12 - 2/11/[?] - Texas?] 2 Come branding time, and I was right in the big middle of it, tending to the irons, and everything else a stripling could shake. One thing about it, though, and that was there wasn't a lazy bone in my body, and I learnt to rope and brand on my own [account?]. I reckon I could pull it all off by the time I was eight years old. [That's?] pretty-young, but in them days, a kid wasn't always hanging out in some ice cream parlor. Instead, he went about his business and tried to be some account in the world. Another thing, people weren't always yapping baby talk at him, but gave him jobs to do, and if he didn't, he wanted to the next time he was given something to do.

“I was left a dogie when my mother died, and I wasn't but 12 at the time. You know, even though we had tried to get along, we didn't have much stuff when she died, and I sold out for [\$?]100.00 and lit out for the West. I wanted to get away from the place where I'd had so much trouble.

“A couple of months later, I lit in Fort Stockton, and met Tom Bailey. He was ram rodding for the Western Union Beef Co., and was in town right then, a-looking for cow punchers. [I?] told him I could ride and rope, and he gave me a chance. I was told to beat it out to the ranch, and when he came out, he'd see what I could do.

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“When he got out there, he put me through my paces, and hired me. I got \$15.00 a month and chuck. Now the Western Union Beef outfit [was?] a big spread, going from Fort Stockton to the mouth of the Pecos River. It was a big outfit, and had ranches from below Uvalde to clean up in Montana. A couple of bankers, R.T. and N.T. Wilson were the ones that owned the Co. They ran the Alamo National bank in San Antonio, and that's where all our checks come 3 from.

“Now, naturally, since the ranch was such a big one, and even ran two brands at the same time right on the same range, there was a lot of cow punchers working the spread. There were a number of niggers, too, and dont you ever believe them niggers couldn't ride and rope to beat the band. There was old [Geo.?] Adams, and he could ride and rope with the best. Then too, there was Tom Gannig, a younger nigger that was good. Niggers weren't allowed a gun on that spread. I said Ganning was young, well, old Geo was an ex-slave. He'd been a slave down near San Antonion on a plantation that had been in the Wilson family for years and years. There was one more nigger that I recall, and his name was ' Snow Ball.' That was because he was the blackest nigger anybody ever saw. And yet, he was sure a mighty good cow hand.

“About the best rider on the spread was Henry Salmone. He was in charge of the hoss ranch, and I reckon he had charge of 500 saddle hosses at least. Besides having that many, they had to keep busting more wild hosses in to take the place of those that got killed or too old to work any more. Believe, me, that's many a hoss and a sight to see for sure.

“Then, there was Button Clark, the trail boss. He was always in charge of the trail drives, because he'd been up the trail so many times, and knowed the country like a book. He was called ' Button,' because there was another top hand on the spread whose name was Buck Clark.

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“About the cattle, well have you seen any longhorn critters? That's what the Western Union Beef Co. run. Whole herds of them. Whys they branded 10,000 dogies a year when the spread was going 4 great guns. The two irons they run was the [?] and the Double Half Moon. You make the [?] like this: and the Double Half Moon like this: . Of course, the critters carried the irons shoulder, side and hip.

“Oh, yes. Jim Watts was the wagon boss when I first got on, but he was fired a couple of years/ later for staying drunk all the time, and Doc Coleman took his place. I don't recall at this time just how long he did work as wagon boss, but Hugh Boles took his place end stayed right on through, working for John T. McElroy of [Pecos?] City, who bought the ranch, look, stock, and barrel, along in '94. I had word of the ranch in '98, and Hugh Boles still had the wagon boss job.

“Now I've told you about the men on the spread, I'll [spin?] a couple of yarns about some of the work. They might sound to you like they was yarns, but when you're on the spot at one of these things, 'taint so funny. Not by a darn sight! Now, you take a stampede, and they're one of the most dangerous things ever was, and yet, they happen all the time on any ranch where a bunch of cow critters are rounded up into a herd. Anything'll cause them, too.

“There was once when I went North with about [1,000?] head of four-year-olds, steers they was, and we was trying to hold them at [Canyon?] City. [Them?] ornery raseals'd stampede every night, and one time they run plum to Amarillo! Button Clark, who was in charge of the herd. trailed them there hisself. After we rounded the critters all up again, the tally showed 23 steers gone.

“Then another night, they run to'ards Amarillo again, and veered a little East just enough to run right smack into Joe 5 Nation's herd, which put the whole kit and [b'iling?] to running. Now that was the worst mess ever I got into, because after stopping the run, we had to cut

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the whole herd to get the two of them separated. Work, work, work. That's about all that trip amounted to.

“The reason the 7D put that herd up there in the first place was because there was so much dry weather, and we had to get the critters to water. In one year, the 7ds had three herds around Amarillo, and Joe Nation had six!

“Another reason the 7ds put so many cattle at Amarillo was because Amarillo was our shipping point to the Montana ranges. [We?] shipped on the Ft. Worth & Denver road to Brush Wyoming, where they were unloaded and drove to the range the Western Union Beef Co. had in mind. [That's?] the way they done business. Then conditions in Texas were unfavorable for cattle, they tried to put their beef into a country that was favorable, and they owned ranches everywhere like I showed you before.

“Now, I've always been considered one of the best shots in the country, but I'm not going to tell anything about it. Instead, I'll tell you about some of the boys on the spread there that could really shoot as well as ever I could myself. Now, there's Bob Wilson. Just a cow hand, but a darn sight better than any I've seen since I left the 7ds. Old Bob was a noted pistol shot, and the quickest on the draw ever I seen. One day, the boys decided to prank him, and one of them that was a good roper, waited up a draw for him to come to the chuck wagon that was spotted right on top. Well, old Bob finally came along in a lope, whistling some sort of a tune, and this roper zipped his lasso out, trying to trip the hoss. The rope made the hoss's front foot alright, but old Bob shot trust lasso in two before any pressure could be put on it. He'd have shot the cow hand himself, if he hadn't have ducked behind a rock the minute he made his [cast?]. That sure was funny to everybody but the zany that tried to throw old Bob, because if he hadn't have gone to hollering, " Don't shoot! Don't shoot!, I'm one of the boys!", old Bob'd have rode up into them rocks and made a sieve out of him.

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Now, I never done much hoss busting. They had men on the hoss ranch that took care of the busting, but I did do a lot of [bronc?] riding because them ornery rescals was half Spanish and Mustang, and the Mustang hoss was as mean a critter as ever walked. They pitched every morning when you went out and roped [the?] one you were to ride, [and?], they'd pitch for fully five minutes 'til they got what we called, ' warmed up'. In other words, pitched 'til they got the laziness out of their bones.

“Some way or other, I sure wish I could make you realize just how hard they pitched. They pitched every bit as hard and fast as these critters you see now in the rodeos, so we had a real rodeo every morning. There'd be some funny [sight s?] take place sometimes, too. I recall very plain how one of the [niggers?] was pitcher plum over the [corral?] walls, and they were eight foot high. When that nigger come down on the other side, he let out a big grunt that could almost be heard to Fort Stockton. [Then?] too, I've seen the boys pitched into mesquite trees, and every other way you can think of.

[What?] I'm trying to picture to you is; that in then days a man had to be a man every day without no layoffs. Every day! You take in a stampede now, and I've seen a 100 or more. The boys that are out with a herd must be real good riders willing to take chances with their live. When a herd starts to running, it goes hell-bent-for-election and will run over anything it can unless its too big, then the herd'll ran 'til they run up against something they can't run over, then they'll split and go around but keep a-running. [That's?] the way them ornery critters'll do every time. Well, when a herd gets to running, it'll run 'til it runs down, or gets so tired it can't run anymore. [The?] thing a cowhand has to do, is to get that herd to milling, and then they'll run in a circle 'til they get run down. If they're not put into a mill, they'll run over some bank of a crick, or a cut, or even a canyon if there's one in the way. [Then?] there'll be a lot of beef killed and lost, which can run up into the thousands of dollars.

“Now then, I want you to picture a herd on the stomp, and realize that any human or hoss that gets in the way, that the herd'll run over them and stomp them into the very ground if

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it possibly can. Get that picture, then realize that the only possible way to turn a herd into a mill is to get right out in front and beat the lead steer 'til he starts turning and trying to get away from you. That away, the rest of the herd'll follow him, and the herd'll then go into a mill. When you get that picture, then you'll see and understand why men had to be the men in them days. Not now, because these fine cattle are hard to put into a stomp, and when they are, they don't run long because they're not grown for strength, but for fat. They didn't grow them in the old days for strength, but them old long horns just naturally grewed like a hoss, without any help from man.

They'd hide out in the brakes, and when we were on the 8 roundup, they'd come a-busting out and try their [dead?] level best to kill the cowhand. [That?] was the old mossy horns, of course, that got so testy and there were mighty few so mean, thanks be. Others were real wild and flighty, and would run away from the cowhand as hard as they could go. [That?] was the expected, though, and the cowhand'd rope him and then drive him to what they'd rounded up, where another'd stay with them and keep them corraled. After a little persuasion, most of them critters'd stay together in a herd.

“Now, what I'm telling is what actually happened to me and not something I've read. Truth of the [matter?] is that I can't read nor write. Reason being because I was raised a dogie, and had to hustle for my bread and meat all my life. I just want to tell about one of them stomps we had on one of the last trail drives to Amarillo with 7ds, while it was still owned by the W.U.H. Co. I'm standing night herd, and Its been raining pretty hard. Whenever it goes to raining, a herd'll stand Up and go to shifting around, trying to got their tails and backs to the wind and rain. [That's?] their nature, but they're also ready to run in case anything makes the [least?] little old bobble. Well, sir. Instead of the rain getting harder, it began to lighten, and the night itself got lighter. [We?] could see a heap better'n when it was raining, and all of a sudden, we heard a shot from the camp where the rest of the boys'd gone to sleep.

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The herd heard it too, and were off like a shot, running right towards me and the other night rider. We'd stopped for a but of talk and a cigarette, but was in the wrong spot at the right time. If it hadn't have been that the night was pretty light, and we were able to see the leaders, we'd have been stomped right into the 9 ground. Instead, we could see the leaders, and he and me turned [that?] herd into a mill in less then five minutes after it got started. Five minutes! [I'll?] bet that'd have made some kind of a record if records had been kept, became five minutes is a wonderful time.

[We?] had a lot of good times, there on the 7D, what with our contests we had every time we weren't pushed with the work and all, but along came the thing that spoilt it all when John T. McElroy of Pecos City made a deal with the W.U. Beef Co., and bought the ranch. I don't know just what kind of a deal was made, but I do know that the cowhands were given the order to roundup every head on the ranch, and bring it to the chutes at the headquarters for a tally. Well, on the day we were to have the herd there, there was a stranger there with [McElroy?], nobody paid no attention to him, because we were all busy with the herd.

“Finally came the order to [shoot?] [the?] chutes, and we started the cattle through. Hugh Boles made the count for the W.U. Beef Co., and John T. made his own count in the middle of the chutes as the critters passed him by. The stranger made the count at the end of the chutes as the critters all passed out and into the new herd. 28,000 head passed through the chutes in that one day, and, this stranger was Segal Saunders, of the Kansas City Saunders Cattle Commission Co. He bought every head that came through, and paid John T. \$4.00 a head for every one of them 28,000 critters. Figure it yourself.

“Then the real work started. Segal Sounders gave the order to have the critters road branded, and I myself put a seven on 13,000 of them critters. 13,000! You see, all I had to do was put the iron as the other boys downed them, and there were three [crew?] 10 working with me. It certainly kept us all busy. After the cattle were all branded, then they

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roaded to Amarillo, and shipped to different points. I myself left Amarill with a train load for [Terre?] [Hante?], Ind., to be fed out.

“When I returned from working with that herd, I quit the range for good and never went back. [?] man could really save his money and be healthy in it, but it just didn't appeal to me no more after I got back from that year in Indianna, so I quit. I'm now living on my farm out near Springtown, Texas. Just doing nothing all [Summer?] but wait for winter, then when winter gets here, I wait for the good old summer time.